

# WITNESSING BETTER THAN KNOWING THE FUTURE NO. 2330

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
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*“When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying,  
Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?  
And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the  
seasons which the Father has put in His own power. But you  
shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon  
you: and you shall be witnesses unto Me both in  
Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria,  
and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”  
Acts 1:6-8.*

THESE are among the last words of our Lord. We greatly prize the last words of good men. Let us set high store by these words of our ascending Lord. It is very curious to my mind that Jesus should make mention of John the Baptist and of John's Baptism in these last words. Read the fifth verse—“John truly baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence.” It is very usual for good men's memories, in their last hours, to go back to their first hours. I trust that some of us will think of our Baptism even when we are dying—

*High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow,  
That vow renewed shall daily hear—  
Till in life's latest hour I bow,  
And bless in death a bond so dear.”*

Our Lord began in such a way that He could afford to look back on His beginning. Some do not commence so—their beginning is so undecided, so imperfect, so hesitating, that they may well wish to have it forgotten. But our Lord, at the close of His sojourn on earth, thinks of John the Baptist and pays him a dying word of respect just before He is taken up into Glory. I like to notice that interesting fact.

But, now, to come more to the text, a question was put to our Lord. Many questions were asked of Him by His disciples, some of them not very wise ones. We are very glad that they asked them, for they have extracted from the Savior a great amount of instruction and, although this question about restoring the Kingdom to Israel may have been a mistaken one, and they may have meant a more material and carnal kingdom than our Savior intended to establish (of that I am not sure), yet the question brought to us a reply which we may well store up in our memories and hearts—“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has

come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

We have three things to talk about, tonight. First, *some things which are not for us*. Secondly, *some things for us to receive*. And thirdly, *something for us to be*.

**I.** First, then, let us consider SOME THINGS WHICH ARE NOT FOR US. It is not for us to know the times and the seasons, or to be able to make a map of the future. There are some great events of the future very clearly revealed. The Prophecy is not at all indistinct about the *facts that will occur*, but as to *when* they will occur, we have no data. Some *think* that they have, but our Lord, here, seems to say that we do not know the times and the seasons—and that it is not for us to know them. I pass no censure upon brethren who think that, by elaborate calculations, they find out what is to be in the future. I say that I pass no censure, but *time* has passed censure of the strongest kind upon all their predecessors! I forget how many miles of books interpreting prophecy there are in the British Museum, but I believe it amounts to miles, all of which have been disproved by the lapse of time. Some of the writers were wonderfully definite—they knew within half-an-hour when the Lord would come! Some of them were very distinct about all the events—they had mapped them all within a few years. The men who wrote the books, happily for *themselves*, had mostly died before the appointed time came. It is always wise to pitch on a long period of prophecy, that you may be out of the way if the thing does not come off—and they mostly did so. There were very few of them who lived to suffer the disappointment which would certainly have come to them through having fixed the wrong date. I let time censure their mistake. God forgave it, for they did it with a desire for His Glory. The bulk of them were most sincere students of the Word of God and, herein, are a lesson to us, even though they were mistaken in their calculations. But, Beloved, it is not for you to know the times and the seasons.

First, *it is not proper for you*. It is not your work. You are not sent into the world to be prophets—you are sent into the world to be *witnesses*. You do not come here to be prognosticators of the events of tomorrow about yourself, or about your children, or about your friends, or about the nations of the earth. A veil hangs between you and the future. Your prayer is to be, “Your Kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.” You are told to look for the coming of your Lord and to stand in perpetual expectation of His return, but to know the time when He will come is no part of your office. You are servants who are to look for your Lord, who may come at cock-crowing, or at midday, or at midnight. Always stay on your tiptoes of expectation. It would be wrong for you to profess that you need not watch until such-and-such a time, for you know that He will not come until that date arrived.

As it is not proper for you, so it *is not profitable for you*. What would you be the better if you could make a map of all that is yet to be? Suppose it were revealed to you, tonight, by an angel—in what respect would it alter your conduct for tomorrow? In what way would it help you to perform the duties which your Master has enjoined upon you? I believe that it

would be a very dangerous gift—you would be tempted to set yourself up as an interpreter of the future. If men believed in you, you would become eminent and notable, and you would be looked upon with awe. The temptation would be to become a prophet on your own account, to head a new sect, to lead a new company of men to believe in yourself. I say that that would be the temptation. For my part, I would rather not know any more than my Lord pleases to reveal to me—and if He revealed all the future to me, I would feel like the Prophets who spoke of “the burden of the Lord.” Neither would it ensure your salvation to be able to foretell the future, for Balaam was a great prophet, but he was a great sinner—he was an arch-rebel although he was an arch-divine.

Nor do I know that by foretelling the future you would convince your fellow men, for Noah told them that the world would be destroyed by the Flood. He could give them a very accurate account of the time when the rain would descend and yet they were not converted by his preaching, neither did they come into the ark. Those Truths which God has revealed you must accept for yourselves and proclaim to others—*they* are profitable for all purposes and sufficient for your work—but the future is known only to God!

And as it is not proper or profitable, so it *is not possible for you to know* the times and the seasons. You may study as you will and pray as you please, but the times and the seasons are not committed to you. Our Lord, as Man, spoke of one great event of which He did not know the time—“Of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.” He does not say *that*, now that He has risen from the dead, but He seems to hint that He did not know so as to tell His disciples—He must keep it secret, even from them, that “which the Father has put in His own power.”

Notice, next, dear Friends, that it *is not good for you to know* the times and the seasons. That is what the Savior means when He says, “It is not for you to know.” For, first, it would distract your attention from the great things of which you have to think. It is enough for your mind to dwell upon the Cross and the coming Glory of your Lord. Keep these two things distinctly before you and you need not puzzle your brains about the future. If you knew that something important was going to happen very speedily, you might be full of consternation and do your work in a great hurry. You might be worked up into a frenzy that would spoil all your service. Or, if there was a long time to elapse before the great event, you might feel the indifference of distance. If our Lord were not to come for another hundred years, and He may not, we cannot tell—then we might say, “My Lord delays His coming,” and so we might begin to sleep, or to play the wanton. It is for our good to always stand in this condition—knowing that He is coming, knowing that He will reign, knowing that certain great events will certainly transpire—but not knowing the exact times and seasons when those events are to be expected.

But there is something *better* than knowing the times or the seasons—*it is good for us to know that they are in the Father’s power*—“which the Father has put in His own power.” The events will come to pass, then, in due time. The future is all in God’s hands. No prophecy will lack its mate. No

Word of God will fall unfulfilled to the ground. Possess your souls in patience—the things that are foretold are sure to happen. “Though the vision tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.” I am persuaded that God never is before His time, but He is never late. He never failed to keep appointments with His people to the tick of the clock. The future is in the Father’s power.

And especially let it be remembered that it is in His power as our Father. He must arrange it rightly. He must arrange it in infinite love to us. It cannot be that, in some dark hour yet to come, He will forget us. He is our Father—will He forget His children? If the times could be in my hands, how earnestly would I pray that Christ would take them into His hands, or that the Father would take away from me the dangerous power and wield it all Himself! Did we not sing just now—

***“All my times are in Your hands,  
All events at Your command”?***

The time of birth, the time of the new birth, the time of a sore trial, the time of the death of your beloved one, the time of your sickness, and how long it shall last—all these times must come and last, and end as shall please your Father. It is for you to know that your Father is at the helm of the ship and, therefore, it cannot be wrecked! It may rock and reel to and fro, but, since He rules the waves, the vessel will not have one more tossing than His infinite love permits! Let us, then, not seek to unroll the map of the future, but calmly say—

***“My God, I would not long to see  
My fate with curious eyes,  
What gloomy lines are writ for me,  
Or what bright scenes arise,”***

but just leave it all with God. The Father has it in His hands and there we wish it to be. So much concerning some things which are not for us.

**II.** And now, secondly, there are SOME THINGS FOR US TO RECEIVE. The Savior said to the 11 that they were to wait at Jerusalem till they had received power by the Holy Spirit coming upon them. This is what we need—we need the Holy Spirit! We often speak about this, but, in truth, it is unspeakable—the power of the Holy Spirit—mysterious, Divine. When it comes upon a man, he is bathed in the very essence of the Deity. The atmosphere about him becomes the life and power of God. There is an old proverb that knowledge is power—Christ has taken away the knowledge that is not power. He said, “It is not for you, child; it is not for you.” But He gives you the knowledge that *is* power, or, rather, that power which is better than all knowledge, the power of the Holy Spirit! Gotthold, in his parables, speaks of his little child who wanted to come into his room, but he was doing something there which he did not wish the child to see, and so he went on with his work, when, to his horror and surprise, he found that his child had, in some way, climbed up outside the window and was standing on the sill trying to look in to see what his father was doing—hazarding his life in the attempt. You may guess that it was not long before that child was taken down with a pat and something more, to teach him not to pry into his father’s secrets! It is so with some of us—we need just a little pat and perhaps more than that, to keep us from looking into things that do not belong to us. We may be comforted, even, if we do not

know the times and the seasons, for we may get something vastly better, namely, the Holy Spirit to give us real power for our life-work!

The Holy Spirit gives to His people power which may be looked at from different points. He gave to some of them, in the olden times, *miraculous power*, and they went forth, having received the Spirit of God, to do great signs and wonders in the name of Christ. If you have not that, you may hope to have mental power. The Holy Spirit does not educate us, or give us culture after the common method of men, and yet there is an inner education and a higher culture which is much more to be desired, which comes from Him. He leads us into all the Truths of God! He makes us feel the force of the Truth of God. He gives us a grip of the Truth of God. He writes the Truth of God upon the heart. He applies it to the understanding. Many a man has become quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord who was very slow of understanding in other respects. The Holy Spirit takes the fool and makes him know the wonders of redeeming love. It is amazing how persons of very scanty gifts and very small attainments, have, nevertheless, become wise toward God—their mental faculties being quickened with regard to heavenly things in a very remarkable manner!

The power of the Spirit is also, in part, *moral power*. He gives to men qualities that make them strong and influential over their fellow men. He imparts dauntless courage, calm confidence, intense affection, burning zeal, deep patience, much-enduring perseverance. Many other hallowed influences besides these are Graces of the Spirit of God which form in men a moral power exceedingly useful and exceedingly forcible. I have known men who have been slow of speech and who have exhibited very few gifts, who have, nevertheless, been very strong men in our assemblies, true pillars of the Church, for *piety is power*—and *Grace is power*.

Besides that, there is a more secret, subtle power still, *spiritual power*, wherein, in the spiritual world, a man is made a prince with God, has power with God and, learning how to prevail with God for men, he catches the art of prevailing with men for God. He is first a wrestler, alone, by Jabbok. Then he becomes a wrestler in the midst of the host of sinners, conquering them for Christ, taking them captive in the name of the Most High! Power in prayer is the highest form of power. Communion with God is power. And holiness, above all things, is a great power among the sons of men!

This spiritual power makes a man influential in a sense very different from that in which the world uses the word, “influential”—a disgraceful use of the word. We need men who have influence in the most Divine sense—men who, somehow or other, cast a spell over their fellow men. In their presence, men cannot do what they are accustomed to do elsewhere. When these men are in any company, they check sin without a word, they incite to righteousness almost without a sentence! They carry everything before them, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord who dwells in them! Have I not seen some, decrepit and bedridden, yet ruling a house and influencing a parish? Have I not seen some tottering old woman who, nevertheless, has been a very queen in the circle in which she moved? Have I not seen some poor, humble rustic from the plow who, nevertheless, has worn a coronet in the midst of his fellow men by the ho-

liness of his life and the spiritual power that God the Holy Spirit had imparted to him?

Now, Beloved, I have not time to fully describe this endowment. I have only mentioned one or two points in which it is seen, but this endowment is what we need before we can do anything for Christ. Do you always think enough of this? The teacher prepares her lesson, but does she also prepare herself by seeking the power of the Holy Spirit? The minister studies his text, but does he ask for a Baptism of the Holy Spirit? I am afraid that this spiritual qualification, the most essential of all, is frequently overlooked. Then, the Lord have mercy upon us! The soldier had better go to battle without sword or rifle—the artilleryman had better wheel up his gun without powder or shot, than that we should attempt to win a soul until—first of all, the Holy Spirit has given us power! Power must go with the Word that is preached or taught if any large result is to follow and that power must first be in the man who speaks that Word.

For this power the disciples were to wait. The world was dying, Hell was raging, yet they must tarry at Jerusalem till they had that Power. Impetuous Peter must hold His tongue and loving John must be quiet and must commune in secret with his Master. None of them must go out into the street or stand in the Temple to proclaim the Words of this life. They must stop till God should see fit to pour out his Spirit upon them—and I would to God that sometimes we could be quiet, too! It were better to be dumb than to speak only in the power of our own spirit! It were better to lay the finger on the lip than to begin to talk before our message has been burnt into us by the Holy Spirit. Wait for the live coal from off the altar to blister your lips, for only *then* can you speak with power when you, yourself, have felt the fire of the Spirit!

**III.** Now we pass on to the third point, which is a very important practical one, SOMETHING FOR US TO BE. If you are a disciple of Christ, you are not to look into the times and the seasons which the Father has put in His own power. You are to receive the Spirit of God and then there is something for you to be. Did you expect me to say that then there is *something for you to do*? Well, there is a great deal for you to *do*, but the text says, *You shall be witnesses,* not, “You shall *act* as witnesses” only, but, “You *shall be* witnesses.” Every true Christian should, in his own proper person, be a witness for his Lord. “Here I stand,” he says, “myself a proof of what my Lord can do. I, His servant, saved by Him, and renewed by Him, washed in His blood, it is I who, while I live, whether I speak or not, am a monument of His love, a trophy of His Grace.” “You shall be witnesses unto Me.”

Dear Friends, we are to be *witnesses of what Christ has done*. If we have seen Christ. If we believe in Christ, let us tell it honestly. These Apostles had a great deal to tell. They had been with Christ in private. They had seen His miracles. They had heard His choice and more secret words. They had to go and bear witness to it all. And you, who have been let into the secrets of Christ. You who have communed with Him more closely than others, you have much to tell. Tell it all, for whatever He has said to you in the closet, you are to proclaim upon the housetop. You are to witness what you have seen, tasted and handled concerning your Lord.

You are to *witness to what He has revealed*, to make known to others the Doctrine that He preached, or taught by His Apostles. Mind that you do not tell any other! You are not sent to be “an original thinker,” to make up a Gospel as you go along—you are a witness, that is all, a *retailer* of Christ’s Truth—and you miss the end of your life unless you perpetually witness, and witness, and witness to what you know of Him, and to what you have learned from Him. Let this be your prayer and your resolve—

**“Give me Your strength, O God of power!  
Then let winds blow, or thunders roar,  
Your faithful witness will I be—  
‘Tis fixed—I can do all through You.”**

You are to *witness to what you have experienced concerning Christ*. Now, what is that? I will just run over this witness, feeling that there are many hundreds of dear friends here, tonight, who could bear the same testimony and who will do so as they have opportunity.

First, I beg to say to all present here, tonight, that the Lord Jesus Christ can remove despair and every form of spiritual distress. He did so for me. I was full of darkness. The shadow of death was upon me and I found no comfort till I heard that blessed text, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” I looked unto Him and was lightened and my face was not ashamed—and I am here, tonight, to bear witness that a load was thus taken from me which I could not get rid of in any other way—and my midnight was, in a single moment, turned into the blaze of midday! Neither have I ever gone back to that darkness, nor have I again had reason to cry, “Woe is me that ever I was born.” No, there is, in the name of *Jesus*, a balm for every mental wound, a relief for all the agony of a tortured spirit! I am sure of it. I am not saying to you what I have merely heard from other people, but what I have, *myself*, felt, and there are many here who can endorse my testimony that there is no relief to a sinner’s aching heart like that which Jesus brings! I wish that you would all prove this Truth of God for yourselves, but, at any rate, we are witnesses that it is so.

And, next, our Lord Jesus is a great transformer of character. I do not like to speak of myself, but I will speak of many a man whom I know. He came into this Tabernacle a drunk, a swearer, a lover of unholy pleasures and, while the Word was preached, the Lord broke him down and melted his heart. Now he hates what once he loved and, as to those pursuits which were once distasteful to him, so that he cursed and swore at the very mention of them, or at least poured ridicule upon others who loved them, he *now* loves them, himself, and it is a wonder to himself to find himself where he now is! He never dreamed of being what he is. Ask his wife whether there is a change in him. Ask his little children whether there is a change in him. Ask his workmates. Ask his employer—ask *anybody*, and they will all say—“He is not the same man.”

The Lord Jesus Christ has turned everything upside down with him. It was the wrong way up before and so He has put it all right. He can turn the lion into a lamb, the raven into a dove and He has done so to many of our friends who are sitting in this house, tonight, as they would willingly bear witness! Oh, if there are any here, tonight, who would learn the way

of righteousness and quit the paths of sin, let them believe my testimony which comes not out of feigned lips! "I speak the truth in Christ and lie not." The Lord is able to transform character in a very amazing way! He has done it for many of us and if you believe in Him, He will do it for you, also!

Next, we should like to bear witness to the sustaining power of Christ under temptation. After being saved, we have been tempted and we are men of like passions with others. I speak for my Sisters as well as for my Brothers here. We have all been tempted and we have been well near thrown back to our old condition—but when we have fled to Christ and trusted in Him, our feet have stood firm, even upon the brink of the precipice! We have passed through fire and water by way of trial and temptation and yet we stand, for Christ is able to guard us, even, from stumbling, and to present us faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy. We are not talking to you of things that we have dreamt. O Sirs, we would not like to tell some of you how we have been tempted, how hard it has gone with us, how we have been saved by the skin of our teeth, but saved we have been, to the praise of God's mighty Grace! Let His name be praised forever and ever! That is our witness. If you would be kept from temptation, come and trust Him!

We wish, also, to say that the Spirit of God coming from Christ moves men to high and noble thoughts. Selfishness no longer rules the man who believes in Christ—he loves his fellow men, he desires their good—he can forgive them if they persecute him, he can lay down his life for them. Have we not had many who have gone forth among the heathen and laid down their lives for Christ? I was speaking with a Brother from the Congo on Monday and I spoke of the many deaths there, and he said, "Yes, it looks a sad thing that so many missionaries should die, but, Sir," he added, "that is the first thing that we have done in Africa that is really hopeful. I have often heard the natives say to me, 'These men must believe a true religion or else they would not come here to die for us poor black men.' Men begin to believe this new kind of evidence. The blood of the missionary becomes the seed of the Church." I do not doubt that it is so and, Beloved, if you and I can live wholly and only for Christ. If we can live nobly. If we can get out of ourselves. If we can rise superior to worldly advantages and prove that we believe all we say, we shall convince our fellow men of the truth of our religion! This is what the Holy Spirit would have us to be and we desire to obey His promptings more and more—

***"Holy Spirit, dwell in me!  
I, myself, would holy be."***

I will not detain you many minutes more, but I must bear my testimony to the supporting power of Christ in the time of trouble. There are many here who would have been in the asylum, in their time of trial, if it had not been that they could carry their grief to Christ. There are some of us who are not strangers to very acute pain and to a long continuance of it, too—and we have found no comfort in the world like going to our Lord when racked with pain, and torn with anguish. There is a power about Him to charm us into joy when everything would drive us to distress—and almost to despair.

And, specially, I want to bear my witness, not, of course, a personal one, but that of an observer, as to the power of our holy religion in the hour of death. I have been at many deathbeds. I have seen many Christians just about to die. There it is that the power of our holy religion comes in. How calm, how resigned—sometimes how triumphant, how ecstatic—is the frame of mind of the departing Believer! I never heard one of them regret that he was a Christian. In times when men sift what they have done and believed—and when they tell no lies, for the naked truth comes up before them—I have heard them glory in belonging to Christ and in resting in Him! But I have never heard them regret that they did so. Our religion is not all of the future—it is not a thing that dreams concerning the world to come. It gives us *present* joy, *present* strength, *present* comfort and we commend it to you most heartily, for this is our duty, to be witnesses for Christ! There are some who can give their evidence-in-chief, but the pity is that when they come to be cross-examined, when they get among the ungodly in the world, they make a mess of it. The Lord have mercy upon some who come in among us and profess to know Christ and do not—it is their lie that taints the testimony of the true in the judgment of mankind! Be you the more zealous to overbear their treachery by your consistency. Be you the more full of integrity and stern truthfulness, and boundless love, to make up for these wounds which your Lord receives so often in the house of His friends!

May the Spirit of God rest upon you, Beloved in the Lord, and may you hear your Master say to you, “You shall be witnesses unto Me.” Amen.

**EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
LUKE 4:16-30; 9:57-62 AND MATTHEW 28:16-20.**

We will read three short passages of Scripture, all relating to Christ’s service. The first concerns the ministry of the Lord Jesus, Himself.

**Luke 4:16-19.** *And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the Prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* What a glorious passage! This was the text of Christ’s whole ministry not only of that day at Nazareth, but of all His life ever after.

**20.** *And He closed the book. Rolled up the sacred writing—*

**20.** *And He gave it again to the minister, and sat down.* Their practice was to sit down to speak, while the people usually stood to hear—a very good custom, indeed. If *we* did the same, perhaps we should have fewer of our hearers going to sleep.

**20, 21.** *And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.* That is the way to preach—bring home the Scripture

to the present time, show its application to everyday life, especially point out its connection with Christ—and prove how it is fulfilled and verified in His sacred Person. Doubtless, Jesus said a great deal besides what is here recorded, but there were no shorthand writers, there, to take down every word He uttered.

**22.** *And all bore Him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?* There! Did it matter whose son Jesus was? Yet, in order to abate the force and even the blessedness of Divine Truth, men turn their thoughts to the Speaker rather than to what He says. How foolish!

**23.** *And He said unto them, You will surely say unto Me this proverb, Physician, heal yourself: whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.* “Begin at home, work miracles here! You are the Son of the carpenter who lives here—now, do some wonderful work among us.”

**24-26.** *And He said, Verily I say unto you, No Prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the Heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.* Elijah did not feel bound to labor always among the Jews, but he went right to Sidon, to a heathen woman, and he sojourned with the widow in the faraway country. God is Sovereign. He can save whom He wills and He will exercise that Sovereignty and bless some of those who appear to be most hopeless—and to have the least signs of good about them, and to be the farthest removed from the means of Grace!

**27.** *And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the Prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.* Only the stranger and foreigner was cured of the disease of leprosy—another instance of Divine Sovereignty. Men do not like this Doctrine of Sovereignty—they are willing to have a god if he is not God—they do not mind believing in a god who is not King and who does not do as He wills with His own. They believe in free will, they say. Yes, yes, free will for everybody but God! Man is to be the god of man and of God, too, according to the talk of some! But this is the thunder from the Divine Throne of God—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Blessed is he who humbly bows his head and says, “Be it so, My Lord!” Absolute power cannot be in better hands than in those of the God of Love!

**28.** *And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath.* They were at first very pleased to have a promising young Preacher out of their own town and they said, one to another, “Did not He speak well?” Now they have changed their note—He has been too faithful for them! He has exalted God instead of man! And now they are filled with wrath.

**29, 30.** *And rose up and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down, headlong. But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way.* With that holy calm in which He always dwelt—with wondrous Self-

possession—He passed through the midst of them and escaped their malice. Now let us read what Christ says to those who would be His followers. Turn to—

**Luke 9:57.** *And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.* He was a volunteer, but his zeal was too hot to hold out long. He had never fully known what following Christ meant, so he came forward without a thought.

**58.** *And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.* He did not reckon on such hard fare as that, to lie hard, and live hard, so we hear no more of him. That is would-be follower number one.

**59.** *And He said unto another, Follow Me.* Not a volunteer, this time, but one actually called by Christ and commanded to come—a conscript, as it were.

**59.** *But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.* We do not even know that his father was dead. He would like to stay at home until the old man was ready to be buried.

**60.** *Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go you and preach the Kingdom of God.* When Christ wants men to go upon His errands, they must make no excuses. The King's business requires haste. The King's commands are peremptory. Other people could bury the dead—let them do it. They were not alive unto this holy ministry—they would, therefore, be doing right in stopping to bury the dead. When Christ says to a man, "Follow Me," he must not let even the most tender relationship detain him, or the most proper duties stand in the way of the highest duty. That is would-be follower number two. We hear no more of him, either.

**61.** *And another also said, Lord, I will follow You; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.* "Lord, I will follow You, but I must have time. I need a little allowance and a permit to leave home. I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at home at my house." It might be a long distance and as it was now Christ's time to send out the seventy, they must go at once, or not at all. This man intends to wait till he has gone, perhaps, 50 miles home and back again.

**62.** *And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow and, looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.* You must go at once when you have orders to go—and not even the courtesies of life, or the fondnesses of affection, may make you disobey the command of the Captain. It would be a pretty thing, in the day of battle, if the soldiers came to the general and one said, "I must go back to bury my father," and another said, "I cannot fight, for I need to go and bid farewell to my mother." The country would soon be in a desperate state for lack of soldiers and the great King, whose war is more important than any other, will not have for soldiers those who talk in this fashion! So, you see, there are three would-be followers gone, but there are at least 70 faithful followers left, as the next chapter shows. Our third reading will be at the end of the Gospel according to Matthew.

**Matthew 28:16.** *Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. Away from the haunts of men, where He had been known to be, in a country familiar to them, and with which He was familiar, in a despised country, "Galilee of the Gentiles."*

**17.** *And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him.* Probably this was the occasion referred to by Paul, when the risen Savior "was seen of above five hundred brethren at once."

**17.** *But some doubted.* There were some honest doubters, then. The breed has been kept up ever since, only there are more *dishonest* doubters by a great deal than there are of honest ones, now. We can never expect to be quite free from doubters in the Church, since even in the presence of the newly-risen Christ, "some doubted."

**18.** *And Jesus came and spoke unto them.* These words to imply that He came nearer to them than He was at first—unveiling Himself still more and revealing Himself more clearly.

**18, 19.** *Saying, All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go you, therefore, and teach all nations.* "Teach," that is, *disciple*, make disciples of "all nations."

**19, 20.** *Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you.* There is teaching, again! It is as much the duty of the Christian to *teach after* Baptism as to teach *before* Baptism. He must be always teaching. Therefore, Believers are always to be *learners*, since Christ would have His servants always to be teachers—"Teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you." We are not to invent a Gospel. We are not to change, shift, cut and shape it to meet the advancement of the age! Christ's command is plain—"Teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you."

**20.** *And, lo, I am with you, always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.* They have their commission. Here is the seal to it. Here is the source of their power. Here is the society in which they are to work—"Lo, I am with you always." God grant that you and I, going forth to teach for Christ, may always have the sound of our Master's feet with us, even to the end of the world! Amen.

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# **THE ASCENSION AND THE SECOND ADVENT PRACTICALLY CONSIDERED NO. 1817**

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 28, 1884,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And while they looked steadfastly toward Heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into Heaven, will so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven.” Acts 1:10, 11.*

FOUR great events shine out brightly in our Savior's story. All Christian minds delight to dwell upon His birth, His death, His Resurrection and His Ascension. These make four rungs in that ladder of light, the foot of which is upon the earth, but the top reaches to Heaven. We could not afford to dispense with any one of these four events, nor would it be profitable for us to forget, or to underestimate the value of any one of them. That the Son of God was born of a woman creates in us the intense delight of a brotherhood springing out of a common humanity. That Jesus once suffered to the death for our sins and, thereby, made a full Atonement for us, is the rest and life of our spirits. The manger and the Cross, together, are Divine seals of love. That the Lord Jesus rose again from the dead is the warrant of our justification and also a transcendently delightful assurance of the resurrection of all His people and of their eternal life in Him. Has He not said, “Because I live, you shall live also”? The Resurrection of Christ is the Morningstar of our future glory! Equally delightful is the remembrance of His Ascension. No song is sweeter than this—“You have ascended on high. You have led captivity captive, You have received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious, also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.”

Each one of these four events points to another and they all lead up to a fifth. The fifth link in the golden chain is our Lord's Second and most glorious Advent. Nothing is mentioned between His ascent and His descent. True, a rich history comes between, but it lies in a valley between two stupendous mountains—we step from alp to alp as we journey in meditation from the Ascension to the Second Advent. I say that each of the previous four events points to it. Had He not come, a first time, in humiliation, born under the Law, He could not come a second time in amazing glory “without a sin-offering unto salvation.” Because He died

once, we rejoice that He dies no more, death has no more dominion over Him and, therefore, He comes to destroy that last enemy whom He has already conquered.

It is our joy, as we think of our Redeemer as risen, to feel that in consequence of His rising, the trumpet of the archangel shall assuredly sound for the awaking of all His slumbering people when the Lord, Himself, shall descend from Heaven with a shout. As for His Ascension, He could not, a second time descend, if He had not first ascended! But having perfumed Heaven with His Presence and prepared a place for His people, we may fitly expect that He will come again and receive us unto Himself, that where He is, there we may be, also. I want you, therefore, as in contemplation you pass with joyful steps over these four grand events, as your faith leaps from His birth to His death, and from His resurrection to His Ascension, to be looking forward and even hastening unto this crowning fact of our Lord's history—for before long He shall so come in like manner as He was seen going up into Heaven.

This morning, in our meditation, we will start from the Ascension and, if I had sufficient imagination, I would like to picture our Lord and the 11 walking up the side of Olivet, communing as they went—a happy company with a solemn awe upon them, but with an intense joy in having fellowship with each other! Each disciple was glad to think that his dear Lord and Master who had been crucified was now among them, not only alive but surrounded with a mysterious safety and Glory which none could disturb. The enemy was as still as a stone—not a dog moved his tongue—His bitterest foes made no sign during the days of our Lord's after-life below! The company moved peacefully onward towards Bethany—Bethany which they all knew and loved. The Savior seemed drawn there at the time of His Ascension, even as men's minds return to old and well-loved scenes, when they are about to depart out of this world. His happiest moments on earth had been spent beneath the roof where lived Mary and Martha and their brother, Lazarus. Perhaps it was best for the disciples that He should leave them at that place where He had been most hospitably entertained, to show that He departed in peace and not in anger. There they had seen Lazarus raised from the dead by Him who was now to be taken up from them—the memory of the triumphant past would help the tried faith of the present. There they had heard the voice saying, "Loosen him, and let him go," and there they might fitly see their Lord loosened from all bonds of earthly gravitation that He might go to His Father and their Father. The memories of the place might help to calm their minds and arouse their spirits to that fullness of joy which ought to attend the glorifying of their Lord.

But they have come to a standstill, having reached the brow of the hill. The Savior stands conspicuously in the center of the group and, following upon most instructive discourse, He pronounces a blessing upon them. He lifts His pierced hands and while He is lifting them and is pronouncing words of love, He begins to rise from the earth. He has risen above them all, to their astonishment! In a moment He has passed beyond the olive trees which seem, with their silvery sheen, to be lit up by His milder radi-

ance. While the disciples are looking, the Lord has ascended into mid-air and speedily He has risen to the regions of the clouds. They stand spell-bound with astonishment and suddenly a bright cloud, like a chariot of God, bears Him away! That cloud conceals Him from mortal gaze. Though we have known Christ after the flesh, now after the flesh we know Him no more. They are riveted to the spot, very naturally so—they linger long in the place—they stand with streaming eyes, wonder-struck, still looking upward.

It is not the Lord's will that they should long remain inactive—their reverie is interrupted. They might have stood there till wonder saddened into fear. As it was, they remained long enough, for the angel's words may be accurately rendered, "Why have you stood, gazing up into Heaven?"

Their lengthened gaze needed to be interrupted and, therefore, two shining ones, such as before met the women at the sepulcher, are sent to them. These messengers of God appear in human form that they may not alarm them—and in white raiment as if to remind them that all was bright and joyous—and so these white-robed ministers stood with them as if they would willingly join their company. As no one of the 11 would break silence, the men in white raiment commenced the discourse. Addressing them in the usual celestial style, they asked a question which contained its own answer, and then went on to tell their message. As they had once said to the women, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen," so did they now say, "you men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven."

The angels showed their knowledge of them by calling them, "men of Galilee," and reminded them that they were yet upon earth by recalling their place of birth. Brought back to their senses, their reverie over, the Apostles at once gird up their loins for active service. They do not need twice telling, but hasten to Jerusalem. The vision of angels has singularly enough brought them back into the world of actual life, again, and they obey the command, "Tarry you at Jerusalem." They seem to say—"The taking up of our Master is not a thing to weep about. He has gone to His Throne and to His Glory and He said it was expedient for us that He should go away. He will now send us the promise of the Father; we scarcely know what it will be like, but let us, in obedience to His will, make the best of our way to the place where He bade us await the gift of power."

Can you not see them going down the side of Olivet, taking that Sabbath-day's journey into the cruel and wicked city without a thought of fear; having no dread of the bloodthirsty crew who slew their Lord, but happy in the memory of their Lord's exaltation and in the expectation of a wonderful display of His power? They held fellowship of the most delightful kind with one another and soon entered into the upper room where, in protracted prayer and communion, they waited for the promise of the Father. You see I have no imagination—I have barely mentioned the incidents in the simplest language. Yet try and realize the scene, for it will be

helpful to do so, since our Lord Jesus is to come in the same manner as the Apostles saw Him go up into Heaven.

My first business, this morning, will be to consider *the gentle chiding* administered by the shining ones—"You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into Heaven?" Secondly, *the cheering description* of our Lord which the white-robed messengers used—"This same Jesus"; and then, thirdly, *the practical truth* which they taught—"This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven."

I. First, then, here is A GENTLE CHIDING. It is not sharply uttered by men dressed in black who use harsh speech and severely upbraid the servants of God for what was rather a mistake than a fault. No, the language is strengthening, yet tender. The fashion of a question allows them, rather, to reprove themselves than to be reproved—and the tone is that of brotherly love and affectionate concern.

Notice that *what these saintly men were doing seems, at first sight, to be very right*. I think if Jesus were among us now, we would fix our eyes upon Him and never withdraw them! He is altogether lovely and it would seem wicked to yield our eyesight to any inferior object so long as He was to be seen. When He ascended up into Heaven it was the duty of His friends to look upon Him. It can never be wrong to look up—we are often bid to do so—and it is even a holy saying of the Psalmist, "I will direct my prayer unto You and will look up." And, again, "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from where comes my help." If it is right to look up into Heaven, it must be still more right to look up while Jesus rises to the place of His Glory!

Surely it had been wrong if they had looked anywhere else—it was due to the Lamb of God that they should behold Him as long as eyes could follow Him. He is the Sun—where should eyes be turned but to His light? He is the King—where should courtiers within the palace gate turn their eyes but to their King as He ascends to His Throne? The truth is, there was nothing wrong in their looking up into Heaven. But they went a little further than looking—they stood "gazing." A little excess in right may be faulty. It may be wise to look, but foolish to gaze. There is a very thin partition, sometimes, between that which is commendable and that which is censurable. There is a golden mean which it is not easy to keep. The exact path of right is often as narrow as a razor's edge and he must be wise that does not err either on the right hand or on the left.

"Look" is always the right word. Why, it is, "Look unto Me and be saved." Look, yes, look steadfastly and intently—let your posture be that of one "looking unto Jesus" always throughout life! But there is a *gazing* which is not commendable—when the look becomes not that of reverent worship, but of an overweening curiosity—when there mingles with the desire to know what should be known, a prying into that which it is for God's Glory to conceal. Brothers and Sisters, it is of little use to look up into an empty Heaven! If Christ Himself is not visible in Heaven, then in vain do we gaze, since there is nothing for a saintly eye to see! When the Person of Jesus was gone out of the blue vault above them and the cloud

had effectually concealed Him, why should they continue to gaze when God, Himself, had drawn the curtain? If infinite Wisdom had withdrawn the object upon which they desired to gaze, what would their gazing be but a sort of reflection upon the Wisdom which had removed their Lord?

Yet it did seem very right. Thus certain things that you and I may do may appear right and yet we may need to be chided out of them into something better—they may be right in themselves, but not appropriate for the occasion, not seasonable, nor expedient. They may be right up to a point and then may touch the boundary of excess. A steadfast gaze into Heaven may be, to a devout soul, a high order of worship, but if this filled up much of our working time it might become the idlest form of folly!

Yet I cannot help adding that *it was very natural*. I do not wonder that the whole 11 stood gazing up, for if I had been there I am sure I would have done the same. How struck they must have been with the ascent of the Master out of their midst! You would be amazed if someone from among our own number began, right now, to ascend into Heaven! Would you not? Our Lord did not gradually melt away from sight as a phantom, or dissolve into thin air as a mere apparition—the Savior did not disappear in that way at all, but He *rose*, and they saw that it was His very self that was so rising! His own Body, the materialism in which He had veiled Himself, actually, distinctly and *literally* rose to Heaven before their eyes! I repeat, the Lord did not dissolve and disappear like a vision of the night, but He evidently rose till the cloud intervened so that they could see Him no more.

I think I would have stood looking to the very place where His cloudy chariot had been. I know it would be idle to continue to do so, but our hearts often urge us on to acts which we could not logically justify. Hearts are not to be argued with. Sometimes you stand by a grave where one is buried whom you dearly loved—you go there often to weep. You cannot help it, the place is precious to you, yet you could not prove that you do any good by your visits. Perhaps you even injure yourself, thereby, and deserve to be gently chided with the question, “why?” It may be the most natural thing in the world and yet it may not be a wise thing. The Lord allows us to do that which is innocently natural, but He will not have us carry it too far—for then it might foster an evil nature.

Therefore He sends an interrupting messenger—not an angel with a sword, or even a rod—He sends some man in white raiment. I mean one who is both cheerful and holy and he, by his conduct or his words, suggests to us the question, “Why do you stand here gazing?” *Cui bono?* What will be the benefit? What will it avail? Thus our understanding, being called into action, we, being men of thought, answer to ourselves, “This will not do. We must not stand gazing here forever.” And, therefore, we arouse ourselves to get back to the Jerusalem of practical life where, in the power of God, we hope to do service for our Master.

Notice, then, that the Apostles were doing that which seemed to be right and what was evidently very natural, but that it is very easy to carry the apparently right and the absolutely natural too far. Let us take heed to ourselves and often ask our hearts, “Why?” For, thirdly, notice that

what they *did was not, after all, justifiable upon strict reason*. While Christ was going up, it was proper that they should adoringly look at Him. He might almost have said, "If you see Me, when I am taken up, a double portion of My spirit shall rest upon you." They did well to look where He led the way. But when He was gone, still to remain gazing was an act which they could not exactly explain to themselves and could not justify to others. Put the question thus—"What purpose will be fulfilled by your continuing to gaze into the sky? He is gone, it is absolutely certain that He is gone. He is taken up and God, Himself, has manifestly concealed all trace of Him by bidding yonder cloud sail in between Him and you. Why do you still gaze?"

He told you, "I go unto My Father." Why do you stand and gaze? We may, under the influence of great love, act unwisely. I remember well seeing the action of a woman whose only son was emigrating to a distant colony. I stood in the station and I noticed her many tears and her frequent embraces of her boy. But the train came up and he entered the carriage. After the train had passed beyond the station, she was foolish enough to break away from friends who sought to detain her—she ran along the platform, leaped down upon the railroad and pursued the flying train. It was natural, but it had been better left undone. What was the use of it? We had better abstain from acts which serve no practical purpose, for in this life we have neither time nor strength to waste in fruitless action. The Apostles would be wise to cease gazing, for nobody would be benefited by it and they would not, themselves, be blessed. What is the use of gazing when there is nothing to see? Well, then, did the angels ask, "Why do you stand gazing up into Heaven?"

Again, put another question—What precept were they obeying when they stood gazing up into Heaven? If you have a command from God to do a certain thing, you need not inquire into the reason of the command—it is disobedient to begin to canvas God's will—but when there is no precept whatever, why persevere in an act which evidently does not promise to bring any blessing? Who bade them stand gazing up into Heaven? If Christ had done so, then, in Christ's name, let them stand like statues and never turn their heads! But as He had not bid them, why did they do what He had not commanded and leave undone what He *had* commanded? For He had strictly charged them that they should tarry at Jerusalem till they were "endued with power from on high." So what they did was not justifiable.

Here is the practical point for us—*What they did we are very apt to imitate*. "Oh," you say, "I shall never stand gazing up into Heaven." I am not sure of that. Some Christians are very curious, but not obedient. Plain precepts are neglected, but difficult problems they seek to solve. I remember one who used to always be dwelling upon the bowls and seals and trumpets. He was great at apocalyptic symbols, but he had seven children and no family prayer. If he had left the bowls and trumpets and minded his boys and girls, it would have been a deal better! I have known men marvelously proficient upon the Book of Daniel and specially instructed in Ezekiel, but singularly forgetful of the 20<sup>th</sup> of Exodus and not very clear

upon Romans the Eighth. I do not speak with any blame of such folks for studying Daniel and Ezekiel, but quite the reverse—yet I wish they had been more zealous for the conversion of the sinners in their neighborhoods—and more careful to assist the poor saints!

I admit the value of the study of the feet of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's vision and the importance of knowing the kingdoms which make up the 10 toes, but I do not see the propriety of allowing such studies to overlay practical godliness. If the time spent over obscure theological propositions were given to a mission in the dim alley near the good man's house, more benefit would come to man and more glory to God. I would have you understand all mysteries, Brothers and Sisters, if you can—but do not forget that our chief business here, below, is to cry, "Behold the Lamb!" By all manner of means read and search till you know all that the Lord has revealed concerning things to come—but *first of all* see to it that your children are brought to the Savior's feet and that you are workers, together with God, in the building up of His Church! The dense mass of misery, ignorance and sin which is round about us on every side demands all our powers. And if you do not respond to the call, though I am not a man in white apparel, I shall venture to say to you, "you men of Christendom, why do you stand gazing up into the mysteries, when so much is to be done for Jesus, but you are leaving it undone?" O you who are curious but not obedient, I fear I speak to you in vain, but I have spoken. May the Holy Spirit also speak!

Others are contemplative but not active—much given to the study of Scripture and to meditation, but not zealous for good works. Contemplation is so scarce in these days that I could wish there were a thousand times as much of it! But in the case to which I refer, everything runs in the one channel of thought—all time is spent in reading, in enjoyment, in rapture, in pious leisure. Religion never ought to become the subject of selfishness and yet I fear some treat it as if its chief end was spiritual gratification. When a man's religion all lies in his saving himself and in enjoying holy things for himself, there is a disease upon him! When his judgment of a sermon is based upon the one question, "Did it feed *me*?" it is a selfish judgment. There is such a thing as getting a selfish religion in which you are first, you are second, you are third and you are to the utmost end. Did Jesus ever think or speak in that fashion? Contemplation of Christ, Himself, may be so carried out as to lead you away from Christ—the recluse meditates on Jesus, but he is as unlike the busy self-denying Jesus as well can be! Meditation, unattended with *active service* in the spreading of the Gospel among men, well deserves the rebuke of the angel, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into Heaven?"

Moreover, some are careful, anxious and deliriously impatient for some marvelous interposition. We get, at times, into a sad state of mind because we do not see the Kingdom of Christ advancing as we desire. I suppose it is with you as it is with me—I begin to fret and I am deeply troubled—and I feel that there is good reason that I should be, for the Truth of God is fallen in the streets and the days of blasphemy and rebuke are upon us! Then we pine, for the Master is away, and we cry, "When will He

be back? Oh, why are His chariots so long in coming? Why doe He tarry through the ages?” Our desires sour into impatience and we commence gazing up into Heaven, looking for His coming with a restlessness which does not allow us to discharge our duty as we should. Whenever anybody gets into that state, this is the Word of God—“Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into Heaven?”

In certain cases, this uneasiness has drawn to itself a wrong expectation of immediate wonders and an intense desire for seeing signs. Ah me, what fanaticisms come of this! In America, years ago, one came forward who declared that on such a day the Lord would come—and he led a great company to believe his crazy predictions. Many took their horses and fodder for two or three days and went out into the woods, expecting to be all the more likely to see all that was to be seen when once away from the crowded city. All over the States there were people who had made Ascension-dresses in which to soar into the air in proper costume! They waited and they waited—and I am sure that no text could have been more appropriate for them than this—“Men of America, why do you stand here gazing up into Heaven?”

Nothing came of it and yet there are thousands in England and America who only need a fanatical leader and they would run into the same folly! The desire to know the times and seasons is a craze with many poor bodies whose insanity runs in that particular groove. Every occurrence is a, “sign of the times”—a sign, I may add, which they do not understand! An earthquake is a special favorite with them. “Now,” they cry, “the Lord is coming!”—as if there had not been earthquakes of the sort we have heard of lately hundreds of times since our Lord went up into Heaven! When the prophetic earthquakes occur in different places, we shall know of it without the warnings of these people!

What a number of persons have been infatuated by the number of the beast and have been ready to leap for joy because they have found the number 666 in some great one’s name! Why, *everybody’s* name will yield that number if you treat it judiciously and use the numerals of Greece, Rome, Egypt, China, or Timbuktu! I feel weary with the silly way in which some people make toys out of Scripture and play with texts as with a pack of cards! Whenever you meet with a man who sets up to be a Prophet, keep out of his way in the future! And when you hear of signs and wonders, turn to your Lord and, in patience, possess your souls. “The just shall live by His faith.” There is no other way of living among wild enthusiasts! Believe in God and ask not for miracles and marvels, or the knowledge of times and seasons. To know when the Lord will restore the Kingdom is not in your power!

Remember that verse which I read just now in your hearing—“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons.” If I were introduced into a room where a large number of parcels were stored and I was told that there was something good for me, I should begin to look for that which had my name upon it. And when I came upon a parcel and I saw in pretty big letters, “*It is not for you,*” I would leave it alone. Here, then, is a package of knowledge marked, “*It is not for you* to know the times or the seasons

which the Father has put in His own power.” Cease to meddle with matters which are concealed and be satisfied to know the things which are clearly revealed!

**II.** Secondly, I want you to notice THE CHEERING DESCRIPTION which these bright spirits give concerning our Lord. They describe Him thus—“This same Jesus.”

I appreciate the description all the more because *it came from those who knew Him*. “He was seen of angels”—they had watched Him all His life long and they knew Him—and when they, having just seen Him rise to His Father and His God, said of Him, “This same Jesus,” then I know, by an Infallible testimony, that He was the same and that He *is* the same.

*Jesus is gone but He still exists*. He has left us, but He is not dead! He has not dissolved into nothing like the mist of the morning. “This same Jesus” is gone up unto His Father’s Throne and He is there, today, as certainly as He once stood at Pilate’s bar. As surely as He hung upon the Cross, so surely does He, the same Man, sit upon the Throne of God and reign over creation! I like to think of the positive identity of the Christ in the seventh Heaven with the Christ in the lowest deeps of agony. The Christ they spat upon is now the Christ whose name the cherubim and seraphim are hymning day without night! The Christ they scourged is He before whom principalities and powers delight to cast their crowns! Think of it and be glad, this morning—but do not stand gazing up into Heaven after a myth or a dream! Jesus lives! Mind that *you* live, also. Do not loiter as if you had nothing at all to do, or as if the Kingdom of God had come to an end because Jesus is gone from the earth, as to His bodily Presence. It is not all over! He still lives and He has given you a work to do till He comes. Therefore, go and do it.

“This same Jesus”—I love that word, for, “Jesus,” means *a Savior*. Oh, you anxious sinners here present, the name of Him who has gone up into His Glory is full of invitation to you! Will you not come to “this same Jesus”? This is He who opened the eyes of the blind and brought forth the prisoners out of the prisons! He is doing the same thing today! Oh that your eyes may see His light! He that touched the lepers and that raised the dead, is still the same Jesus—able to save to the uttermost. Oh that you may look and live! You have only to come to Him by faith, as she did who touched the hem of His garment! You have but to cry to Him as the blind man did whose sight He restored! He is the same Jesus, bearing about with Him the same tender love for guilty men and the same readiness to receive and cleanse all that come to Him by faith.

“This same Jesus.” Why, that must have meant that He who is in Heaven is the same Christ who was on earth! And it must also mean that *He who is to come will be the same Jesus that went up into Heaven!* There is no change in our blessed Master’s *Nature*, nor will there ever be! There is a great change in His *condition*—

***“The Lord shall come, but not the same  
As once in lowliness He came—  
A humble Man before His foes,  
A weary man and full of woes.”***

He will be “the same Jesus” in Nature though not in condition. He will possess the same tenderness when He comes to judge, the same gentleness of heart when all the glories of Heaven and earth shall gird His brow. Our eyes shall see Him in that day and we shall recognize Him not only by the nail prints, but by the very look of His Countenance, by the Character that gleams from that marvelous face! And we shall say, “Tis He! ‘Tis He! The same Christ that went up from the top of Olivet from the midst of His Apostles.” Go to Him with your troubles, as you would have done when He was here. Look forward to His Second Coming without dread! Look for Him with that joyous expectancy with which you would welcome Jesus of Bethany who loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus!

On the back of that sweet title came this question, “Why do you stand gazing into Heaven?” They might have said, “We stay here because we do not know where to go. Our Master is gone.” But oh, it is the same Jesus, and He is coming again, so go down to Jerusalem and get to work! Do not worry yourselves! No grave accident has occurred—it is not a disaster that Christ has gone—but an advance in His work! Despisers tell us, nowadays, “Your cause is done for! Christianity is spun out! Your Divine Christ is gone! We have not seen a trace of His miracle-working hands, nor of that voice which no man could rival.” Here is our answer—We are not standing gazing up into Heaven. We are not paralyzed because Jesus is away. He lives, the great Redeemer lives, and though it is our delight to lift up our eyes because we expect His coming, it is equally our delight to turn our heavenly gazing into an earthward watching and to go down into the city and there to tell that Jesus is risen, that men are to be saved by faith in Him and that whoever believes in Him shall have everlasting life!

We are not defeated! Far from it—His Ascension is not a retreat, but an advance! His tarrying is not for lack of power, but because of the abundance of His long-suffering. The victory is not questionable. All things work for it—all the hosts of God are mustering for the final charge. This same Jesus is mounting His white horse to lead forth the armies of Heaven, conquering and to conquer!

**III.** Our third point is this—THE GREAT PRACTICAL TRUTH. This truth is not one that is to keep us gazing into Heaven, but one that is to make each of us go to his house to render earnest *service*. What is it? Why, first, that *Jesus is gone into Heaven*. Jesus is gone! Jesus is gone! It sounds like a knell. Jesus is taken up from you into Heaven! That sounds like a marriage peal! He is gone, but He is gone up to the hills where He can survey the battle! Up to the Throne of God from where He can send us succor. The reserve forces of the Omnipotent stood waiting till their Captain came and now that He is come into the center of the universe, He can send legions of angels, or He can raise up hosts of men for the help of His cause. I see every reason for going down into the world and getting to work, for He is gone up into Heaven and “all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth.” Is not that a good argument—“Go you *therefore* and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”?

*Jesus will come again.* That is another reason for girding our loins, because it is clear that He has not quit the fight, nor deserted the field of battle. Our great Captain is still heading the conflict! He has ridden into another part of the field, but He will be back again, perhaps in the twinkling of an eye. You do not say that a commander has given up the campaign because it is expedient that he should withdraw from your part of the field. Our Lord is doing the best thing for His Kingdom in going away. It was in the highest degree expedient that He should go and that we should, each one, receive the Holy Spirit. There is a blessed unity between Christ the King and the most common soldier in the ranks. He has not taken His heart from us, nor His care from us, nor His interest from us—He is bound up heart and soul with His people and their holy warfare—and this is the evidence of it, “Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as His work shall be.”

Then, moreover, we are told in the text—and this is a reason why we should get to our work—that *He is coming in the same manner as He departed.* Certain of the commentators do not seem to understand English at all. “He who was taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven”—this, they say, relates to His *spiritual* coming at Pentecost! Give anybody a *grain* of sense and do they not see that a *spiritual* coming is *not* a coming in the same manner in which He went up into Heaven? There is an analogy, but certainly not a likeness between the two things! Our Lord was taken up—they could see Him rise! He will come again and “every eye shall see Him.” He went up not in *spirit*, but in *Person*! He will come down in *Person*. “This same Jesus shall so come in like manner.” He went up as a matter of *fact*—not in poetic figure and spiritual symbol, but as a matter of *fact*—“This same Jesus” *literally* went up. “This same Jesus” will *literally* come again! He will *descend* in clouds even as He went *up* in clouds and, “He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth” even as He stood before! He went up to Heaven unopposed! No high priests, nor scribes, nor Pharisees, nor even one of the rabble opposed His Ascension—it were ridiculous to suppose that they could—and when He comes a second time, none will stand against Him! His adversaries shall perish—as the fat of rams shall they melt away in His Presence. When He comes He shall break rebellious nations with a rod of iron, for His force shall be irresistible in that day.

Brothers and Sisters, do not let anybody spiritualize away all this from you! Jesus is coming as a matter of *fact*—therefore go down to your sphere of service as a matter of fact. Get to work and teach the ignorant, win the wayward, instruct the children and everywhere proclaim the sweet name of Jesus! As a matter of *fact*, give of your substance and don’t just *talk* about it. As a matter of *fact*, consecrate your daily life to the Glory of God. As a matter of *fact*, live wholly for your Redeemer! Jesus is not coming in a sort of mythical, misty, hazy way. He is literally and actually coming—and He will literally and actually call upon you to give an account of your stewardship. Therefore, now, today, *literally* not symbolically, *personally* and not by deputy, go out through that portion of the world which

you can reach—and preach the Gospel to every creature according as you have opportunity.

For this is what the men in white apparel meant—*be ready to meet your coming Lord*. What is the way to be ready to meet Jesus? If it is the same Jesus that went away from us who is coming, then let us be doing what He was doing before He went away! If it is the same Jesus that is coming, we cannot possibly put ourselves into a posture of which He will better approve than by going about doing good! If you would meet Him with joy, serve Him with earnestness! If the Lord Jesus Christ were to come today I would like Him to find me at my studying, praying, or preaching. Would you not like Him to find you in your Sunday school, in your class, or out there at the corner of the street preaching, or doing whatever you have the privilege of doing in His name? Would you meet your Lord in idleness? Do not *think* of it!

I called one day on one of our members and she was whitening the front steps. She got up all in confusion. She said, “Oh dear, Sir, I did not know you were coming today, or I would have been ready.” I replied, “Dear Friend, you could not be in better trim than you are—you are doing your duty like a good housewife—and may God bless you.” She had no money to spare for a servant and she was doing her duty by keeping the home tidy—I thought she looked more beautiful with her pail beside her than if she had been dressed according to the latest fashion. I said to her, “When the Lord Jesus Christ comes suddenly, I hope He will find me doing as you were doing, namely, fulfilling the duty of the hour.”

I want you all to get to your pails without being ashamed of them! Serve the Lord in some way or other! Serve Him always! Serve Him intensely! Serve Him more and more. Go tomorrow and serve the Lord at the counter, or in the workshop, or in the field. Go and serve the Lord by helping the poor and the needy, the widow and the fatherless. Serve Him by teaching the children, especially by endeavoring to train your own children. Go and hold a temperance meeting and show the drunk that there is hope for Him in Christ. Or go to the midnight meeting and let the fallen woman know that Jesus can restore her! Do what Jesus has given you the power to do, and then, you men of Britain, you will not stand gazing up into Heaven, but you will wait upon the Lord in prayer and you will receive the Spirit of God—and you will proclaim to all around the doctrine of, “Believe and live.” Then when He comes He will say to you, “Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your Lord.” So may His Grace enable us to do. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—**

***Luke 24:49-53, Acts 1:1-12.***

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—17, 319, 346.**

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# THE ASCENSION AND THE SECOND ADVENT PRACTICALLY CONSIDERED NO. 1817

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 28, 1884,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And while they looked steadfastly toward Heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into Heaven, will so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven.”*

*Acts 1:10, 11.*

FOUR great events shine out brightly in our Savior's story. All Christian minds delight to dwell upon His birth, His death, His Resurrection and His Ascension. These make four rungs in that ladder of light, the foot of which is upon the earth, but the top reaches to Heaven. We could not afford to dispense with any one of these four events, nor would it be profitable for us to forget, or to underestimate the value of any one of them. That the Son of God was born of a woman creates in us the intense delight of a brotherhood springing out of a common humanity. That Jesus once suffered to the death for our sins and, thereby, made a full Atonement for us, is the rest and life of our spirits. The manger and the Cross, together, are Divine seals of love. That the Lord Jesus rose again from the dead is the warrant of our justification and also a transcendently delightful assurance of the resurrection of all His people and of their eternal life in Him. Has He not said, “Because I live, you shall live also”? The Resurrection of Christ is the Morningstar of our future glory! Equally delightful is the remembrance of His Ascension. No song is sweeter than this—“You have ascended on high. You have led captivity captive, You have received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious, also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.”

Each one of these four events points to another and they all lead up to a fifth. The fifth link in the golden chain is our Lord's Second and most glorious Advent. Nothing is mentioned between His ascent and His descent. True, a rich history comes between, but it lies in a valley between two stupendous mountains—we step from alp to alp as we journey in meditation from the Ascension to the Second Advent. I say that each of the previous four events points to it. Had He not come, a first time, in

humiliation, born under the Law, He could not come a second time in amazing glory “without a sin-offering unto salvation.” Because He died once, we rejoice that He dies no more, death has no more dominion over Him and, therefore, He comes to destroy that last enemy whom He has already conquered.

It is our joy, as we think of our Redeemer as risen, to feel that in consequence of His rising, the trumpet of the archangel shall assuredly sound for the awaking of all His slumbering people when the Lord, Himself, shall descend from Heaven with a shout. As for His Ascension, He could not, a second time descend, if He had not first ascended! But having perfumed Heaven with His Presence and prepared a place for His people, we may fitly expect that He will come again and receive us unto Himself, that where He is, there we may be, also. I want you, therefore, as in contemplation you pass with joyful steps over these four grand events, as your faith leaps from His birth to His death, and from His resurrection to His Ascension, to be looking forward and even hastening unto this crowning fact of our Lord’s history—for before long He shall so come in like manner as He was seen going up into Heaven.

This morning, in our meditation, we will start from the Ascension and, if I had sufficient imagination, I would like to picture our Lord and the 11 walking up the side of Olivet, communing as they went—a happy company with a solemn awe upon them, but with an intense joy in having fellowship with each other! Each disciple was glad to think that his dear Lord and Master who had been crucified was now among them, not only alive but surrounded with a mysterious safety and Glory which none could disturb. The enemy was as still as a stone—not a dog moved his tongue—His bitterest foes made no sign during the days of our Lord’s after-life below! The company moved peacefully onward towards Bethany—Bethany which they all knew and loved. The Savior seemed drawn there at the time of His Ascension, even as men’s minds return to old and well-loved scenes, when they are about to depart out of this world. His happiest moments on earth had been spent beneath the roof where lived Mary and Martha and their brother, Lazarus. Perhaps it was best for the disciples that He should leave them at that place where He had been most hospitably entertained, to show that He departed in peace and not in anger. There they had seen Lazarus raised from the dead by Him who was now to be taken up from them—the memory of the triumphant past would help the tried faith of the present. There they had heard the voice saying, “Loosen him, and let him go,” and there they might fitly see their Lord loosened from all bonds of earthly gravitation that He might go to His Father and their Father. The memories of the place might help to

calm their minds and arouse their spirits to that fullness of joy which ought to attend the glorifying of their Lord.

But they have come to a standstill, having reached the brow of the hill. The Savior stands conspicuously in the center of the group and, following upon most instructive discourse, He pronounces a blessing upon them. He lifts His pierced hands and while He is lifting them and is pronouncing words of love, He begins to rise from the earth. He has risen above them all, to their astonishment! In a moment He has passed beyond the olive trees which seem, with their silvery sheen, to be lit up by His milder radiance. While the disciples are looking, the Lord has ascended into mid-air and speedily He has risen to the regions of the clouds. They stand spell-bound with astonishment and suddenly a bright cloud, like a chariot of God, bears Him away! That cloud conceals Him from mortal gaze. Though we have known Christ after the flesh, now after the flesh we know Him no more. They are riveted to the spot, very naturally so—they linger long in the place—they stand with streaming eyes, wonder-struck, still looking upward.

It is not the Lord's will that they should long remain inactive—their reverie is interrupted. They might have stood there till wonder saddened into fear. As it was, they remained long enough, for the angel's words may be accurately rendered, "Why have you stood, gazing up into Heaven?"

Their lengthened gaze needed to be interrupted and, therefore, two shining ones, such as before met the women at the sepulcher, are sent to them. These messengers of God appear in human form that they may not alarm them—and in white raiment as if to remind them that all was bright and joyous—and so these white-robed ministers stood with them as if they would willingly join their company. As no one of the 11 would break silence, the men in white raiment commenced the discourse. Addressing them in the usual celestial style, they asked a question which contained its own answer, and then went on to tell their message. As they had once said to the women, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen," so did they now say, "you men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven."

The angels showed their knowledge of them by calling them, "men of Galilee," and reminded them that they were yet upon earth by recalling their place of birth. Brought back to their senses, their reverie over, the Apostles at once gird up their loins for active service. They do not need twice telling, but hasten to Jerusalem. The vision of angels has singularly enough brought them back into the world of actual life, again, and they obey the command, "Tarry you at Jerusalem." They seem to say—"The

taking up of our Master is not a thing to weep about. He has gone to His Throne and to His Glory and He said it was expedient for us that He should go away. He will now send us the promise of the Father; we scarcely know what it will be like, but let us, in obedience to His will, make the best of our way to the place where He bade us await the gift of power.”

Can you not see them going down the side of Olivet, taking that Sabbath-day’s journey into the cruel and wicked city without a thought of fear; having no dread of the bloodthirsty crew who slew their Lord, but happy in the memory of their Lord’s exaltation and in the expectation of a wonderful display of His power? They held fellowship of the most delightful kind with one another and soon entered into the upper room where, in protracted prayer and communion, they waited for the promise of the Father. You see I have no imagination—I have barely mentioned the incidents in the simplest language. Yet try and realize the scene, for it will be helpful to do so, since our Lord Jesus is to come in the same manner as the Apostles saw Him go up into Heaven.

My first business, this morning, will be to consider *the gentle chiding* administered by the shining ones—“You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into Heaven?” Secondly, *the cheering description* of our Lord which the white-robed messengers used—“This same Jesus”; and then, thirdly, *the practical truth* which they taught—“This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven.”

**I.** First, then, here is A GENTLE CHIDING. It is not sharply uttered by men dressed in black who use harsh speech and severely upbraid the servants of God for what was rather a mistake than a fault. No, the language is strengthening, yet tender. The fashion of a question allows them, rather, to reprove themselves than to be reproved—and the tone is that of brotherly love and affectionate concern.

Notice that *what these saintly men were doing seems, at first sight, to be very right*. I think if Jesus were among us now, we would fix our eyes upon Him and never withdraw them! He is altogether lovely and it would seem wicked to yield our eyesight to any inferior object so long as He was to be seen. When He ascended up into Heaven it was the duty of His friends to look upon Him. It can never be wrong to look up—we are often bid to do so—and it is even a holy saying of the Psalmist, “I will direct my prayer unto You and will look up.” And, again, “I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from where comes my help.” If it is right to look up into Heaven, it must be still more right to look up while Jesus rises to the place of His Glory!

Surely it had been wrong if they had looked anywhere else—it was due to the Lamb of God that they should behold Him as long as eyes could follow Him. He is the Sun—where should eyes be turned but to His light? He is the King—where should courtiers within the palace gate turn their eyes but to their King as He ascends to His Throne? The truth is, there was nothing wrong in their looking up into Heaven. But they went a little further than looking—they stood “gazing.” A little excess in right may be faulty. It may be wise to look, but foolish to gaze. There is a very thin partition, sometimes, between that which is commendable and that which is censurable. There is a golden mean which it is not easy to keep. The exact path of right is often as narrow as a razor’s edge and he must be wise that does not err either on the right hand or on the left.

“Look” is always the right word. Why, it is, “Look unto Me and be saved.” Look, yes, look steadfastly and intently—let your posture be that of one “looking unto Jesus” always throughout life! But there is a *gazing* which is not commendable—when the look becomes not that of reverent worship, but of an overweening curiosity—when there mingles with the desire to know what should be known, a prying into that which it is for God’s Glory to conceal. Brothers and Sisters, it is of little use to look up into an empty Heaven! If Christ Himself is not visible in Heaven, then in vain do we gaze, since there is nothing for a saintly eye to see! When the Person of Jesus was gone out of the blue vault above them and the cloud had effectually concealed Him, why should they continue to gaze when God, Himself, had drawn the curtain? If infinite Wisdom had withdrawn the object upon which they desired to gaze, what would their gazing be but a sort of reflection upon the Wisdom which had removed their Lord?

Yet it did seem very right. Thus certain things that you and I may do may appear right and yet we may need to be chided out of them into something better—they may be right in themselves, but not appropriate for the occasion, not seasonable, nor expedient. They may be right up to a point and then may touch the boundary of excess. A steadfast gaze into Heaven may be, to a devout soul, a high order of worship, but if this filled up much of our working time it might become the idlest form of folly!

Yet I cannot help adding that *it was very natural*. I do not wonder that the whole 11 stood gazing up, for if I had been there I am sure I would have done the same. How struck they must have been with the ascent of the Master out of their midst! You would be amazed if someone from among our own number began, right now, to ascend into Heaven! Would you not? Our Lord did not gradually melt away from sight as a phantom, or dissolve into thin air as a mere apparition—the Savior did not disappear in that way at all, but He *rose*, and they saw that it was His very self

that was so rising! His own Body, the materialism in which He had veiled Himself, actually, distinctly and *literally* rose to Heaven before their eyes! I repeat, the Lord did not dissolve and disappear like a vision of the night, but He evidently rose till the cloud intervened so that they could see Him no more.

I think I would have stood looking to the very place where His cloudy chariot had been. I know it would be idle to continue to do so, but our hearts often urge us on to acts which we could not logically justify. Hearts are not to be argued with. Sometimes you stand by a grave where one is buried whom you dearly loved—you go there often to weep. You cannot help it, the place is precious to you, yet you could not prove that you do any good by your visits. Perhaps you even injure yourself, thereby, and deserve to be gently chided with the question, “why?” It may be the most natural thing in the world and yet it may not be a wise thing. The Lord allows us to do that which is innocently natural, but He will not have us carry it too far—for then it might foster an evil nature.

Therefore He sends an interrupting messenger—not an angel with a sword, or even a rod—He sends some man in white raiment. I mean one who is both cheerful and holy and he, by his conduct or his words, suggests to us the question, “Why do you stand here gazing?” *Cui bono?* What will be the benefit? What will it avail? Thus our understanding, being called into action, we, being men of thought, answer to ourselves, “This will not do. We must not stand gazing here forever.” And, therefore, we arouse ourselves to get back to the Jerusalem of practical life where, in the power of God, we hope to do service for our Master.

Notice, then, that the Apostles were doing that which seemed to be right and what was evidently very natural, but that it is very easy to carry the apparently right and the absolutely natural too far. Let us take heed to ourselves and often ask our hearts, “Why?” For, thirdly, notice that what they *did was not, after all, justifiable upon strict reason*. While Christ was going up, it was proper that they should adoringly look at Him. He might almost have said, “If you see Me, when I am taken up, a double portion of My spirit shall rest upon you.” They did well to look where He led the way. But when He was gone, still to remain gazing was an act which they could not exactly explain to themselves and could not justify to others. Put the question thus—“What purpose will be fulfilled by your continuing to gaze into the sky? He is gone, it is absolutely certain that He is gone. He is taken up and God, Himself, has manifestly concealed all trace of Him by bidding yonder cloud sail in between Him and you. Why do you still gaze?”

He told you, “I go unto My Father.” Why do you stand and gaze? We may, under the influence of great love, act unwisely. I remember well see-

ing the action of a woman whose only son was emigrating to a distant colony. I stood in the station and I noticed her many tears and her frequent embraces of her boy. But the train came up and he entered the carriage. After the train had passed beyond the station, she was foolish enough to break away from friends who sought to detain her—she ran along the platform, leaped down upon the railroad and pursued the flying train. It was natural, but it had been better left undone. What was the use of it? We had better abstain from acts which serve no practical purpose, for in this life we have neither time nor strength to waste in fruitless action. The Apostles would be wise to cease gazing, for nobody would be benefited by it and they would not, themselves, be blessed. What is the use of gazing when there is nothing to see? Well, then, did the angels ask, “Why do you stand gazing up into Heaven?”

Again, put another question—What precept were they obeying when they stood gazing up into Heaven? If you have a command from God to do a certain thing, you need not inquire into the reason of the command—it is disobedient to begin to canvas God’s will—but when there is no precept whatever, why persevere in an act which evidently does not promise to bring any blessing? Who bade them stand gazing up into Heaven? If Christ had done so, then, in Christ’s name, let them stand like statues and never turn their heads! But as He had not bid them, why did they do what He had not commanded and leave undone what He *had* commanded? For He had strictly charged them that they should tarry at Jerusalem till they were “endued with power from on high.” So what they did was not justifiable.

Here is the practical point for us—*What they did we are very apt to imitate.* “Oh,” you say, “I shall never stand gazing up into Heaven.” I am not sure of that. Some Christians are very curious, but not obedient. Plain precepts are neglected, but difficult problems they seek to solve. I remember one who used to always be dwelling upon the bowls and seals and trumpets. He was great at apocalyptic symbols, but he had seven children and no family prayer. If he had left the bowls and trumpets and minded his boys and girls, it would have been a deal better! I have known men marvelously proficient upon the Book of Daniel and specially instructed in Ezekiel, but singularly forgetful of the 20<sup>th</sup> of Exodus and not very clear upon Romans the Eighth. I do not speak with any blame of such folks for studying Daniel and Ezekiel, but quite the reverse—yet I wish they had been more zealous for the conversion of the sinners in their neighborhoods—and more careful to assist the poor saints!

I admit the value of the study of the feet of the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s vision and the importance of knowing the kingdoms which make up the 10 toes, but I do not see the propriety of allowing such studies to

overlay practical godliness. If the time spent over obscure theological propositions were given to a mission in the dim alley near the good man's house, more benefit would come to man and more glory to God. I would have you understand all mysteries, Brothers and Sisters, if you can—but do not forget that our chief business here, below, is to cry, “Behold the Lamb!” By all manner of means read and search till you know all that the Lord has revealed concerning things to come—but *first of all* see to it that your children are brought to the Savior's feet and that you are workers, together with God, in the building up of His Church! The dense mass of misery, ignorance and sin which is round about us on every side demands all our powers. And if you do not respond to the call, though I am not a man in white apparel, I shall venture to say to you, “you men of Christendom, why do you stand gazing up into the mysteries, when so much is to be done for Jesus, but you are leaving it undone?” O you who are curious but not obedient, I fear I speak to you in vain, but I have spoken. May the Holy Spirit also speak!

Others are contemplative but not active—much given to the study of Scripture and to meditation, but not zealous for good works. Contemplation is so scarce in these days that I could wish there were a thousand times as much of it! But in the case to which I refer, everything runs in the one channel of thought—all time is spent in reading, in enjoyment, in rapture, in pious leisure. Religion never ought to become the subject of selfishness and yet I fear some treat it as if its chief end was spiritual gratification. When a man's religion all lies in his saving himself and in enjoying holy things for himself, there is a disease upon him! When his judgment of a sermon is based upon the one question, “Did it feed *me*?” it is a selfish judgment. There is such a thing as getting a selfish religion in which you are first, you are second, you are third and you are to the utmost end. Did Jesus ever think or speak in that fashion? Contemplation of Christ, Himself, may be so carried out as to lead you away from Christ—the recluse meditates on Jesus, but he is as unlike the busy self-denying Jesus as well can be! Meditation, unattended with *active service* in the spreading of the Gospel among men, well deserves the rebuke of the angel, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into Heaven?”

Moreover, some are careful, anxious and deliriously impatient for some marvelous interposition. We get, at times, into a sad state of mind because we do not see the Kingdom of Christ advancing as we desire. I suppose it is with you as it is with me—I begin to fret and I am deeply troubled—and I feel that there is good reason that I should be, for the Truth of God is fallen in the streets and the days of blasphemy and rebuke are upon us! Then we pine, for the Master is away, and we cry, “When will He be back? Oh, why are His chariots so long in coming? Why

doe He tarry through the ages?” Our desires sour into impatience and we commence gazing up into Heaven, looking for His coming with a restlessness which does not allow us to discharge our duty as we should. Whenever anybody gets into that state, this is the Word of God—“Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into Heaven?”

In certain cases, this uneasiness has drawn to itself a wrong expectation of immediate wonders and an intense desire for seeing signs. Ah me, what fanaticisms come of this! In America, years ago, one came forward who declared that on such a day the Lord would come—and he led a great company to believe his crazy predictions. Many took their horses and fodder for two or three days and went out into the woods, expecting to be all the more likely to see all that was to be seen when once away from the crowded city. All over the States there were people who had made Ascension-dresses in which to soar into the air in proper costume! They waited and they waited—and I am sure that no text could have been more appropriate for them than this—“Men of America, why do you stand here gazing up into Heaven?”

Nothing came of it and yet there are thousands in England and America who only need a fanatical leader and they would run into the same folly! The desire to know the times and seasons is a craze with many poor bodies whose insanity runs in that particular groove. Every occurrence is a, “sign of the times”—a sign, I may add, which they do not understand! An earthquake is a special favorite with them. “Now,” they cry, “the Lord is coming!”—as if there had not been earthquakes of the sort we have heard of lately hundreds of times since our Lord went up into Heaven! When the prophetic earthquakes occur in different places, we shall know of it without the warnings of these people!

What a number of persons have been infatuated by the number of the beast and have been ready to leap for joy because they have found the number 666 in some great one’s name! Why, *everybody’s* name will yield that number if you treat it judiciously and use the numerals of Greece, Rome, Egypt, China, or Timbuktu! I feel weary with the silly way in which some people make toys out of Scripture and play with texts as with a pack of cards! Whenever you meet with a man who sets up to be a Prophet, keep out of his way in the future! And when you hear of signs and wonders, turn to your Lord and, in patience, possess your souls. “The just shall live by His faith.” There is no other way of living among wild enthusiasts! Believe in God and ask not for miracles and marvels, or the knowledge of times and seasons. To know when the Lord will restore the Kingdom is not in your power!

Remember that verse which I read just now in your hearing—“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons.” If I were introduced into a

room where a large number of parcels were stored and I was told that there was something good for me, I should begin to look for that which had my name upon it. And when I came upon a parcel and I saw in pretty big letters, "*It is not for you,*" I would leave it alone. Here, then, is a package of knowledge marked, "*It is not for you* to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power." Cease to meddle with matters which are concealed and be satisfied to know the things which are clearly revealed!

**II.** Secondly, I want you to notice THE CHEERING DESCRIPTION which these bright spirits give concerning our Lord. They describe Him thus—"This same Jesus."

I appreciate the description all the more because *it came from those who knew Him*. "He was seen of angels"—they had watched Him all His life long and they knew Him—and when they, having just seen Him rise to His Father and His God, said of Him, "This same Jesus," then I know, by an Infallible testimony, that He was the same and that He *is* the same.

*Jesus is gone but He still exists*. He has left us, but He is not dead! He has not dissolved into nothing like the mist of the morning. "This same Jesus" is gone up unto His Father's Throne and He is there, today, as certainly as He once stood at Pilate's bar. As surely as He hung upon the Cross, so surely does He, the same Man, sit upon the Throne of God and reign over creation! I like to think of the positive identity of the Christ in the seventh Heaven with the Christ in the lowest deeps of agony. The Christ they spat upon is now the Christ whose name the cherubim and seraphim are hymning day without night! The Christ they scourged is He before whom principalities and powers delight to cast their crowns! Think of it and be glad, this morning—but do not stand gazing up into Heaven after a myth or a dream! Jesus lives! Mind that *you* live, also. Do not loiter as if you had nothing at all to do, or as if the Kingdom of God had come to an end because Jesus is gone from the earth, as to His bodily Presence. It is not all over! He still lives and He has given you a work to do till He comes. Therefore, go and do it.

"This same Jesus"—I love that word, for, "Jesus," means *a Savior*. Oh, you anxious sinners here present, the name of Him who has gone up into His Glory is full of invitation to you! Will you not come to "this same Jesus"? This is He who opened the eyes of the blind and brought forth the prisoners out of the prisons! He is doing the same thing today! Oh that your eyes may see His light! He that touched the lepers and that raised the dead, is still the same Jesus—able to save to the uttermost. Oh that you may look and live! You have only to come to Him by faith, as she did who touched the hem of His garment! You have but to cry to Him as the blind man did whose sight He restored! He is the same Jesus, bearing

about with Him the same tender love for guilty men and the same readiness to receive and cleanse all that come to Him by faith.

“This same Jesus.” Why, that must have meant that He who is in Heaven is the same Christ who was on earth! And it must also mean that *He who is to come will be the same Jesus that went up into Heaven!* There is no change in our blessed Master’s *Nature*, nor will there ever be! There is a great change in His *condition*—

**“The Lord shall come, but not the same  
As once in lowliness He came—  
A humble Man before His foes,  
A weary man and full of woes.”**

He will be “the same Jesus” in Nature though not in condition. He will possess the same tenderness when He comes to judge, the same gentleness of heart when all the glories of Heaven and earth shall gird His brow. Our eyes shall see Him in that day and we shall recognize Him not only by the nail prints, but by the very look of His Countenance, by the Character that gleams from that marvelous face! And we shall say, “’Tis He! ’Tis He! The same Christ that went up from the top of Olivet from the midst of His Apostles.” Go to Him with your troubles, as you would have done when He was here. Look forward to His Second Coming without dread! Look for Him with that joyous expectancy with which you would welcome Jesus of Bethany who loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus!

On the back of that sweet title came this question, “Why do you stand gazing into Heaven?” They might have said, “We stay here because we do not know where to go. Our Master is gone.” But oh, it is the same Jesus, and He is coming again, so go down to Jerusalem and get to work! Do not worry yourselves! No grave accident has occurred—it is not a disaster that Christ has gone—but an advance in His work! Despisers tell us, nowadays, “Your cause is done for! Christianity is spun out! Your Divine Christ is gone! We have not seen a trace of His miracle-working hands, nor of that voice which no man could rival.” Here is our answer—We are not standing gazing up into Heaven. We are not paralyzed because Jesus is away. He lives, the great Redeemer lives, and though it is our delight to lift up our eyes because we expect His coming, it is equally our delight to turn our heavenly gazing into an earthward watching and to go down into the city and there to tell that Jesus is risen, that men are to be saved by faith in Him and that whoever believes in Him shall have everlasting life!

We are not defeated! Far from it—His Ascension is not a retreat, but an advance! His tarrying is not for lack of power, but because of the abundance of His long-suffering. The victory is not questionable. All things work for it—all the hosts of God are mustering for the final charge. This

same Jesus is mounting His white horse to lead forth the armies of Heaven, conquering and to conquer!

**III.** Our third point is this—THE GREAT PRACTICAL TRUTH. This truth is not one that is to keep us gazing into Heaven, but one that is to make each of us go to his house to render earnest *service*. What is it? Why, first, that *Jesus is gone into Heaven*. Jesus is gone! Jesus is gone! It sounds like a knell. Jesus is taken up from you into Heaven! That sounds like a marriage peal! He is gone, but He is gone up to the hills where He can survey the battle! Up to the Throne of God from where He can send us succor. The reserve forces of the Omnipotent stood waiting till their Captain came and now that He is come into the center of the universe, He can send legions of angels, or He can raise up hosts of men for the help of His cause. I see every reason for going down into the world and getting to work, for He is gone up into Heaven and “all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth.” Is not that a good argument—“Go you *therefore* and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”?

*Jesus will come again*. That is another reason for girding our loins, because it is clear that He has not quit the fight, nor deserted the field of battle. Our great Captain is still heading the conflict! He has ridden into another part of the field, but He will be back again, perhaps in the twinkling of an eye. You do not say that a commander has given up the campaign because it is expedient that he should withdraw from your part of the field. Our Lord is doing the best thing for His Kingdom in going away. It was in the highest degree expedient that He should go and that we should, each one, receive the Holy Spirit. There is a blessed unity between Christ the King and the most common soldier in the ranks. He has not taken His heart from us, nor His care from us, nor His interest from us—He is bound up heart and soul with His people and their holy warfare—and this is the evidence of it, “Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as His work shall be.”

Then, moreover, we are told in the text—and this is a reason why we should get to our work—that *He is coming in the same manner as He departed*. Certain of the commentators do not seem to understand English at all. “He who was taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven”—this, they say, relates to His *spiritual* coming at Pentecost! Give anybody a *grain* of sense and do they not see that a *spiritual* coming is *not* a coming in the same manner in which He went up into Heaven? There is an analogy, but certainly not a likeness between the two things! Our Lord was taken up—they could see Him rise! He will come again and “every eye shall see Him.” He went up not in *spirit*, but in *Person*! He will come down in *Person*. “This same

Jesus shall so come in like manner.” He went up as a matter of *fact*—not in poetic figure and spiritual symbol, but as a matter of *fact*—“This same Jesus” *literally* went up. “This same Jesus” will *literally* come again! He will *descend* in clouds even as He went *up* in clouds and, “He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth” even as He stood before! He went up to Heaven unopposed! No high priests, nor scribes, nor Pharisees, nor even one of the rabble opposed His Ascension—it were ridiculous to suppose that they could—and when He comes a second time, none will stand against Him! His adversaries shall perish—as the fat of rams shall they melt away in His Presence. When He comes He shall break rebellious nations with a rod of iron, for His force shall be irresistible in that day.

Brothers and Sisters, do not let anybody spiritualize away all this from you! Jesus is coming as a matter of *fact*—therefore go down to your sphere of service as a matter of fact. Get to work and teach the ignorant, win the wayward, instruct the children and everywhere proclaim the sweet name of Jesus! As a matter of *fact*, give of your substance and don’t just *talk* about it. As a matter of *fact*, consecrate your daily life to the Glory of God. As a matter of *fact*, live wholly for your Redeemer! Jesus is not coming in a sort of mythical, misty, hazy way. He is literally and actually coming—and He will literally and actually call upon you to give an account of your stewardship. Therefore, now, today, *literally* not symbolically, *personally* and not by deputy, go out through that portion of the world which you can reach—and preach the Gospel to every creature according as you have opportunity.

For this is what the men in white apparel meant—*be ready to meet your coming Lord*. What is the way to be ready to meet Jesus? If it is the same Jesus that went away from us who is coming, then let us be doing what He was doing before He went away! If it is the same Jesus that is coming, we cannot possibly put ourselves into a posture of which He will better approve than by going about doing good! If you would meet Him with joy, serve Him with earnestness! If the Lord Jesus Christ were to come today I would like Him to find me at my studying, praying, or preaching. Would you not like Him to find you in your Sunday school, in your class, or out there at the corner of the street preaching, or doing whatever you have the privilege of doing in His name? Would you meet your Lord in idleness? Do not *think* of it!

I called one day on one of our members and she was whitening the front steps. She got up all in confusion. She said, “Oh dear, Sir, I did not know you were coming today, or I would have been ready.” I replied, “Dear Friend, you could not be in better trim than you are—you are doing your duty like a good housewife—and may God bless you.” She had no money to spare for a servant and she was doing her duty by keeping

the home tidy—I thought she looked more beautiful with her pail beside her than if she had been dressed according to the latest fashion. I said to her, “When the Lord Jesus Christ comes suddenly, I hope He will find me doing as you were doing, namely, fulfilling the duty of the hour.”

I want you all to get to your pails without being ashamed of them! Serve the Lord in some way or other! Serve Him always! Serve Him intensely! Serve Him more and more. Go tomorrow and serve the Lord at the counter, or in the workshop, or in the field. Go and serve the Lord by helping the poor and the needy, the widow and the fatherless. Serve Him by teaching the children, especially by endeavoring to train your own children. Go and hold a temperance meeting and show the drunk that there is hope for Him in Christ. Or go to the midnight meeting and let the fallen woman know that Jesus can restore her! Do what Jesus has given you the power to do, and then, you men of Britain, you will not stand gazing up into Heaven, but you will wait upon the Lord in prayer and you will receive the Spirit of God—and you will proclaim to all around the doctrine of, “Believe and live.” Then when He comes He will say to you, “Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your Lord.” So may His Grace enable us to do. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
Luke 24:49-53, Acts 1:1-12.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—17, 319, 346.**

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

# PRAYER MEETINGS

## NO. 3421

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 1914.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
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*“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.”*  
*Acts 1:14.*

IN all those churches which are not altogether tied and bound by liturgies and rituals, it has been common to hold meetings for social prayer. We call them Prayer Meetings. Now, it may be profitable, now and then, to look over some of our institutions, to see whether they are Scriptural—to notice their defects, to see in what respect they may be improved, or to observe their merits—that we may be induced still further to carry them on. The subject, therefore, this evening, suggested to me by the fact that we are going to meet for a day of prayer tomorrow, is that of Prayer Meetings—assemblies of the people of God for worship of that peculiar kind which consists in each one expressing his desire before the Lord. Let us, then, go through very briefly—

### I. THE APOSTOLIC HISTORY OF MEETINGS FOR PRAYER.

These meetings must have been very common, indeed. They were, doubtless, everyday things, but still there are some few records of the facts connected with them which may be instructive. The first meeting for prayer which we find after our Lord's Ascension to Heaven is the one mentioned in the text—and we are led from it to remark that *united prayer is the comfort of a disconsolate Church*. Can you judge of the sorrow which filled the hearts of the disciples when their Lord was gone from them? They were an army without a leader, a flock without a shepherd, a family without a head. Exposed to innumerable trials, the strong, brazen wall of His Presence, which had been round about them, was now withdrawn. In the deep desolation of their spirits they resorted to prayer. They were like a flock of sheep that will huddle together in a storm, or come closer, each to its fellow, when they hear the sound of the wolf. Poor defenseless creatures as they were, they yet loved to come together and would die together if necessary. They felt that nothing made them so happy, nothing so emboldened them, nothing so strengthened them to bear their daily difficulties as to draw near to God in common supplication! Beloved, let every Church learn the value of its Prayer Meetings in its dark hours! When the pastor is dead, and when it has been difficult to find a suitable successor. When, it may be, there are problems and divisions. When death falls upon honored members, when poverty comes in, when there is a spiritual dearth, when the Holy Spirit

appears to have withdrawn Himself—there is but one remedy for these and a thousand other evils—and that one remedy is contained in this short sentence, “Let us pray.” Those churches which are now writing, “Ichabod,” on their walls and who sorrowfully confess that the congregation is slowly dwindling, might soon restore their numbers if they did but know how to pray! Brothers and Sisters, though they are dispirited, now, defeat would then soon become success, their spirits being revived by drawing near to God! And if any of you are personally afflicted and troubled in your estate, you shall find that after coming up to the House of God, your own private prayer chamber will be peculiarly comforting to you! And after that, come and unite with the saints of God who have, probably, all of them, experienced assaults like yours. And as you hear them pouring out sighs similar to yours and making requests such as you would make, but scarcely know how to word them, you will see the footprints of the flock and, by-and-by, you shall see the Shepherd, Himself! One of the first uses of the Prayer Meeting, then, is to encourage a discouraged people.

Again, if you look at the Second Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, you will perceive that *the Prayer Meeting is the place for the reception of Divine Power*. “They were all with one accord in one place,” making their prayers and, as they waited there, suddenly they heard the sound as of a rushing, mighty wind, and the cloven tongues descended upon them and they were clothed with the power which Jesus had promised them. And what a difference it made in them! Common fishermen became the extraordinary messengers of Heaven! Illiterate men spoke with tongues that they had never, themselves, heard! They began to reveal mysteries which had not been revealed to philosophers or kings! These men were lifted out of the level of ordinary humanity and became God-Inspired, filled with the Deity, Himself, who came to dwell in their hearts and minds! The result was that poor wavering Peter became bold as a lion and the impetuous John, who would have called fire from Heaven upon the Samaritans, had another fire fall upon him—one not to destroy, but to rescue and bless!

Now, the great need of the Church in all times is the power of the Holy Spirit. “I believe in the Holy Spirit,” says the Creed, but how many, or rather how few are there who really do believe in Him? There is a mysterious, supernatural energy which comes from the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity which really, at this day, falls upon men—as really as when Peter spoke with unknown tongues or worked miracles. And though the power of working miracles is not given now, yet spiritual power is given and this spiritual power is as manifest, and just as certainly with us, today, if we possess the Spirit, as it was with the Apostles! Now, if we want to get this, the most likely place in which to find it is the Prayer Meeting. I will guarantee you that the best teachers of the school, the men who are of the right spirit, are those who will be found here tomorrow evening. I will guarantee you that the best ministers are those who do not despise the gathering of the people of God! And I am sure

that the cream of the Christian Church will be found on the whole—of course, other things are to be considered, too—among those who most commonly assemble for prayer. Oh, yes, this is the place to meet with the Holy Spirit and this is the way to get His mighty power! If we would have Him, we must meet in greater numbers! We must pray with greater fervency, we must watch with greater earnestness and believe with firmer steadfastness! The Prayer Meeting, then, has this second use—that it is the appointed place for the reception of power!

The next incident in this Apostolic history you will find in the Fourth Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and there you will see that *the Prayer Meeting is the resource of a persecuted Church*. Turn to the 31<sup>st</sup> verse. Peter and John had been shut up in prison. The Scribes and Pharisees had persecuted the disciples of Christ. They resorted to prayer and we read that “when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.” Yes, all the persecutions of the separate members should be recorded in prayer before God, and if the whole Church, itself, should fall into disrepute through misrepresentation, or through the natural hostility of all men to the Church of God, then should it resort to its Great Friend for its defense!

Persecuting times are hence often very good for the Church because they compel her to pray. When the devil, like the wild boar out of the woods would break up the vineyard, the vines seem to flourish the more because they are watered with the dews of Heaven in answer to prayer. Let the stakes smoke at Smithfield and the saints of God go up to Heaven in chariots of fire—and then the Word of God multiplies exceedingly and the death of the martyrs brings down the blessing to themselves and the nation in which they dwell!

Anything that would make us pray would be a blessing—and if ever we should come to times of persecution again, we must fly to the shadow of the Eternal and, keeping close together in simple, intense prayer—we shall find a shelter from the blast.

Still keeping to the Acts of the Apostles, in the 12<sup>th</sup> Chapter you find *the Prayer Meeting made a means of individual deliverance*. You know the story well. Peter was in prison and Herod promised himself the great pleasure of putting him to death. He was sleeping one night, chained between two soldiers—and the keepers of the door kept the prison. But prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him. The walls of the prison were very thick, but prayer was made without ceasing. The soldiers were very watchful—there were 16 of them, appointed to watch Peter by turns—four at a time—and he was chained by both hands to two of them. Yet prayer was made without ceasing of the Church for him—and prayer laughs altogether at stone walls, handcuffs, iron bars and gates of brass! And so, in the middle of the night an angel smote Peter upon the side and raised him up—and his chains fell off! He put his

garments about him—every door opened as he advanced—and Peter found himself in the street, and wondered whether he was awake, or whether it was a vision. And when he got to the house where they were at prayer, they were all equally surprised and thought it must be Peter's spirit—that it could never be Peter, himself! Yet there he was, in very flesh and blood, released from his prison in answer to their prayers! And so in the Prayer Meeting, the Church of God may plead for individuals. It may not be God's will, there may be no necessity for it, that every one of God's people should be brought out of prison, or raised up from sickness, or saved from need—but if it is the Master's will and is a right thing, He will grant it! And, so, when we come together we may unite in particular and personal supplications! I do not doubt that many a life has been spared in answer to united prayer, that many a soul that has been, as it were, spirit-burdened, has obtained gracious liberty through the prayers of the Brothers and Sisters. It were well if we often put up our prayers for one another, remembering those who are in bonds as being bound with them. Observe here, then, another valuable use of the Christian Prayer Meeting!

Further on, in the next Chapter, we find a Prayer Meeting *suggesting missionary operations*. While the servants of God were met together—see the second verse of the 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter—fasting and in prayer, the Holy Spirit said, “Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them,” and when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

We sit down and we begin to figure away the expense of such-and-such a form of Christian service—and we think that would be a good plan. And the other, and a third, and a fourth, and a fifth—all pieces of human machinery. But I think if we were more often on our knees about God's work, we should more often do right—and the right methods and the right men, and the right plans would come to us! Christ is the Head of the Church—and who thinks so much about the Church as the Head of the Church? And while we wait upon Him, I do not doubt but what fresh plans and fresh schemes will be marked out, and that different kinds of men will be called to the work as distinctly as if angels had touched their lips with a live coal from off the burning altar, and who may be “separated” to teach the Word, where, perhaps, it has never reached before! England needs many who shall shake her and waken her out of her sleep. She needs a new race of Whitfields and of Wesleys—of men who are before their age only because they are more suited to its culture! She needs some Boanerges who shall thunder out the Word of God, some men who shall be like lightning in carrying out their holy mission! She needs men who will preach the Truth of God and tell it to her poor men, yes, and to her rich men, too! And if ever we are to get these, it must be in answer to prayer! Oh, that we would but pray for such men and, having got them, pray that God would make them full of Himself, for they cannot run over with blessings to others until they are, themselves, full of blessing! We would understand what the Prayer Meeting is, if we

did this. I look forward to tomorrow for a blessing of this kind. There may be sitting here, now, some young man to whom China may be under obligation, or of whom India shall be glad. I do not know who it may be, but there may be one here who shall yet bring up diamonds from the very depths, and who shall be inspired to do so in answer to our prayers!

Once more, I will remind you of a Prayer Meeting which, perhaps, you have forgotten, but which is recorded in the 16<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Acts. What was *the first Christian service that was held in Europe*? Do you know? Why, it was a Prayer Meeting! The very first service was not an Episcopal ordination, nor even the preaching of a sermon, for Paul went to the place where prayer was known to be made by the riverside—and there he met with Lydia and preached to her—and her heart was so opened that she receive the Truth of God! So, then, a Prayer Meeting became in Europe the first foothold of the Gospel! Europeans, you ought never to forget, disown, or think lightly of Prayer Meetings. How you ought to value them! Very often, I do not doubt, in a Christian enterprise, the first foothold that a cause gets is the Prayer Meeting. You, Brothers and Sisters, some of you live in some of the dark parts of this city, and you would like to see a cause for Christ there. Well, begin with a Prayer Meeting just as Paul did! Or you live in a small village, perhaps, where there is no church with whom you can worship. Well then, hold a Prayer Meeting! This costs you nothing! This will enrich you! This will serve for a beginning, and although you may not be content with that as the only service on the Sabbath after some little time, yet begin with it! This then, is the missionary's lever—he begins with the Prayer Meeting.

Thus have I, as briefly as I could, gone through the early history of Prayer Meetings and shown you the extreme value of such to the Church of God. And now, secondly, and very briefly, indeed—

## II. WHAT ARE THE USES OF THE PRAYER MEETING?

The Prayer Meeting is useful to us in itself, and also very useful from the answer which its gets, and brings to us from God.

*It is a very useful thing for Christians to pray with each other, even apart from the answer.* God has made our piety to be a thing which shall be personal, but yet He looks for family piety. Happy is the household where the altar burns day and night with the sweet perfume of family worship! He also gives us more extended views and makes us feel that all the saints are our Brothers and Sisters and that, therefore, our meetings as Christian families, and as Christian Churches in the Prayer Meeting, become the exponents and natural outgrowth of social godliness. We sing together and pray together—and thus our Christian brotherhood is manifested to the world—and is the more enjoyed by ourselves.

The Prayer Meeting serves this purposes and sometimes *it also generates devotion*. Some of the Brothers and Sisters may be very dull and heavy, but others who are at that time in a lively state of mind may stimulate and excite them. I must confess very often to deriving much fire from some of our Brothers and Sisters who pray here on Monday even-

ings, when God gives them Grace to really pray. When you have been busy all day, and are not able to shake off the cares of business, you get warmed up by getting near to each other in your prayers. And, more than that, the united fires being placed together on the hearth, the coals are made to burn with greater power. There is a kind of Divine excitement that comes upon us, sometimes, at the Prayer Meeting. I recollect in one of our meetings for fasting and prayer, the intense excitement there was, not fleshly, but deeply spiritual. How we felt ourselves bowed down at one time, and then lifted up again at another! I have sometimes sat side by side with a Brother who has said, "Can you bear this much longer? I feel it is too much for my physical frame." Oh, the calm delight which springs from close communion with the invisible God! Such days as I have sometimes had have laid me prostrate all the next day from very joy, from very excess of delight! Oh, this is good for us! This is good for you! Even though the outward man decays, yet shall not the inward man, but be renewed from day to day! Oh, it is a grand thing thus to be made fit again, with joints all oiled, and muscles all braced, and nerves all strung for the battle of life! United prayer, then, serves this purpose, and therefore is it valuable.

But, again, united prayer is useful *inasmuch as God has promised extraordinary and peculiar blessings in connection with it*, "Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father who is in Heaven." God asks agreement and once the saints agree, He pledges Himself that the prayer of His agreeing ones shall be answered! Why, see what accumulated force there is in prayer, when one after another pours out his vehement desires—when many seem to be tugging at the rope, when many seem to be knocking at Mercy's gate—when the mighty cries of many burning hearts come up to Heaven! When, my Beloved, you go and shake the very gates thereof with the powerful battering-ram of a holy vehemence and a sacred importunity, then is it that the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence! When first one, and then another, and yet another, throws his whole soul into the prayer, the Kingdom of Heaven is conquered and the victory becomes great, indeed!

As I was sitting a little while and thinking over this text, I thought of the accumulated love of God which there is in a Prayer Meeting because God loves every one of His children. Very well, then, there is so much love for one, and here is another, and there is so much love for him, and then, if God's love to one of His people is a reason for answering his requests—if here are 10 present, there is 10 times the reason—and if there are a thousand such, then surely there must be a thousand-fold force of love to move our Heavenly Father to grant the accumulated desires of the assembly!

The Prayer Meeting is an institution which ought to be very precious to us and to be cherished very much by us as a Church, for to it we owe everything. When our comparatively little Chapel was all but empty, was

it not a well-known fact that the Prayer Meeting was always full? And when the Church increased, and the place was scarcely large enough, it was the Prayer Meeting that did it all! When we went to Exeter Hall, we were a praying people, indeed. And when we entered on the larger speculation, as it seemed, of the Surrey Music-Hall, what cries and tears went up to Heaven for our success! And so it has been ever since. It is in the spirit of prayer that our strength lies! And if we lose this, the locks will be shorn from Samson and the Church of God will become weak as water. And though, we, as Samson did, go and try to shake ourselves as at other times, we shall hear the cry, "The Philistines are upon you," and our eyes will be put out, and our glory will depart unless we continue mighty and earnest in prayer. But now, once again, let us ask—

### III. WHAT ARE THE HINDRANCES TO THE PRAYER MEETING?

Now listen, for perhaps some of you will hear something about yourselves. What are the hindrances to the Prayer Meeting? There are some hindrances before the people come. *Unholiness* hinders prayer. A man cannot walk contrary to God and then expect to have his prayers heard. "If you abide in My commandments, you shall abide in My love." There is a promise made to those keeping the commands. Such shall have power with God! But, on the other hand, inconsistent Christians shall not be answered.

*Discord* always spoils prayer. When Believers do not agree and are picking holes in each other's coats, they do not really love one another—and then their prayers cannot succeed. Discord spoils prayer, and so also does *hypocrisy*, for hypocrites will creep in—you cannot help it—and the more a Church flourishes, the more, I believe, do hypocrites get in, just as you see many a noxious creeping thing come and get into a garden after a shower of rain. The very things that make glad the flowers bring out these noxious things—and so hypocrites get in and steal much of the Church's sap away and help spoil the Prayer Meeting. Now, which among you does this belong to? I am not reflecting upon any person in particular, but God knows why some of you do not ever come to the Prayer Meeting. Some of you, I know, have business that really prevents your coming, and others have service for Him that keeps them away, but surely some of our friends who have no other imperative engagement or duty do constantly keep away from the Prayer Meeting. I only wish that their conscience were even half-awake, for I am sure it would make them smart for neglecting this duty. I would that they would feel ashamed that they have missed this very great privilege, for had they come with us, they might have drawn near to God and been healed of their pretences.

But there are some things which hinder the Prayer Meeting when we are at it. One is *long prayers*. It is dreadful to hear a Brother pray us into a good frame, and then, by his long prayer, pray us out of it again! You remember what John Macdonald once said, "When I am in a bad frame I always pray short, because my prayer will not be of any use, and when I am in a good frame I pray short, because if other people are in a good

frame, too, I might, if I kept on longer, pray them into a bad frame.” Long prayers, then, spoil Prayer Meetings, for long prayers and true devotion in our public assemblies seem pretty much to be divorced from one another! And Prayer Meetings are also hindered when those who get up to pray do not pray, but *preach a little sermon*, and tell the Lord all about themselves, though He knows them better than they do, instead of asking at once for what they need. Prayer Meetings are often hindered by *a lack of directness* and by beating about the bush. I admired a prayer I heard last Monday night in which a Brother said, “Lord, the orphanage needs £3,000—be pleased to send it.” That was a straightforward application. Another Brother would have said, “Lord, we have great difficulties in our work. Do You be pleased to help us,” but this Brother just stated the case and I think he believed that God would hear him. Another way to never grow weary in prayer is to do as a good Scotsman said he did. He said, “I never go to God unless I have business to do with Him, unless there is something I want to praise Him for, to confess, or to seek at His hands.” We must come not merely with well-rounded and polished periods, but really to pray, and really to praise, and really to confess and seek cleansing! And if we do this, the Prayer Meeting shall not disappoint us.

Prayer Meetings are sometimes hindered by *a want of real earnestness* in those who pray, and in those who pray in silence. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, one warm, hearty prayer is worth a score of those packed in ice! I fear that much of our prayer is lost because we do not sufficiently throw our hearts into it. It is possible for us to attend the meeting and all the while be thinking of the home, the infant in the cradle, or the shop, the field, the farm, the factory, the counting-house, and I know not what besides! Is it any wonder, then, that prayer stops? The Brother who prays may be burning with earnest desire, but his prayer lags because we are not backing it with silent fervor and passionate longing for God’s blessing. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we have often spoiled our Prayer Meetings thus! We have each, I fear, in our turn done something towards it—let us pray that we may never again so transgress.

But the Prayer Meeting may also be spoiled *after we have been to it*. “How?” you ask. Why, by our asking a blessing and then not expecting to receive it! God has promised that He will do to us according to our faith, but if our faith is nothing, then the answer will also be nothing. *Inconsistency*, too, in not practically carrying out your desires will also spoil the Prayer Meeting. If you ask God to convert souls, but you will not do anything for those souls. If you ask God to save your children, but you will not talk to them about their salvation. If you ask God to save your neighbors, and you do not distribute tracts among them, nor do anything else for them, are you not altogether a hypocrite? You pray for what you do not put out your hand to get! You pray for fruit, but you will not put out your hand to pluck it, and all this spoils the Prayer Meeting. Earnest prayer, however, is always to be followed up by persevering efforts—and

then the result will be great, indeed! But for a moment will I occupy your time upon the next point, and then we have done. It is this—

**IV. WHAT SHOULD BE THE GREAT OBJECTIVE OF THE PRAYER MEETING—AND THAT FOR WHICH WE SHOULD SEEK THE ANSWER?**

First, it must be the *glory of God* or else the petition is not sufficiently put up. How much of the Lord's Prayer consists in prayers for God, rather than for ourselves? "Hallowed be Your name: Your Kingdom come: Your will be done, as in Heaven, so on earth." And then comes, "Give us this day our daily bread." Do we not often begin by asking for the bread, and leave the glory of God to be put into a corner? Pray that King Jesus may have His own! Pray that the royal crown may be set upon that dear head that once was girt with thorns! Pray that the thrones of the heathen may totter from their pedestals, and that Jesus may be acknowledged King of Kings and Lord of Lords! This is to be the grand objective of our prayer! You recollect how David put it, "Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory. The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." For the coming of Christ in power, for the extension of His Kingdom, for the downfall of error, for the end of the times of darkness, for the ingathering of the Jews and the Gentiles—for all these things let us pray in order that God may be glorified, and on that account alone!

And then, in subservience to that, let us pray *for a blessing on the Church*. We ought to exercise a little of our love for one another in praying for our fellow members. Pray for the minister, for he needs it most. His necessities in that direction are the greatest and, therefore, let him always be remembered. Pray for the Church officers. Pray for the workers in all organizations. Pray for the sufferers. Pray for the strong, for the weak, for the rich, for the poor, for the trembling, for the sick, for the backsliding, for the sinful. Yes, for every part of the one great body of Jesus let our supplications perpetually ascend. Let our prayers be continual, that the holy oil of which we read may run down from the head even to the skirts of the garment!

Then we should also pray for *the conversion of the ungodly*. Oh, this ought to be like a burden on our hearts! This ought to be prayed out of the lowest depths of a soul that is all aglow with sympathy for them. They are dying! They are dying! They are dying without hope! I stood yesterday at the grave's brink at the funeral of one of our Brothers, an Elder of the Church. The place that knew him once, will know him no more, and someone else now occupies the seat where he formerly sat. It was a great joy to know that he had rested on the Rock so long and that he had now entered into the rest which Jesus had promised him. But oh, to stand by those who die without hope is grim work—this is to sorrow without alleviation, to mourn without any sweet reflection to wipe away the tears! Oh, my Hearers, will you die in your sins? Will you live in your sins, for if you live in them, you *will* die in them! My Hearers, will you die without a Savior? Will you live without a Savior? For if you live without Him, you will assuredly die without Him! It is of no use my preaching to

the people, my dear Christian Brothers and Sisters, unless you pray for them! It is of no use holding special services for the quickening of the spiritually dead unless the Holy Spirit is brought into the field by our prayers! It may be that you who pray have more to do with the blessed results than we who preach! I think I have told you of the old monkish story of the monk who had been very successful in his preaching, but a message came from Heaven to him that it would not have been so if it had not been for the prayers of an old deaf brother monk who sat upon the pulpit stairs and pleaded with God for the conversion of the hearers. It may be so. We may appear to the eyes of men to have the credit of success, but all the while the real honor may belong to someone else! And I do certainly, myself, always ascribe the conversions worked in this house to the prayers of God's people. Let it always be so ascribed and let God have the whole Glory of it! But do pray for conversions. Never give up on your unconverted wife, Husband! Never cease to pray for your unconverted children. Never let the devil tempt you to be dumb concerning your ungodly neighbors, but day and night, in the house and by the way, lift up your hearts to God in real prayer, and say to Him, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" He has given us His pledge that He will answer—believe it and you shall see it, and you shall have the joy of it while His shall be the Glory! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
ACTS 4:8-33.**

Peter and John were summoned before the priests to give an account for having healed the lame man, and for having preached in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. In the eighth verse we read—

**Verses 8-12.** *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, You rulers of the people and elders of Israel, if we this day are examined for the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole, be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him does this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.* Nothing can exceed the directness, the comprehensiveness and the boldness of this statement! He not only declares the name of Christ to be the wonder-working name, but he charges them with His murder, reasserts the Resurrection—no, further—he cuts at the root of all their ceremonial righteousness and declares that they must be saved by this hated and despised name, or else perish forever! Under all circumstances, let the servant of God behave himself boldly! Let him remember that this is the hour he ought always to speak, and that when the honor of his Master and the welfare of souls are concerned, it is not for him to withhold, but to speak out the Truth of God!

**13.** *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled. And they took notice of them, that they had been with Jesus.* Where else could such holy courage have been learned? They spoke, in their measure, just as the great Master did, of whom it is written, “He spoke as One having authority, and not as the Scribes.” They did not speak with the timid, hesitating manner of a preacher who seems to hold the balance of probabilities between the right and the wrong, the false and the true, but with the demonstration of a hearty conviction of the truth of the principles which they uttered. So Christ spoke, and, having learned of Him, so spoke His disciples!

**14.** *And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.* Converts shut the mouths of adversaries. The good done by the Gospel will always be a dumb-founding argument to the ungodly.

**16-20.** *But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? For that, indeed, a notable miracle has been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem: and we cannot deny it. But that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that they speak, henceforth, to no man in this name. And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge you. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.* Like the vessel full of new wine, which must have vent or burst, so is the man who is filled with the knowledge of Jesus! He must speak. He must—

**“Tell to others round,  
What a dear Savior he has found.”**

It is no matter of choice with him, for, as Paul says, “Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.” As the old Prophet has it, “The word of the Lord was as fire in my bones,” and if it is the true Word of God, it will soon burn its way out!

**21-22.** *So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done. For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was showed.* Therefore it was the more remarkable—forty years lame and yet healed! But how great is the Grace displayed in the salvation of an aged sinner—forty years dead in trespasses and in sins—fifty, sixty, seventy, or even 80 years, a faithful servant of the black tyrant and yet made to follow the new and better Master! What a triumph of Grace is that which snatches the sere brand out of the burning when it is so fitted for the fire!

**23.** *And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.* You can always tell a man by his company. Had these people been ungodly, they would have done as the ungodly do when they come out of prison—they would have

gone off to their old pot-companions. But they are Believers, and so they go to their own company.

**24-28.** *And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, You are God, which have made Heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that is in them. Who by the mouth of Your servant, David, have said, Why did the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. For of a truth against Your holy Child Jesus, whom You have anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together. For to do whatever Your hand and Your counsel determined before, to be done.* How strangely this Doctrine of Predestination comes in just there! They are singing of the wickedness of men, and the triumph which God gets over it—and so this is the very sum and substance of the song—that when wicked men think that God’s decrees will be forever put away by the destruction of His Son, they themselves are then actually doing what God had “determined before to be done.” The wildest discord makes harmony in the ear of God! Man may be in rebellion against the Most High, but he is still abjectly the slave of God’s predestination! And let man sin with his free will, even to the most extreme length of folly, yet even then God has a bit in his mouth and a bridle upon his jaws, and knows how to rule and govern him according to His own good pleasure! The ferocity of kings and priests does but fulfill the counsel of God!

**29-33.** *And now, Lord, behold their threats and grant unto Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your Word, by stretching forth Your hand to heal: and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of the holy Child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together: and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common. And with great power gave the Apostles witness of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great Grace was upon them all.*

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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

# PENTECOST

## NO. 1783

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 1, 1884,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The day of Pentecost.”  
Acts. 2:1.*

**[Sermon No. 511, Volume 9, is also entitled, “Pentecost.” Its Scripture verses are Acts 2:1-4.]**

LOOKING into a silversmith's window on Thursday last, I observed a notice card upon which was printed as follows—“This shop will be closed this evening and will not be re-opened until Tuesday evening.” I looked at the name over the window and observed that it belonged to one of the house of Israel. I had forgotten till that moment that we have now reached the Levitical feast of Pentecost which contains, among its regulations, that no servile work is to be done—and hence all business is laid aside by the faithful Jew. Surely, the Jews, in their care to observe their law, deserve much praise. At what an expense must large trading firms suspend their business! They send a lesson to many professed Christians who seem to have little regard for the Lord's Day, break in upon its rest in a thousand frivolous ways and half regret that they cannot pursue their earthly callings throughout the whole seven days of the week.

It is true that we consider these days, weeks and sacred festivals to have become obsolete by the fulfillment of the great Truths of God which they typified, but as this is not the judgment of the Jew because he has not received Jesus as the Messiah, we may at least learn from his strict observance of the Sabbath, the Passover and the feast of Pentecost, that it becomes us to study the *spiritual meaning* of these types, and to guard with care the one great festival which remains to the Church, namely, the Lord's Day. On our Sabbath let us do no needless work, but seek rest both for body and soul.

We are now at the season called Pentecost. In the reading of the Scriptures, I showed you out of Leviticus 23 that the first feast was the Passover and that there is no feasting, no satisfaction, no peace, no rest, no joy to any heart till, first of all, we have seen the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, who is our Passover. When we have understood the great Truth declared in Jehovah's Word, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you,” then we know what it is to dwell in safety within the blood-sprinkled doors while the Destroying Angel passes by. Through the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”

Under the covering of the blood of the Lord's Passover, we feast upon the Pascal Lamb, and thus our hunger is removed, our desires are satisfied, our strength is renewed and our heart is made glad. As the result of that Passover, we do, in *fact*, what the Jews did in *emblem* on the morrow after the Passover Sabbath—we confess that we are not our own, but are bought with a price—and that all that we have belongs to our redeeming Lord. On the morrow after the Sabbath, the Israelite brought the wave-sheaf of his barley harvest, which was waved before the Lord in type that every product of the soil—and all the result of man's labor—was from God and belonged to God. So, as soon as we have fed upon Christ and have come out of the house of bondage, we begin to enquire, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?" It becomes an instinct with us to express our gratitude in one way or another. Without any deliberation or delay, we conclude that if He has loved us and given Himself for us, we ought to show our love to Him in some manifest form.

Seven clear weeks passed away from the waving of the sheaf of the barley harvest and then came the feast of first fruits for all the crops, but principally for the wheat harvest which was then in full operation—this was Pentecost. In 50 days Israel was fully clear of Egypt, far away in the desert, and quite delivered from all fear of pursuing armies. Pharaoh's hosts had been destroyed and the Red Sea rolled between Israel and her former oppressors. Then it was that they held a holy convocation. They did not bring to God in the wilderness the loaves of bread of first fruits, for they had not yet reached the land which would yield them a harvest. But they held their convocation and were instructed as to what their duty would be when they came to the promised land. When they actually reached their possessions in Canaan, they kept the 50<sup>th</sup> day and held a solemn feast in which they presented unto the Lord two loaves of bread made of fine flour from the new wheat. This offering dedicated the harvest.

The teaching of this ceremony is just this—"When you are saved, when you have entered into rest, when you have considered and deliberated, then renew your vows unto the Lord, make your consecration more large and full and deliberate—and dedicate yourself and all that you have unto the Lord who has given you all things richly to enjoy. You have already, in the short time since you have known the sprinkled blood, obtained a harvest of joy and peace—therefore delay not to bring a worthy portion unto the Lord and say unto Him, 'You have set me free and made me to be Your servant. And now I offer to You all that I am and all that I have, for You have bought me with Your precious blood.'"

***"Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small!  
Love so amazing, so Divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all!"***

Thus the three feasts can be understood by us in our own spiritual experience. We can keep them in spirit; let us do so at once. Let us again rehearse the Passover by fresh faith in Jesus! Let us renew our first dedication which was like to the wave-sheaf. And then let us come with solemn resolve and, after many days of sweet experience, let us renew our covenant before the Lord, saying—

***“High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow,  
That vow renewed shall daily hear:  
Till in life’s latest hour I bow,  
And bless in death a bond so dear.”***

We deliberately wish our loyalty to stand good to the end. We have no desire to draw back, but rather would we wish to be more completely the Lord’s than we have been. We would bring “a new meat offering before the Lord” and keep the feast with great joy, ceasing from all servile work, but in the spirit of obedient children serving the Lord with gladness. Thus we read Pentecost by the light within.

On the larger platform of the Lord’s doings for His Church, the Passover stands for the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus upon the Cross when He poured out His soul unto death—that by His blood we might be saved from wrath. The waving of the barley sheaf was carried out by our Lord’s rising from the dead on the morrow after the Sabbath—when He rose from the dead and became the first fruits of them that slept. The feast of first fruits 50 days after His death is fulfilled by the descent of the Holy Spirit, giving to the Church the first fruits of the Spirit and working the conversion of 3,000 souls who were thus the first fruits from among the Jews. This beginning of blessing was followed by a revival which continued with the Church at Jerusalem for a long time—and extended throughout all the world, till almost every nation had, in a short time, learned the Doctrine of the Cross and multitudes had submitted unto Christ!

Of this greater Pentecost we shall not fail to speak this morning—we shall dwell upon both the type and the antitype—and if I run them a little into one another, you must forgive me. The type is so admirable and so many-sided that it has its own actual lesson as well as its figurative lesson. I scarcely know where the type ends and where the antitype begins—but your meditations will easily set it right if I should make a muddle.

First, I shall speak upon *the consecrated harvest of the field* which we shall illustrate by the passage out of Leviticus. Then, secondly, upon *the consecrated harvest of our Lord Jesus Christ*. And, as a practical lesson, we shall close by considering *the consecrated harvest which should come from each soul* unto the redeeming Lord.

**I.** First, let us speak of THE CONSECRATED HARVEST OF THE FIELD. It may seem somewhat singular to you that we should be talking of harvest on this first day of June, but I beg you to remember that the Bible was not written in England, but in Palestine. And in that country the harvest is much earlier than in this northerly latitude where the climate is so much more severe. An early day in June would be the average time for the fruits of the field to be ripe. At the beginning of the barley harvest the first ripe ears were presented to the Lord in due order, but at the fuller festival they brought into God’s house, not the ears of wheat, but two large loaves of bread taken from their habitations—the fruit of the earth actually prepared for human food. These loaves were offered unto the Lord with other sacrifices.

What did that mean? It meant, first, *that all came from God*. “We know that,” says one. Yes, we do know it, but we often talk as if it were not true. We regard our bread as the fruit of our own labor, which is also true, but

it is only a small part of the truth—for who is He that gives us strength to labor—and gives the earth the power to bring forth her harvest from the seed which is sown in her furrows? It is not every man that accepts the mercies of daily Providence as in very truth sent from God. I fear in many houses, bread is eaten and the Giver is forgotten. There may, perhaps, be a formal giving of thanks, but there is no *heart* in it. It is a horrible thing that men should live like brutes—like dumb cattle, grazing but thinking nothing of Him who causes grass to grow for the cattle—and herbs for the service of man. If any here have sunken into that brutish condition, may God deliver them from their degrading ingratitude!

Oh, you Christian people, you are clothed by the charity of God and fed by His bounty! And if you do not continually acknowledge that every good gift is from your heavenly Father, may the Lord have pity upon you and bring you to your right minds! Poverty has been, sometimes, sent upon men because they were not grateful when they enjoyed abundance. Persons who can grumble when their table is loaded, must not wonder if, one of these days, they become so distressed as to pine for the crumbs which once fell from their table! Let us not provoke God to chasten us for our murmuring, but let us bless Him, this day, for our life, our health, our bread and our clothing—yes, and for the very air we breathe! All that is short of Hell is more than we deserve. Let us, by grateful offerings to the Lord, express our thankfulness for all the comforts we enjoy.

The waving of those loaves before the Lord signified, next, that *all our possessions need God's blessing upon them*. It would be a horrible thing to be rich with unblest riches, yet some are in that condition and, consequently, the more they hoard, the more curses they lay up for themselves. Without a blessing from God, His gifts become temptations and bring with them care, rather than refreshment! We read of some, that “while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them and slew the fattest of them.” Thus it seems that the very bread on the table may prove a curse unless God shall bless it. It was, no doubt, a very joyous sight to see the loaves and the fishes multiplied for the crowd—but the best part of it was that *before* fish or bread had been increased, the Master had looked up to Heaven and blessed them! The people ate of *blessed* fish and *blessed* bread—and thus it nourished them.

If you have little, my Brother, yet if God has blessed your little, there is a flavor in it which the ungodly cannot know when they fill themselves with their stalled oxen! If you have an ample estate, yet if you have more blessing, your riches shall not be a snare to you, but you shall be able to endure prosperity which, to many, is like the height of the craggy rock from which they are dashed down to destruction! God's blessing is what we need upon common life, yes, upon the leavened bread of daily life as well as upon the unleavened bread of our holy things! We need the Lord's blessing from morning to night, from the first day of the week till Saturday night. We need it on all we are, and have and do! The Israelites brought the two loaves of leavened bread, praying the Lord to bless all the other loaves that would be baked out of the year's harvest—and the Lord did so.

Let us sanctify the bulk of our substance by the sacrifice unto the Lord of what is needed for His holy service.

It meant, next, all that we have, we hold under God as His stewards. These two loaves were a kind of peppercorn rent, acknowledging the superior Landlord who was the true Owner of the Holy Land. The two loaves were a quit rent, as much as to say, "O Lord, we acknowledge that this is Your soil and we are tenants at will." We farm our portions as bailiffs for our God! We gather the fruit of it as stewards for the Most High and bring a part, thereof, to His altar in token that we would use the rest to His Glory. Have we all done this with our substance? Do we continually dedicate all that we have unto our God and stand to the dedication? Do we make a conscientious use of such temporal benefits as the Lord entrusts to us? Where is that one talent of yours, O slothful servant? Where are those five talents, O you man of influence and of wealth? If you have not traded with them for the Great Master, what are you but an embezzler of your Master's goods, false to your trust? Beware lest He come and say to you, "Give an account of your stewardship, for you may no longer be steward." The faithful Believer will bring unto the Lord, *with gladness*, the Lord's portion, and thus confess that everything He has is, like himself, the royal possession of the King of kings!

Again, the bringing of those loaves signified that *they were afraid they might commit sin in the using of what God had given*. The first thank-offering, as we have seen, was of barley, fresh plucked from the field. There was nothing evil about that—and so our Lord, when risen from the dead, made a pure and perfect presentation unto the Lord. But this second offering of the first fruits was not wheat as God made it, but a loaf of bread in which there was leaven. Somehow human nature seems to crave for leaven with the pure flour and so the Israelite brought to God not a pure gift, but that form of it which is used by man for his nourishment. Why was it ordained that they should present leaven to God? Was it not meant to show us that common life, with all its imperfections, may yet be used for God's Glory? We may, through our Lord Jesus, be accepted in our business life as well as in sanctuary life—in market dealing as well as in sacramental meditation. Life, as it comes to common people in their daily labor and in their domestic relationships, is to be holiness unto the Lord!

Yet do not fail to notice that when they brought these two leavened loaves, they brought with them a burnt offering of seven lambs, without blemish, and one young bullock and two rams—the Holy Spirit thus signifying that our daily lives, services and gifts cannot be accepted in and of *themselves*—but we must bring with them the true sweet-savor offering of our Lord Jesus Christ who offered Himself without spot unto God! The precious blood of His Sacrifice must fall upon our leavened loaves, or they will be sour before the Lord. We can never be accepted except in that one ordained way—"He has made us accepted in the Beloved." Christ's Sacrifice is so sweet that it perfumes our offerings and renders that acceptable which otherwise would have been rejected. This poor leavened cake of ours has the elements of corruption in it—but lo—here, in Jesus, we have

a savor which is sweet unto the Lord and the Lord is well pleased with us for His righteousness' sake!

No, that was not all. In consideration of the loaf being leavened, they brought with it a sin offering as well. "Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering." See Leviticus 23:19. Confessing, as each one of *us* must do—that however hearty our dedication to God, there is still a faultiness in our lives—we are glad to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus! However much we labor to live wholly and alone unto God's Glory, yet, in many things we offend and come short of the Glory of God. We bring a sacrifice for *sin* because it is *needed*. We confess the iniquities of our holy things. That loaf which we present is of fine flour, but it is baked with leaven and, therefore, a sin offering is needed. O man of God, never try to bring any prayer, or any act of penitence, or any deed of faith, or any gift of love to God apart from the great sin offering of Jesus Christ! You are a saint, but you are still a *sinner*—and though you are clean before men—yet when you come before *God*, His pure and holy eyes behold folly and defilement in you which nothing can put away except the cleansing blood of Christ!

"If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." Yet we still sin, for it is written, "and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin," which it could not do if there were no sin to put away even then. It is, to my mind, a great joy that you and I can give to God the first fruits of our substance and can dedicate to Him our time and talents and, in doing so we need not be afraid of rejection because we bring with us the sweet savor offering of Jesus Christ, which is His righteousness, and the sin offering of Jesus Christ which He offered when He was made to be sin for us!

Let us learn one more lesson—*all this was done as an act of joy*. A new meat offering was offered unto the Lord with peace offerings, which two offerings always signify, among other things, a quiet, happy communion with God. In addition to all this, they presented a drink offering of wine which expresses the joy of the offerer. Pentecost was not a *fast*—it was a festival! When you give *anything* to God, give it not as though it were a tax, but render it freely, or it cannot be accepted! If you do anything for the Lord, your God, do it not as of forced labor demanded by a despot, whom you would gladly refuse if you could. You do nothing unto God if it is not done of a willing mind. God loves a cheerful giver. He wants no slaves to grace His Throne—you shall hear no crack of whips in all the domains of our great Lord! His service is perfect freedom! To give to Him is rapture! To live to Him is Heaven! When we shall perfectly serve Him, we shall be in our glory, which is His Glory. The sinking of self is the rising of joy!

Beloved, the Lord would not have any of you give of your substance to Him with rueful countenance, squeezing it out as though you were losing a drop of blood. Give nothing if you cannot give heartily—but do everything unto the Lord with all your heart, soul and strength! The Lord would not have the Ark of the Covenant dragged by unwilling beasts, but He ordained that it should be carried upon the willing shoulders of chosen *men*,

to whom the service was an honor and a delight. He would have His servants sing in their joyous hymns, "God is the Lord, which has showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." He would have each one gladly say, "O Lord, truly I am Your servant! By Your Grace I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid—You have loosed my bonds."

**II.** Thus far we have been considering part of the lesson of the original Jewish Pentecost. Now we must hasten on to consider, in the second place, THE CONSECRATED HARVEST OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST as taught by the events of the great Christian Pentecost described in the Acts of the Apostles. Our Lord is the greatest of all Sowers, for He sowed Himself. Did He not say, "Except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit"? Our Lord had been sown in His death and burial—and since such a corn of wheat as this is quick in growing and soon yields a harvest—in 50 days there comes a time for the ingathering of the first fruits. Had He not said, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest"? And now, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, the fruit was seen of them and joyfully gathered!

Let us learn some lessons from the Christian Pentecost. First, learn that *the first harvest of our Lord Jesus Christ was through the Holy Spirit*. There were no 3,000 converts till, first of all, was heard the rushing of mighty wind! Till the cloven tongues had rested on the little company of disciples, there were no broken hearts among the crowd. Until the Believers were all filled with the Holy Spirit, the minds of their hearers were not filled with conviction. We are longing, greatly longing, for our Lord Jesus to see of the travail of His soul and to be satisfied in this congregation and in this city. How we long to see millions brought to Christ! I am sure some of us will feel a heartbreak until whole nations come to Jesus' feet—and this cannot be except by the special power of the Holy Spirit!

The Holy Spirit will bless the world by filling the Church with His own might. If I want my hearers converted, I must first of all, myself, be filled with the Holy Spirit. I know that I address a great many workers and I, therefore, say to each one of them—pay great attention to your own spiritual state. If you desire to save your class, you must, yourself, be endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit. You cannot burn a way for the Truth of God into the heart of another unless the tongue of fire is given to you from on high. Mind this. I tried, last Lord's Day, to exhort you to pay much reverence and honor to the Holy Spirit, who is so often forgotten in the Church of God. I pray you take good heed to the exhortation. Maintain a grateful spirit towards the Holy Spirit, paying special honor to Him, for He works all our works in us—and without Him there will be neither sheaves nor loaves of the harvest to offer the Lord. The ingathering of the revival at Pentecost was worked by the Holy Spirit.

*That day when the Spirit of God was given may be considered to be the ordering of the Christian dispensation.* You may not have noticed it, but if you will count the days, you will find that it was exactly 50 days after the original Passover that the Law was given on Mount Sinai. Many careful

readers have observed this, but have feared to attach importance to the fact because the Jews did not connect it with Pentecost. Neither Philo nor Josephus speak of the giving of the Law as happening at the time known as Pentecost. But that has nothing to do with *us*. We are not bound to be blind to a matter because Josephus, or Philo, or *all* writers did not happen to see it! They are not Rabbis to us. The Jews did not, at that time, see all in the Law of God which they have seen since, and we, having the Law in our hands, are bound to examine for ourselves.

It was at Pentecost that God descended upon Mount Sinai and the national laws of Israel were proclaimed together with those Ten Commandments which are the standard of equity for all mankind. Moses asked of Pharaoh, on the behalf of Israel, that they might keep a feast unto Jehovah their God in the wilderness—and this was no mere pretext—but a truthful statement. They *did* keep a holy season as they proposed. They summoned a special assembly of the elders and sanctified the people as soon as the turmoil of their leaving Egypt had subsided. On the 50<sup>th</sup> day after the Exodus, the Lord came down in the sight of all Israel upon Sinai. The trumpet was heard from the top of Horeb and Sinai was altogether on a smoke. Now, we assert that as the inauguration of the Law was on Pentecost, so, also, was the inauguration of the Gospel! At the commencement of the Old Testament dispensation, what manifestation do we get? God gives His people *a law*. At the commencement of the New Testament dispensation, what do we get? A law? No, the Lord gives His people *the Spirit*. That is a very different matter.

Under the Old Covenant, the Commandments were given. But under the New Covenant, the will and the power to obey are bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit. No more have we the Law of God upon stone, but the Spirit writes the precept upon the fleshy tablets of the heart! Moses on the mount can only tell us what to *do*—but Jesus, ascended on high, pours out the power to do it! Now we are not under the Law, but under Grace, and the Spirit is our guiding force. In the Church of God, our rule is not according to the letter of a law, but according to the Spirit of the Lord! Some people look for a specific ordinance for every item of procedure on the part of the Church. But, as far as I can see, there is a singular absence of written rule and ritual concerning particulars—apart from the two great standing ordinances.

I believe that under this dispensation, saints are left to the freedom of the Spirit and are not specifically commanded in every detail by a written law. Neither this form of Church government, nor that is forced upon us—but life is permitted to assume its own necessary form under the molding power of the Holy Spirit. Because we are to become men in Christ and to no longer be children, we are directed not so much to a specific law as to certain great general principles which are made to be our guide through the Holy Spirit. Servants, you know, must be told to do this and that, at such an hour and in such a way—but loving, obedient children may be left free to obey the dictates of their loving hearts. We love the Inspired Book which reveals to us the mind of God and we revere it all the more because the Lord, Himself, who inspired the Book dwells among us to

conduct us by its holy instruction in all things. The Lord is among us in a higher degree than ever He was in Sinai, where boundaries were set to keep off the trembling people. The Lord is in the midst of His people in love and fellowship—and by the indwelling Spirit whereby He leads the sacred marching of His redeemed. Pentecost was thus the inauguration of the Gospel dispensation.

This Pentecost was also *the beginning of a great harvest of Jews and Gentiles*. Were there not *two loaves*? Not only shall Israel be saved, but the multitude of the Gentiles shall be turned unto the Lord Jesus Christ and He shall see of His soul's travail in those whom His Father gave Him from before the foundation of the world! If the first fruits were so great, what will the ultimate harvest be? Let us look for whole *kingdoms* to submit themselves to Jesus!

That day of Pentecost, or feast of first fruits, what was it? Did it only consist in many conversions? No. I believe that *the filling of the Apostles with the Holy Spirit was a part of the first fruits* of the day of Pentecost. We, ourselves, who are born to God whenever the Holy Spirit visits us in His fullness and sanctifies and elevates us, are a large part of our Lord's reward. A man full of the Holy Spirit rejoices the heart of Christ! Your poor starveling Christians, who have a name to live and nothing more, who shiver over Christ's commands and never plunge into His service to find waters to swim in, bring Him little honor and little pleasure. But when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we make men see the glory of His Grace, and His name is magnified in the esteem of all onlookers!

Still, the major part of the Pentecostal first fruits will be found in *the great number that were that day converted*. How much we desire the same blessing, as a Church, for ourselves and all other Churches! We hope to receive some 75, today, but what is this compared to three thousand? We are not without additions to the Church every month, but, oh, that the Lord would add to us *daily*! Why should it not be? Persuade the people to come and hear! Pray for them and for the preacher while they are hearing—and watch for their souls after hearing—and we shall yet see a far larger increase!

*The Christian Pentecost is, to us, full of instruction*. Learn its lessons. First, *the disciples had to wait for it*. "The husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth." Sow on! If you have to wait a week of weeks or a week of years, wait with confidence, for Pentecost will yet yield its loaves unto the Lord! *They obtained nothing until they began preaching the Gospel*—and then, *in one day*, the Church was multiplied by twenty-five. O, when shall each member bring in 25 in a day by preaching the Word of God? Those 3,000 souls were due to the testimony of Jesus by the disciples. The Spirit of God was there, but *He did not work upon men apart from the means which He has ordained*! Peter stood up with the eleven. They preached Christ crucified and *then* the people believed! Oh, for a great day of preaching when *all* shall turn out and preach! If all the Lord's servants and handmaids began to proclaim His salvation, we would soon wake up these sleepy millions and London would be all on the move to—

wards better things! A great multitude must preach the Gospel if we are to have a great multitude converted by it!

*Of all those people saved, it was acknowledged that they belonged unto the Lord, alone.* When they were pricked to the heart and believed in Jesus, they came at once and were baptized! As they were dead to the world, it was right that they should be openly buried with Christ in Baptism. So consecrated were they, that their lives were wholly given to their Lord! In a very special manner it was so with them, for they had all things in common—they lived a heavenly life here below. We read, “And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.” Thoroughly did they give unto God the glory of their salvation, for they were wholly occupied in “praising God”—so we are told in the last verse of the chapter from which we have culled our text.

Yet if even we should see 3,000 converted in a day, *we must not reckon that such first fruits would be absolutely perfect.* In the first Pentecost, as we have seen, leavened cakes were presented to God—so in all our successes and additions, there will sure to be a leaven. Do not wonder if some converts go back or if others turn out to be hypocrites, or merely temporary converts. It will always be so and we should not think it a new and strange trial—tares grow with the wheat and bad fish are taken in the same net with the good. Therefore let the Church, in her best success, still keep to Christ and His precious blood—and daily turn to His finished Sacrifice. Let us use upon the large scale, as well as in our own personal concerns, the great Sacrifice for sin—and when we admit members into the Church wholesale, let us continually plead the precious blood that each one may be dedicated to God. Be this our motto—“None but Jesus! None but Jesus!” Let us exalt the Lamb of God, the sin-atoning Lamb! These converts and this success can only be accepted in the Beloved.

But with all our care and prudence, *let us not dampen our joy,* for the feast of first fruits is ever to be a gladsome occasion. So the type teaches us and so let the fact always be with us. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, on that day on which I lately saw 40 persons, one by one, and listened to their experience and proposed them to the Church, I felt as weary as ever a man did in reaping the heaviest harvest! I did not merely give them a few words as enquirers, but examined them as candidates with my best judgment. I thought that if I had many days of that sort I must die, but I also wished it might be my lot to die in that fashion! Having so many coming to confess Christ, my mind was crushed beneath the weight of blessing, but I would gladly be overwhelmed again! O that my Hearers would thus oppress me every week of my life! Pray the Lord to send us, day after day, such additions to the Church that we shall be scarcely able to hear all the testimonies of what the Lord has done for them! Then let us sing, “Hallelujah, Hallelujah,” every day in the week and every hour of the day! Let us rejoice and be glad—and give a hearty welcome to those who come into the Church—and hearty praise to God who sends them!

So much about the Pentecost at Jerusalem. God send a Pentecost like it to Newington Butts and to every other place!

**III.** The last thing was to be THE CONSECRATED HARVEST FROM EACH PARTICULAR PERSON. What I have to say is not mine, but the Lord's. If you open your Bibles at Deuteronomy 26, you will find, there, a form of service which I pray may serve you today. After the first offering on behalf of the nation, consecrating all the harvest, *individuals* began to bring their first fruits personally, even to the very end of the year. Whenever the olives had been pressed, or the figs had been gathered, or the grapes had been trodden, or the wheat fields had been reaped, the truly believing Israelite took a part of his crop to the House of God and presented it as a love token.

“And it shall be, when you are come in the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance, and possess it, and dwell there; that you shall take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which you shall bring of your land that the Lord your God gives you, and shall put it in a basket, and shall go unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose to place His name there. And you shall go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the Lord your God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord swore unto our fathers for to give us. And the priest shall take the basket out of your hands and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God.” See how the offerer began—“I profess this day unto the Lord your God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord swore unto our fathers for to give us.” I wish to stand here, this morning, and to say for myself, what I hope you can say, each one of you, for himself—“I have come to the land of peace and rest which the Lord promised to Believers. I have become a possessor of all things in Christ.” That is the reason why I would bring my offering. If the Lord has brought you into the goodly land of salvation, you, too, should bring your sacrifice to Him.

After this, the offerer went on to say—“A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians evil entreated us and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage.” Here was an admission of a former state of misery! Must we not, also, say that we were in bondage, but that the Lord brought us out with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and set us free from our oppressors? I can say so and I know I am speaking the mind of hundreds of you! The Lord has delivered you! Your sin is pardoned! Your iniquities are covered! You are free from the power of sin! You walk at liberty in righteousness! You have come into the land of promise! You have entered into rest! That is abundant reason for bringing your gift of love to the Lord!

Then the man also said, “The Lord has brought us into this place and has given us this land, even a land that flows with milk and honey.” Thus we, also, glory in our happiness and peace in Christ Jesus. Ours is a blessed lot! It is a good thing to be a Christian! It is a blessed privilege to be a child of God! It is a delightful blessing to be a partaker of the Covenant and all the blessings stored up therein. Do we not say so? I am sure we do and, therefore, it is that we bring our thank offering as a token that we love the Lord and desire to praise Him for all that He has done for us.

Then the offerer presented his first fruits and said, “And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land, which You, O Lord, have given me.” When he had made his offering spontaneously and freely because God had done so much for him, then he went home to enjoy all the good things which God had given him.

He did not feel as if he were practicing self-indulgence when he ate of his figs or partook of his pomegranates, for his fruits in the lump were sanctified by the first fruits being made holy unto the Lord. He was not afraid to partake of the bounties of Providence, for he had received of the bounties of Grace. He did not eat what had never been blessed of God, but he went his way and heard the priest say, as he left the sanctuary, “You shall rejoice in every good thing which the Lord your God has given unto you and unto your house, you, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you.” Then he understood the language of Solomon—“Go your way. Eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God now accepts your works.” Thus may the true Believer receive with gladness the supplies which his heavenly Father gives him. And if he, for Christ’s sake, and the love of men, abstains from partaking of wine, he abstains with greater delight than he ever had in drinking it!

Regarding nothing as common or unclean. Let us, in everything, give thanks—and whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do—let us glorify God and feel that He blesses us. This earth which once was accursed, becomes to holy men a place of blessing, the vestibule of Glory, none other than the House of God and the very gate of Heaven! Oh, you that have never eaten of the Pascal Lamb; that have never been sprinkled with His blood—you cannot know *anything* about this—you cannot offer anything to God! You cannot receive His blessing upon your daily lives because you have not, first of all, accepted salvation by the atoning blood! I wish you would now come to Jesus! I pray God you may!

But, oh, if you have known the power of the death of Christ and so are pardoned, do not miss the further joy of a consecrated life—the joy of spending and being spent for Him who redeemed you! The Lord your God is so blessed in Himself that when you give yourself to Him, His blessedness overflows and fills you! Nothing is so much ours as what is wholly God’s! And when we are not our own, then by some strange logic, we are *most* our own. When we have most fully practiced self-denial, then the best riches and the rarest wealth and the truest blessedness are ours. God help us to test this statement and so to keep the feast! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Leviticus 23:4-21;  
Acts 2:1-8, 14-21, 37-42.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—449, 809, 660.**

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# PENTECOST

## NO. 511

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 24, 1863,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”  
Acts 2:1-4.***

How absolutely necessary is the Presence and power of the Holy Spirit! It is not possible for us to promote the glory of God, or to bless the souls of men, unless the Holy Spirit shall be in us and with us. Those who were assembled on that memorable day of Pentecost were all men of prayer and faith. But even these precious gifts are only available when the celestial fire sets them on a blaze. They were all men of experience—most of them had been preachers of the Word, and workers of miracles. They had endured trials and troubles in company with their Lord, and had been with Him in His temptation.

Yet even experienced Christians, without the Spirit of God, are weak as water. Among them were the Apostles and the seventy evangelists. And with them were those honored women in whose houses the Lord had often been entertained, and who had ministered to Him of their substance. Yet even these favored and honored saints can do nothing without the breath of God, the Holy Spirit. Apostles and Evangelists dare not even attempt anything alone. They must tarry at Jerusalem till power is given them from on High. It was not a want of education. They had been for three years in the college of Christ, with perfect Wisdom as their Tutor, matchless eloquence as their Instructor, and immaculate Perfection as their example. Yet they must not venture to open their mouths to testify of the mystery of Jesus until the anointing Spirit has come with blessed unction from above!

Surely, my Brothers and Sisters, if it was so with them, much more must it be the case with us. Let us beware of trusting to our well-adjusted machineries of committees and schemes. Let us be jealous of all reliance upon our own mental faculties or religious vigor. Let us be careful that we do not look too much to our leading preachers and evangelists, for if we put any of these in the place of the Divine Spirit, we shall err most fatally. Let us thank God for all gifts, and for all offices, but oh, let us ever be reminded that gifts and offices are but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, unless the quickening Influence is present.

It has been said by certain modern theologians that we make this doctrine of dependence upon the Holy Spirit far too prominent, and that our constant teaching of this Truth has a tendency to benumb all human ef-

fort, and foster indifference and sloth. Surely it is not so, my Brothers and Sisters. Let us refute this slander by our own earnestness, and let it be seen that those of us who confess that without their Lord they can do nothing, are able with His aid to do everything! O may we be so inflamed by the Eternal Fire that our life may be all zeal and love, self-sacrifice and labor! So shall we teach the gainsayer that the worshippers of the gracious Spirit are not loiterers in the vineyard of the Lord.

I am persuaded that so far from speaking too frequent upon this matter, we do not often enough extol the Blessed Spirit, and certain ministries almost ignore His existence. You might attend some Chapels and not even know that there was a Holy Spirit at all except for the benediction. And were it not for the liturgy, and the, "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit," there are many of our national edifices where you might never know that a Comforter had been sent to us.

Now I earnestly pray that this morning I may stir up your minds by way of remembrance, by a simple exposition of the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. We are not observers of days and months, but it happens to be the season of the year in which the early Church was accustomed to celebrate the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. We commonly talk of Whitsuntide, or White Sunday—which name is not without its lesson in the earlier centuries on this particular day—in commemoration of the great Baptism of the three thousand converted under the preaching of Peter. It was the custom of the Church to hold a great Baptism, and the candidates for immersion being, as with us, robed in white—(therefore the name "Candidates," or "White Ones")—and so that Sunday was called White Sunday.

It was not ill that the outpouring of Pentecost should be celebrated by the Baptism of converts, for the cause is always best remembered by the effect. May our Lord help us to enjoy a Pentecost all the year round and may the pool of Baptism be stirred every week.

I shall call your attention to *the season* when the Spirit was poured out. Secondly, to *the manner* in which it was manifested. And then to *the matter itself*. And, fourthly, to *the results* which followed.

**I.** There is much holy teaching in THE SEASON when the Spirit of God was given. "When the day of Pentecost was fully come." We may observe, first, that the Spirit of God was given in *God's chosen and appointed time*. There is a set time to favor Zion. The Spirit is not at all times alike active in His manifest workings. Both to try our faith and to prove His own sovereignty, the right hand of the Lord is sometimes thrust into His bosom. He will only make bare His arm at such times and seasons as He, Himself, has appointed. "The wind blows where it lists," is a Truth of God well calculated to hide pride from man.

Brethren, if every drop of rain has its appointed birthday, every gleam of light its predestinated pathway, and every spark of fire its settled hour of flying upward, certainly the will, foreknowledge, and decree of God must have arranged and settled the period of every revival and place of every gracious visitation. Times of refreshing, in a Church or a commonwealth, come not except as the Creator-Spirit has determined. The day of salvation to each individual is an appointed time. The second birth is not left to hazard.

Yes, more—every breath of that Divine Spirit which sweeps across the mind of the Believer, every drop of sacred oil which anoints him, or of the holy dew which quickens him—comes to him according to that irresistible will which looses the bands of Orion, or binds up the sweet influences of the Pleiades in God's accepted and appointed time. Therefore, the light of Heaven shall go forth, and although this is not to withhold or restrain us from asking for the Spirit every day, it is to encourage us if He does not at once begin to work, for if the vision tarries we are to wait for it, it shall come in due time—it will not tarry.

There was a further mystery in the season, for *it was after the ascension of our Lord*. The Spirit of God was not given till after Jesus had been glorified. The various blessings which we receive are ascribable to different parts of Christ's work. His life is our imputed righteousness. His death brings us pardon. His resurrection confers upon us justification. His ascension yields to us the Holy Spirit, and those spiritual gifts which edify the body. He says, when He ascended up on High, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. He gave some, Apostles, and some, Prophets, and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers—for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry—for the edifying of the body of Christ.

As when Roman heroes returned from blood-red fields, and the Senate awarded them a triumph, they rode in their chariot drawn by milk-white steeds through the thronging streets of the capitol. So did Jesus Christ, when He led captivity captive, receive a triumph at His Father's hands. The triumphal chariot bore Him through the streets of Glory, while all the inhabitants, with loud acclaim, saluted Him as Conqueror—

**“Crown Him! Crown Him!  
Crowns become the Victor's brow!”**

It was the custom of the Roman conqueror, as he rode along, to distribute large quantities of money which were scattered among the admiring crowd. So our glorified Lord scattered gifts among men, yes, to the rebellious, also, He gave those gifts that the Lord God might dwell among them. In this manner, then, to grace the triumph of Jesus, the Spirit of God was liberally poured out upon the Church below.

Perhaps you remind me that our Lord had ascended ten days before. I know He had, but the delay might teach them patience. Not always does the flower bloom from the root in one hour. Christ has ascended, and Heaven is ringing with His praise. They have kept ten days of joyous holiday before the Eternal Throne, and now, when Pentecost is fully come, the rushing mighty wind is heard. Do you think, my Brothers and Sisters, that we plead Christ's ascension enough as a reason why the Church should be blessed with the Spirit? I know we often reach as far as, “By Your agony and bloody sweat, by Your Cross and passion, by Your precious death and burial, by Your glorious resurrection”—but do we proceed to, “by Your ascension we beseech You to hear us?”

I am afraid we fail to perceive that the ascension of Christ is to be used as an argument in prayer, when we would have the Church revived by the holy breath of God, or have gifts bestowed upon her ministers and Church officers. Moreover, there is yet more teaching in the season. It was at *Pentecost*. Many of the early writers say that Pentecost was the time when the Law was proclaimed upon Mount Sinai. Others think it doubtful. If it is

so, it was very significant that on the day when the Law was issued amid thunders and lightning, the Gospel—God’s new and better Law—should be proclaimed with mighty wind and tongues of fire.

We are clear, however, that Pentecost was a harvest festival. On that day the sheaf was waved before the Lord, and the harvest consecrated. The Passover was to our Savior the time of His sowing, but Pentecost was the day of His reaping, and the fields which were ripe to the harvest when He sat on the well, are reaped now that He sits upon the Throne.

But certainly the Spirit of God was given at Pentecost because *there was then the most need of Him*. On that occasion vast crowds were gathered from all regions. The God of Wisdom always knows how to time His gifts. What would have been the use of granting the many tongues when no strangers were ready to hear? If there had been no Parthians and Medes, and Elamites, and dwellers of Mesopotamia collected in Jerusalem, there would have been no need for the cloven tongues. But inasmuch as the city was full, and the high festival was being kept by unusual multitudes, it was most fit and right that now the Lord should say—“Thrust in your sickle, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.”

Dear Friends, I think that whenever we see unusual gatherings of men, whenever the Spirit of hearing is poured out upon the people, we ought to pray for, and expect an unusual visitation of the Spirit. And when I look upon these crowds assembled in this house every Sunday year after year, I can but entreat you to cry mightily to Him with whom is the residue of the Spirit, that He would give us a Pentecost. Though neither Parthians, nor Medes, nor Elamites are here, yet there scarcely ever passes a Sunday without there being representatives of almost all nations under Heaven who hear the wonderful works of God. Not in their own tongue, it is true, but yet in a language which they understand. Oh, pray that the Spirit of God may fall upon the unexampled hosts assembled here!

Still, dear Friends, we have not dwelt upon a leading reason why the Holy Spirit descended at this special season. “*They were all with one accord in one place.*” We have been expecting to see the days of Heaven upon earth. Our soul has longed to hear the voice of God thundering out of Heaven. We have hoped for days such as our fathers have told us comforted them in the old times. We looked to see thousands born in a day—alas, the vision comes not. But look at our country! We have had spasms of revival—that is as much as I can say. Even the Irish revival, for which we can never sufficiently bless God, was but as a passing cloud. It was not an abiding, resting shower, and so with all the shakings we have had in these later times.

We have had but *glimpses* where we wanted *sights*. We have had but twilight where we needed the sacred, everlasting noon. What is the reason for this? Perhaps it is to be found in our want of union. “*They were all with one accord in one place.*” Christians cannot all be in one place. We have no room that would be large enough to hold them, blessed be God! But if they cannot all be in one *place*, yet they can all be of one *accord*. Oh, when there are no cold hearts, when there are no prejudices to divide us, no bigotries to separate us, no apathy to hold us down, no false doctrine to separate the flocks from one another—and no schism to rend the one sacred garment of Christ—*then* may we expect to see the Spirit of God resting upon us!

And in any Church where there is no strife as to who shall be the greatest, no division about peculiarities, no fighting for respectabilities—but when the Church is of one accord—then may we expect to hear the sound of abundance of Heaven’s rain. Note, dear Friends, what they were doing. They were not merely unanimous, but they were earnest about one grand object. *They had all been praying.* Read the first chapter and you will perceive that they had been *much* in prayer. The whole of the time since the ascent of our Lord they had been occupied in constant supplication. And so, pleading both day and night, it was no great wonder that the granaries of Heaven should be unlocked!

We have had weeks of prayer at the beginning of the last few years, and it was well. But if we had continued in prayer all the weeks of the year, if we had always been with one accord still crying unto Heaven, still wrestling with the angel, still interceding—surely the little cloud, like a man’s hand, which the eye of faith has seen—would by this time have covered all the heavens, and have discharged a plenteous shower upon all nations of men! There must be unity, but that unity must not be the frozen union of death. It must be the glorious welding of a glowing furnace. They had been much in prayer, and now I see them sitting still. Why do they sit so quietly? It is *the quietude of expectation.*

When God’s Church adds *expectation* to supplication, then a blessing tarries no longer. We ask, but we do not *expect* to receive. We pray, but probably nothing would so alarm us as the answer to our prayers. If, after having pleaded with God to send His Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit did come, there are many who would not believe it. There are others who would think it a mere excitement, and there are multitudes who would shut their eyes to it altogether. Oh Spirit of God! Work in the hearts of Your children perfect harmony, intense anxiety, and confident expectation—and then will You come to do Your mighty deeds once more!

These remarks concerning the season may lead to many practical questions. I will but put them rapidly and leave them. Do I help to hinder the coming of the Spirit by any bitterness of my temper? Do I by any want of love tend to divide the Church? Are my prayers such as are likely to prevail? And when I pray, do I expect the blessing of God? If not, how mournful that I should be the means of restraining and limiting the Holy One of Israel! That I should be a Church robber and commit sacrilege against the Church of God—not by stealing its gold and silver—but by closing the treasury of God! Let us, as a Church, humble ourselves under the hand of God and then, girding up the loins of our mind, wait upon Him with patience and earnestness until the Spirit is poured out from on High!

**II.** I come now, dear Friends, in the second place, to notice THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SPIRIT WAS GIVEN. Each word here is suggestive. “*Suddenly.*” No herald sounded his trumpet, but as they were expecting, in a moment, the celestial tempest came. If the Lord is about to do any great work in the world we must not be astonished if we hear of its coming like a thunderclap. Man sits down and plans, and arranges and works, and everybody knows what he is aiming at. God also plans and arranges, and forestalls Himself. But He does not tell man what His purpose is. It is the Glory of God to conceal a thing, and so, though the Spirit may have been secretly preparing men’s hearts, yet the real work of revival is done suddenly, to the surprise of all observers.

You will have noticed it was so in the great revival in New England, when Jonathan Edwards stood up and read his manuscript sermon, holding the manuscript close to his eyes, because he was nearsighted—a method of preaching which I should think would be the very least likely ever to cause an excitement in the audience. And yet while he preached from that text—“Their feet shall slide in due time,” the Spirit of God suddenly came down—the people began to tremble and even cry out under the terrors of conviction—and the awakening spread throughout all that region and many thousands were added to the Church of Christ.

Was it not so with Livingstone at the Kirk of Shotts. The presbytery had been holding long services and preaching sermons without any great results. And just at the close, Livingstone was asked to preach. Standing on a gravestone, in the midst of a driving shower, he addressed the assembled crowd, and down came the Holy Spirit—more mighty than the shower which fell from Heaven—and hundreds were born in one day to Christ. It was the same under George Whitfield, in the notable revivals of which he was the agent. The Spirit came like lightning from the skies. Do not be suspicious when you hear of these things suddenly appearing.

You remember, yourselves, an instance which wakes all your hearts to gratitude. You remember a Chapel with but a handful of people in it who could scarce see from one to another. Did the crowds come by slow degrees? Was it a life-work to build up a Church? No, but the trumpet sounded. The prepared ears heard it. The house was thronged. The Church grew and multiplied—and now we who are members of it bless God for His mercies every day. When God says, “Let there be light” there is light.

Then there was a *sound*. Although the Spirit of God Himself is silent in His operations, yet the operations are not silent in their results. The *sound* would teach them that the Spirit of God was not come to be concealed in their hearts as a silent guest, but to be heard throughout the world as the voice of God. For now faith was come by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. And a sound as of a mighty rushing wind, was a *type* to them of the sound of their own testimony which was to go forth throughout all the world even unto the ends thereof. To their ears the speaking hurricane would say, “Even so, we, a handful of converted men, are to sweep around the globe like a mighty wind. And men are to be compelled to hear the sound of mercy.”

Then it was a sound, notice, *as of wind*. It is remarkable that both in the Greek and in the Hebrew tongues, the word used for wind and for Spirit is the same. Hence, when the Savior said to Nicodemus, “The wind blows where it lists, and you hear the sound thereof,” the type might have been suggested to him by the fact of the word having the double signification of the wind and of the Spirit. The wind is doubtless chosen as a significant emblem because of its mysteriousness—“You can not tell where it comes, nor where it goes.” Because of its freeness—“It blows where it lists.” Because of diversity of its operations, for the wind blows a gentle zephyr at one moment, and later it mounts to a howling blast. The Holy Spirit at one time comes to comfort, and at other times to alarm—at one season softly with the promise—and at another time terribly with the threat.

Observe it was *rushing*. this portrayed the rapidity with which the Spirit's influences spread—rushing like a torrent. Within fifty years from that date of Pentecost, the Gospel had been preached in every country of the known world. Paul and his Brothers, the Apostles, had journeyed east, west, north and south. Iron gates had been , and bars of brass had been snapped, and the glorious life-giving Word had been preached to every creature under Heaven for a witness against them. God's Spirit does not creep and crawl as too often our unspiritual agencies do. When He comes, it is a rush—and half the world is lit with Divine light before we dream that the match has struck.

Nor is this all, for it was *mighty*, a wind against which nothing could stand. The house itself might be shaken. They may have been greatly alarmed for fear the house should fall about their heads. The wind was irresistible, and so is the Spirit of God—where He comes, nothing can stand against Him. O Spirit of God, if You would but now come as a rough north wind, the crescent of Mohammed would be prostrate in the dust, and the gods of the heathen would fall upon their faces like Dagon before the Ark. You have but to proceed in Your sevenfold operations, and the harlot of Rome would lose her enchanting power. You can dash in pieces the hoary systems which have resisted all human attack. Mightier than the tooth of time, Your finger, O sacred Spirit, could destroy what man reckons to be his everlasting workmanship.

Glory be to God, wherever the Spirit comes He proves Himself to be Divine by the Omnipotence which He displays. They heard, then, a sound as of a rushing mighty wind. Although we never expect to hear a sound like this, yet we do expect, dear Christian Friends, to have the reality. We hope yet to see the Spirit of God mysteriously at work, and we hope to hear the sound thereof, the glad tidings cheering our hearts. We love to see nations born in a day. We do yet believe that before our eyes are closed in death, we shall see God's arm stretched out and the irresistible might of His Spirit felt by His enemies.

Consider the next sentence. "*Which filled all the place where they were sitting.*" The sound was not merely heard by the disciples, but it appeared to penetrate the other chambers besides that large upper room where they were probably gathered together. Ah, and when the Spirit of God comes, He never confines Himself to the Church. The influence may not be *saving* to those without, but it is *felt* by them. A revival in a village penetrates even the pothouse. The Spirit of God at work in the Church is soon felt in the farmyard, known in the workroom, and perceived in the factory. It is not possible for the Spirit to be confined when once He comes.

Oh, if He should but visit this place, Walworth and Camberwell and Southwark must all know it. The very streets should be made to wear a different aspect! And whereas we now have to walk down long rooms of shops still open on the Sunday, we should doubtless see them closed, for the Spirit of God would fill all the place where His Church was located. May such glad times come, when from one end of England to another, the Spirit of God shall fill all men in all places, because He dwells specially with His chosen people.

But this was not all. I must now mention what I think was the appearance seen. It was a bright luminous cloud, probably, not unlike that which once rested in the wilderness over the tribes by night. A fiery pillar

was seen hovering in the upper part of the room. The cloud is mentioned as “it,” so that it seems to have been one, and yet it is called “tongues,” so that it must have been many. In the Greek there is a unique commingling of singular and plural in the verbs, which can hardly be accounted for, unless there really did exist a singularity, and a plurality at the same time.

There floated in the room, I think, one mass of flame, a great cloud of fire. This suddenly divided, or was cleft—and separate tongues of fire rested upon the head of each of the disciples. They would understand that thus a Divine power was given to them, for such a figure was by no means unusual or far-fetched. Heathens have been accustomed to represent in their statues, beams of light, or flames of fire proceeding from their false deities. And to this day the cloudy radiance with which Roman Catholic painters always adorn the heads of saints is a relic of the same idea. It was said by the ancients of Hesiod, the first of all the poets, that whereas he was once nothing but a simple neat-herd, yet suddenly a Divine flame fell upon him, and he became from then on one of the noble of men.

We feel assured that so natural a metaphor would be at once understood by the Apostles. A tongue of fire resting upon them would be a token of a special inspiration from God. Notice first it was *a tongue*, for God has been pleased to make the tongue do mightier deeds than either sword or pen. And though the pen shall speak to ages yet to come, yet never with that living force which trembles from the tongue. For what we read in a book is but dead, but that which we *hear* with the ear comes as a living word to the soul. It pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.

Then it was a tongue *of fire*, to show that God’s ministers speak, not coldly, as though they had tongues of ice. Nor learnedly as with tongues of gold, nor arrogantly as with tongues of brass. Nor plaintively as with tongues of willow, nor sternly as with tongues of iron—but earnestly, and in a mystery—not as with tongues of flesh, but with the tongue of flame. Their words consume sin, scorch falsehood, enlighten the darkness, and comfort the poor. Notice, moreover, that “it SAT upon them.” It did not flicker or remove. It remained there. So the Spirit of God is an *abiding* Influence, and the saints shall persevere. It sat *upon each of them*, so that while there was but one fire, yet each Believer received his portion of the one Spirit. There are diversities of operations, but it is the same Lord.

I will not tarry longer with the description of how the Spirit came except to observe that I would to God that He would manifest Himself in the same manner this day. We want our young men to have tongues of fire. And you, fathers, we long to see you also kindled by the live coal which touched the lips of Isaiah. Even you, my Sisters—for doubtless that tongue of fire rested upon the Virgin Mary and upon the other women—we would like to see it rest on you, that in your families, in your Sunday school classes, or in your visitations and nursing of the sick, you may have the Holy Fire abiding in you.

Oh, may God be pleased to send forth the Comforter to each of us! May none of us be without His power, for the set time to favor Zion shall have come when both men and women of every rank and degree shall have received the Spirit of the blessed God. I am afraid this does not interest you. You think it happened a long while ago, and is not likely ever to occur

again. And I am afraid it is not while we remain so indifferent to it, but, oh, if we had the anxiety to desire it, and the faith to expect it, we might see greater things than these. Without the outward sign, which was but for the babyhood of the Church, we might receive the inward and spiritual Grace fit for the full grown man of the advanced Believers of our time.

**III.** Consider now THE MATTER ITSELF, the benefit which now was given. Of the matter itself, we react very briefly that, "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." The sound was not the Holy Spirit, nor was the tongue of fire the Holy Spirit—these were but the *symbols* of His work. The real work was done when all present were filled with the Holy Spirit. What is this? What is this strange mystery? The skeptic sneers and says, "There is no such thing." The formal religionist says, "I have never felt it." And the most of Christians think it something to be devoutly believed in, but by no means to be experienced.

Is there a Holy Spirit? My Hearer, you dare not ask that question, unless you are prepared to involve a doubt of your own conversion, for, "Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And if, therefore, the Holy Spirit does not dwell in you, and has not made you a new creature by His miraculous operations, you are still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity. Only the true Christian knows what it is to receive the Spirit—but there are only a few Christians who know what it is to be *filled* with Him—to be filled with Him to the brim.

There are times when the preacher has known it, when he had no need to ask himself what he should say, nor in what language he should couch his thoughts—for the thoughts were born all dressed, and armed—and they sprung not *from* him but *through* him, of the Holy Spirit. There are times when the soul is full of calm, for the dove is there—full of passion for the fire is there—full of life, for the wind is there—full of growth, for the dew is there—full of Divine priesthood and the power to bless, for the oil is there. And there are times when the soul is full of knowledge, for the light is there—purged and cleansed, because the fountain of Living Water flows within.

There are, it is true, seasons when the man has to complain that he cannot discover any of these signs. But oh, there are glad and high days when God's anointed servants feel borne upon the mystic Wind aloft in thoughts sublime. Then they are no longer weak men, but men inspired to break hard hearts, to stir emotions, to quicken the dead, to open blind eyes, and to preach the Gospel to the poor—and all by the Power from on High. You who have felt the sublime sensation of being filled with the Spirit may read of Ezekiel's being lifted by a lock of his hair between earth and Heaven—but you know that to be filled with the Spirit is a greater wonder still, for that lifts a man up from worldly cares, enables him to lay hold upon God in prayer, bathes him in the joy of Heaven—and then sends him down with shining face to bless his fellow men.

The flesh trembles in the dust because the great Spirit has come to our spirit's help, and flesh must lose all dominion, but our spirit rejoices with great joy. Observe the difference between Peter with the Spirit, and Peter without the Spirit! There he is, cursing and swearing like a sailor. He never knew Christ, he says. There he is, sinking in the sea, he does not believe that he can walk upon the waters, and he cries, "Lord, save, or I perish." Peter, the braggart, the rash man, and yet the coward! Look at

him now—the Spirit of God has come upon him. How different is Peter! Fearless of all the jeers and taunts which the ribald crew might cast at him, he stands up to preach.

Why has this man eloquence? He speaks mightily and not as the scribes. Lo, the people are moved under him as the green corn is moved by the wind, or as the waves of the sea are swept by the gale. And when he has finished preaching he goes up to the temple and commands a lame man to leap, and the miracle is worked! He is brought before the rulers and commanded to hold his peace, and he answers like a hero, “Whether it is right to obey man rather than God, you judge.” Peter is found traveling over every country, preaching the Word in every tongue, and at last, he that was once a coward cheerfully stretches out his aged arms to be nailed to a cross, but head downwards, as though he felt he was not worthy to die like his Master. He expires upon the tree, glorifying Christ in his death!

There is no comparison to be drawn. It is a case of clear contrast between Peter the unspiritual, and Peter full of the Holy Spirit. No man or woman among you knows what he might be if he were filled with the Spirit. What is that rough Luther? He is only fit to have been a killer of bullocks, or a feller of oaks in the forest. But fill Luther with the Holy Spirit and what is he? He takes the bull of Rome by the horns, slays wild beasts of error in the great arena of the Gospel, and is more than a conqueror through the might which dwells in him! Take John Calvin—fit naturally to be a cunning lawyer, cutting and dividing nice points, judging this precedent, and that, frittering away his time over immaterial niceties.

But fill him with the Holy Spirit, and John Calvin becomes the mighty master of Divine Grace, the reflection of the wisdom of all past ages, and a great light to shed a brilliant ray even till the Millennium shall dawn! Chief, and prince, and king of all uninspired teachers, the mighty seer of Geneva, filled with the Spirit of God is no more John Calvin, but a God-sent angel of the Churches! Who knows what yonder young man may be? I know today he is but as other men—fill him with the Spirit, let it move him in the camp of Dan—and woe to the Philistines!

Who knows what that young woman may be? She may sit under the oak quietly with Deborah now, but the day may come when she shall stir up Barak and put a song into his mouth, saying, “Awake, awake, O Barak, lead your captivity captive, you son of Abinoam!” Only let us be filled with the Spirit and we know not what we can be. We shall, “Laugh at impossibility and say, ‘It shall be done.’ ” We shall attempt what we never dreamed of before, and accomplish that which we always thought to be far beyond our grasp.

**IV.** Our last point is—THE RESULT OF IT ALL. Well, well, you will it a very commonplace sort of thing. After all this rushing mighty wind, this fire and so on, what are you expecting? Kings trembling in the dust, or riding in their chariots to do homage to the Apostles? Shall the wind blow down dynasties—shall the fire consume dominions? Nothing of the kind, my Brothers and Sisters! Nothing of the kind! Spiritual and not carnal, is the kingdom of God. The result lies in three things—a *sermon*, a *number of enquirers*, and a *great Baptism!* That is all! Yes, but though it is all, it is the grandest thing in all the world—for in the judgment of the angels and

of those whom God has made wise unto salvation—these are three most precious matters.

There was a *sermon*. The Spirit of God was given to help Peter to preach a sermon. You turn with interest to know what sort of a sermon a man would preach who was full to the brim with the Holy Spirit. You expect him to be more eloquent than Robert Hall, or Chalmers, of course. More learned than the Puritans, certainly. As for illustrations, of course you will have the loftiest flights of poetic genius. You may expect, now, to have all the orations of Cicero and Demosthenes put entirely in the shade. We shall have something glorious now!

No such thing! No such thing! Never was there a sermon more commonplace than that of Peter's, and let me tell you that it is one of the blessed effects of the Holy Spirit to make ministers preach *simply*. You do not want the Holy Spirit to make them ride the high horse and mount up on the wings of the spread eagle to the stars. What is wanted is to keep them down, dealing with solemn subjects in an intelligible manner. What was the theme of this sermon? Was it something so intellectual that nobody could comprehend it, or so grand that few could grasp it?

No, Peter just rises up and delivers himself somewhat like this—"Jesus Christ of Nazareth lived among you. He was the Messiah promised of old. You crucified Him, but in His name there is salvation, and whoever among you will repent and be baptized shall find mercy." That is all! I am sure Mr. Charles Simeon in his, "Skeleton Sermons," would not have inserted it as a model. And I do not suppose that any college professor alive would ever say to his students—"If you want to preach, preach like Peter." Why, I do not perceive it firstly, secondly, thirdly or fourthly, to which some of us feel compelled to bind ourselves. It is, in fact, a commonplace talking about sublime things—sublime things which in this age are thought to be foolishness and a stumbling block.

Well then, may the Spirit of God be poured out to teach our ministers to preach plainly, to set our young men talking about Jesus Christ—for this is absolutely necessary. When the Spirit of God goes away from a Church, it is a fine thing for oratory, because then it is much more assiduously cultivated. When the Spirit of God is gone, then all the ministers become exceedingly learned, for not having the Spirit they need to supply the emptiness His absence has made. And then the old-fashioned Bible is not quite good enough. They must touch it up a bit, and improve upon it. The old doctrines which used to rejoice their grandmothers at the fireside are too stale for them—they must have an improved and a new theology.

And young gentlemen nowadays show their profound erudition by denying everything which is the prop and pillar of our hope, and start some new will-o'-the-wisp which they set their people staring at. Ah, well, we want the Spirit of God to sweep all that away. Oh that my dear Sister who conducts the female class, and all who are in the Sunday school may be helped just to talk to you about Christ. When you get the Spirit of God to come upon you like fire, and like a rushing mighty wind, it will not be to make you doctors of divinity, and scholars, and great elocutionists. It will only be just for this—to make you preach Christ and preach Him more simply than ever you did before.

The next result was that the people were pricked in the heart and began to cry, "*Men and Brothers and Sisters, what shall we do?*" What a disorderly thing to do at a sermon. Usher! Put that man out of the Church! We cannot allow people to be calling out, "What must I do to be saved?" Blessed disorder, blessed disorder, which the Spirit of God gives! This will be the result of all sermons in which there is the Presence of God. Men will feel that they have heard something which has gone right into their inmost nature—that they have received a wound which they can by no means heal. And at the next enquiry meeting there will be many saying, "How can I find peace? How can I get my sins forgiven?"

What next? Why, where the Spirit of God is, there will be faith, and there will be an *outward confession of it in Baptism*. "Well, well," says one, "I did not think we were to see all this rushing mighty wind, and tongues of fire just to get a few commonplace sermons and conversions and Baptisms." But I tell you again it is the conversions and baptisms which make the arches of Heaven ring! I do not believe there was one extra note in Heaven on the day when the Princess of Wales rode through London. We all went and gazed and admired, but I do not believe that one angel ever opened one eye to look at it. He saw nothing there which struck him.

But wherever there is a groaning, and a sobbing, and a sighing after the Savior, a longing after reconciliation—and above all, where there is a renewed heart dedicating itself openly to Jesus, where there is a soul that says—"I will be buried with my Master. I will be obedient to His command, and despite every opposition, I will go down with Him into the liquid grave. I will be numbered with the ridiculed men and women who acknowledge that they are dead to the world and only alive to Christ"—I say it is in such a case that angels rejoice, and this it is for which we want the Spirit of God.

I have done when I have sown this thought. See, dear Friends, see the absolute importance of repentance, and of faith, and of Baptism. I pray you, if the Spirit of God comes all the way from Heaven to work these, be not satisfied till you receive them. See, again, the importance of preaching, for the Spirit of God descends only to help the preacher. And then see, last of all, the all-importance of the Holy Spirit. Without Him we cannot preach, and we cannot hear so as to believe and be saved. May I beg you, as you go your way, to entreat the Lord to be with us according to His own promise—"If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

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# THE PENTECOSTAL WIND AND FIRE

## NO. 1619

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 18, 1881,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”***

***Acts 2:2-4.***

FROM the descent of the Holy Spirit at the beginning we may learn something concerning His operations at the present time. Remember at the outset that whatever the Holy Spirit was at the first, He is that now, for as God, He remains forever the same—whatever He did then He is able to do still, for His power is by no means diminished. As says the Prophet Micah, “O you that are named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” We would greatly grieve the Holy Spirit if we supposed that His might was less, today, than in the beginning. Although we may not expect and need not desire the miracles which came with the gift of the Holy Spirit, so far as they were *physical*, yet we may both desire and expect that which was intended and *symbolized* by them—and we may reckon to see the same *spiritual* wonders performed among us at this day.

Pentecost, according to the belief of the Jews, was the time of the giving of the Law, and if when the Law was given there was a marvelous display of power on Sinai, it was to be expected that when the *Gospel* was given, whose ministration is far more glorious, there should be some special unveiling of the Divine Presence. If at the commencement of the Gospel we behold the Holy Spirit working great signs and wonders, may we not expect a continuance—no, if anything, an *increased* display of His power as the ages roll on? The Law vanished away, but the Gospel will never vanish. It shines more and more to the perfect millennial day and, therefore, I reckon that with the sole exception of physical miracles, whatever was worked by the Holy Spirit at the first, we may look to be worked continually while the dispensation lasts.

It ought not to be forgotten that Pentecost was the feast of first fruits—it was the time when the first ears of ripe corn were offered unto God. If, then, at the commencement of the Gospel harvest we see so plainly the power of the Holy Spirit, may we not most properly expect infinitely *more* as the harvest advances and, most of all, when the most numerous sheaves shall be gathered? May we not conclude that if the Pentecost was thus marvelous, the actual harvest will be still more wonderful? This morning my objective is not to talk of the descent of the Holy Spirit as a piece of history, but to view it as a fact bearing upon us at this hour, even upon us who are called in these latter days to bear our testimony for the Truth of God.

The Father has sent us the Comforter that He may dwell in us till the coming of the Lord. The Holy Spirit has never returned, for He came in accordance with the Savior's prayer to abide with us forever. The gift of the Comforter was not temporary and the display of His power was not to be once seen and no more. The Holy Spirit is here and we ought to expect His Divine working among us. If He does not so work, we should search ourselves to see what it is that hinders Him and whether there may not be something in ourselves which vexes Him so that He restrains His sacred energy and does not work among us as He did before.

May God grant that the meditation of this morning will increase our faith in the Holy Spirit and inflame our desires towards Him so that we may look to see Him fulfilling His mission among men as at the beginning.

I. First, I shall call your attention to THE INSTRUCTIVE SYMBOLS of the Holy Spirit which were made prominent at Pentecost. They were two. There was a *sound* as of a rushing mighty wind and there were cloven tongues, as it were, of fire. Take the symbols separately. The first is wind—an emblem of Deity and, therefore, a proper symbol of the Holy Spirit. Often, under the Old Testament, God revealed Himself under the emblem of breath or wind. Indeed, as most of you know, the Hebrew word for “wind” and “spirit” is the same, So, with the Greek word, when Christ talked to Nicodemus, it is not very easy for translators to tell us when He said, “spirit,” and when He said, “wind.” Indeed, some most correctly render the original all the way through by the word, “wind,” while others, with much reason, have also used the word, “spirit,” in their translation.

The original word signified either the one or the other, or both. Wind is, of all material things, one of the most spiritual in appearance. It is invisible, ethereal, mysterious and, therefore, men have fixed upon it as being nearest akin to spirit. In Ezekiel's famous vision, when he saw the valley full of dry bones, we all know that the Spirit of God was intended by that vivifying wind which came when the Prophet prophesied and blew upon the withered relics till they were quickened into life. “The Lord has His way in the whirlwind,” thus He displays Himself when He works. “The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind,” thus He reveals Himself when He teaches His servants.

Observe that this wind, on the day of Pentecost, was accompanied with a sound—a sound as of a mighty rushing wind, for, albeit the Spirit of God can work in silence, yet in saving operations He frequently uses sound. I would be the last to depreciate meetings in which there is nothing but holy silence, for I could wish that we had more reverence for silence and it is in *stillness* that the inner life is nourished. Yet the Holy Spirit does not work for the advancement of the kingdom of God by silence, alone, for faith comes by *hearing*. There is a sound as of a mighty rushing wind when the Word of God is sounded forth throughout whole nations by the publishing of the Gospel. If the Lord had not given men ears or tongues, silent worship would have been not only appropriate, but necessary—but inasmuch as we have ears, the Lord must have intended us to hear something—and as we have tongues, He must have meant us to speak.

Some of us would be glad to be quiet, but where the Gospel has free course there is sure to be a measure of noise and stir. The sound came on this occasion, no doubt, to call the attention of the assembly to what was about to occur—to awaken them and to fill them with awe! There is something indescribably solemn about the rush of a rising tempest. It bows the soul before the sublime mystery of Divine power. What more fitting as an attendant upon Divine working than the deeply solemn rush of a mighty wind? With this awe-inspiring sound as of a mighty wind, there was clear indication of its coming from Heaven. Ordinary winds blow from this or that quarter of the skies, but this descended from Heaven itself—it was distinctly like a down-draft from above.

This sets forth the fact that the true Spirit, the Spirit of God, neither comes from this place nor that—neither can His power be controlled or directed by human authority—His working is always from above, from God Himself! The work of the Holy Spirit is, so to speak, the breath of God, and His power is always, in a special sense, the immediate power of God. Coming downward, therefore, this mysterious wind passed into the chamber where the disciples were assembled and filled the room. An ordinary rushing mighty wind would have been felt *outside* the room and would probably have destroyed the house or injured the inhabitants if it had been aimed at any one building—but this heavenly gust filled, but did not destroy the room—it blessed, but did not overthrow the waiting company!

The meaning of the symbol is that as breath, air, wind is the very life of man, so is the Spirit of God the life of the *spiritual* man! By Him are we quickened at the first. By Him are we kept alive afterwards. By Him is the inner life nurtured, increased and perfected. The breath of the nostrils of the man of God is the Spirit of God. This holy breath was not only intended to quicken them but to invigorate them! What a blessing would a breeze be, just now, to us who sit in this heavy atmosphere! How gladly would we hail a gust from the breezy down, or a gale from the open sea! If the winds of earth are so refreshing, what must a wind from Heaven be?

That rushing mighty wind soon cleared away all earth—it engendered damps and vapors—it awakened the disciples and left them braced up for the further work of the Lord. They took in great drafts of heavenly life! They felt animated, awakened and bestirred. A sacred enthusiasm came upon them because they were filled with the Holy Spirit! And, girt with that strength, they rose into a nobler form of life than they had known before. No doubt this wind was intended to show the irresistible power of the Holy Spirit, for simple as the air is, and mobile and apparently feeble, yet set it in motion and you feel that a thing of life is among you! Make that motion more rapid and who knows the power of the restless giant who has been awakened!

Look, it becomes a storm, a tempest, a hurricane, a tornado, a cyclone! Nothing can be more potent than the wind when it is thoroughly roused and so, though the Spirit of God is despised among men so much so that they do not even believe in His existence, yet let Him work with the fullness of His power and you will see what He can do! He comes softly, breathing like a gentle zephyr which fans the flowers, but does not dislodge the insect of most transparent wings, and our hearts are comforted.

He comes like a stirring breeze and we are quickened to a livelier diligence—our sails are hoisted and we fly before the gale! He comes with yet greater strength and we prostrate ourselves in the dust as we hear the thunder of His power bringing down, with a crash, false confidences and refuges of lies! How the firm reliances of carnal men, which seemed to stand like rocks, are utterly cast down! How men's hopes, which appeared to be rooted like oaks, are torn up by the roots before the breath of the convincing Spirit! What can stand against Him? Oh, that we did but see in these latter days something of that mighty rushing wind which breaks the cedars of Lebanon and sweeps before it all things that would resist its power!

The second Pentecostal symbol was fire. Fire, again, is a frequent symbol of Deity. Abraham saw a burning lamp and Moses beheld a burning bush. When Solomon had built his holy and beautiful house, its consecration lay in the fire of God descending upon the sacrifice to mark that the Lord was there, for when the Lord had dwelt before in the Tabernacle, which was superseded by the Temple, He revealed Himself in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. "Our God is a consuming fire." Hence the symbol of fire is a fit emblem of God the Holy Spirit. Let us adore and worship Him! Tongues of flame sitting on each man's head symbolized a personal visitation to the mind and heart of each one of the chosen company.

The fires came not to consume them, for no one was injured by the flaming tongue—to men whom the Lord has prepared for His approach, there is no danger in His visitations. They see God and their lives are preserved. They feel His fires and are not consumed. This is the privilege of only those who have been prepared and purified for such fellowship with God. The intention of the symbol was to show them that the Holy Spirit would illuminate them as fire gives light. "He shall lead you into all truth." From then on they were not to be untrained children, but to be teachers in Israel, instructors of the nations whom they were to disciple unto Christ—and, therefore, the Spirit of the Light of God was upon them!

But fire does more than give light—it inflames—and the flames which sat upon each showed them that they were to be ablaze with love, intense with zeal, burning with self-sacrifice and that they were to go forth among men to speak not with the chill tongue of deliberate logic, but with burning tongues of passionate pleading, persuading and entreating men to come to Christ that they might live! The fire signified Inspiration. God was about to make them speak under a Divine influence, to speak as the Spirit of God should give them utterance. Oh, blessed symbol! Would God that all of us experienced its meaning to the fullest and that the tongue of fire sat upon every servant of the Lord! May a fire burn steadily within to destroy our sin—a holy sacrificial flame to make us whole burnt offerings unto God—a never-dying flame of zeal for God and devotion to the Cross!

Note that the emblem was not only fire, but a *tongue* of fire, for God meant to have a *speaking* Church. Not a Church that would fight with the sword—with that weapon we have nothing to do—but a Church that should have a sword proceeding out of its mouth, whose one weapon should be the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! I think, from

what I know of some preachers, that when they had *their* Pentecost, the influence put upon them was in the form of tongues of *flowers*. But the Apostolic Pentecost knew not flowers, but flames! What fine preaching we have nowadays! What new thoughts and poetical turns! This is not the style of the Holy Spirit!

Soft and gentle is the flow of smooth speech which tells of the dignity of man, the grandeur of the century, the toning down of all punishment for sin and the probable restoration of all lost spirits, including the arch-fiend, himself. This is the Satanic ministry, subtle as the serpent, bland as his seducing words to Eve. The Holy Spirit calls us not to this mode of speech! Fire, intensity, zeal, passion as much as you will—but as for aiming at effect by polished phrases and brilliant periods—these are fitter for those who would deceive men than for those who would tell them the message of the Most High! The style of the Holy Spirit is one which conveys the Truth of God to the mind in the most forcible manner—it is plain, but flaming, simple but consuming! The Holy Spirit has never written a cold period throughout the whole Bible and never did He speak by a man a lifeless Word—He always gives and blesses the tongue of fire.

These, then, are the two symbols, and I should like you to carefully observe how the Holy Spirit teaches us by them. When He came from the Father to His Son, Jesus, it was as a dove. Let peace rest on that dear Sufferer's soul through all His days of labor and through the passion which would close them. His anointing is that of peace—He needed no tongue of flame, for He was already all on fire with love. When the Holy Spirit was bestowed, by the Son of God, upon His disciples it was as breath—"He breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit." To have life more abundantly is a chief necessity of servants of the Lord Jesus and, therefore, the Holy Spirit visits us.

Now that we have the Holy Spirit from Christ as our inner life and quickening, He also comes upon us with the intent to use us in blessing others—and this is the manner of His visitation—He comes as the wind which wafts the words we speak, and as fire which burns a way for the Truths of God we utter. Our words are now full of life and flame! They are borne by the breath of the Spirit and they fall like sparks and set the souls of men blazing with desire after God. If the Holy Spirit shall rest upon me or upon you, or upon any of us, to qualify us for service, it shall be after this fashion—not merely of life for ourselves, but of fiery energy in dealing with others! Come on us even now, O rushing mighty wind, and tongue of fire, for the world has great need! It lies stagnant in the malaria of sin and needs a healing wind! It is shrouded in dreadful night and needs the flaming torch of the Truth of God! There is neither health nor light for it but from You, O blessed Spirit! Come, then, upon it through Your people!

Now put these two symbols together, only mind what you are doing. Wind and fire together! I have kept them separate in my discourse up to now and you have seen power in each one—what are they together? Rushing mighty wind, alone—how terrible! Who shall stand against it? See how the gallant ships dash together and the monarchs of the forest bow their heads. And fire alone! Who shall stand against it when it devours its prey?

But set wind and fire to work in hearty union! Remember the old city of London? When first the flames began, it was utterly impossible to quench them because the wind fanned the flame and the buildings gave way before the torrent! Set the prairie on fire. If a rain shower falls and the air is still, the grass may, perhaps, cease to burn—but let the wind encourage the flame and see how the devourer sweeps along while the tall grass is licked up by tongues of fire!

We have lately read of forests on fire. What a sight! Hear how the mighty trees are crashing in the flame! What can stand against it! The fire sets the mountains on a blaze. What a smoke blackens the skies—it grows dark at noon! As hill after hill offers up its sacrifice, the timid imagine that the great Day of the Lord has come. If we could see a spiritual conflagration of equal grandeur it were a consummation devoutly to be wished! O God, send us Your Holy Spirit in this fashion—give us both the breath of spiritual life and the fire of unconquerable zeal—till nation after nation shall yield to the sway of Jesus!

O You who are our God, answer us by fire, we pray You! Answer us both by wind and fire and then shall we see You to be God, indeed. The kingdom comes not and the work is flagging. O that You would send the wind and the fire! You will do this when we are all of one accord—all believing, all expecting, all prepared by prayer. Lord, bring us to this waiting state!

**II.** Secondly, my Brothers and Sisters, follow me while I call your attention to THE IMMEDIATE EFFECTS of this descent of the Holy Spirit, for these symbols were not sent in vain. There were two immediate effects—the first was filling and the second was the gift of utterance. I call special attention to the first, namely, *filling*—“It filled all the house where they were sitting.” But it did not merely fill the house, but the *men*—“They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.” When they stood up to speak, even the ribald mockers in the crowd noticed this, for they said, “These men are full,” and though they added, “with new wine,” yet they evidently detected a singular fullness about them.

We are poor, empty things by nature, and useless while we remain so—we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Some people seem to believe in the Spirit of God giving utterance, only, and they look upon instruction in Divine things as of secondary importance. Dear, dear me! What trouble comes when we act upon that theory! How the empty vessels clatter, rattle and sound! Men in such case utter a wonderful amount of nothing and even when that nothing is set on fire it does not come to much. I dread a revival of that sort, where the first thing and the last thing is everlasting talk. Those who set up for teachers ought to be, themselves, taught of the Lord—how can they communicate that which they have not received? Where the Spirit of God is truly at work, He first *fills* and *then* gives utterance—that is His way. Oh that you and I were at this moment filled with the Holy Spirit!

“Full!” Then they were not cold, dead and empty of life as we sometimes are. “Full.” Then there was no room for anything else in any one of them! They were too completely occupied by the heavenly power to have room for the desires of the flesh! Fear was banished; every minor motive was ex-

pelled! The Spirit of God, as it flooded their very beings, drove out of them everything that was extraneous. They had many faults and many infirmities, before, but that day, when they were filled with the Spirit of God, faults and infirmities were no more perceptible! They became different men from what they had ever been before—men full of God are the reverse of men full of self!

The difference between an empty man and a full man is something very wonderful. Let a thirsty person have an empty vessel handed to him. There may be much noise in the handing, but what a mockery it is as it touches his lips. But fill it with refreshing water and, perhaps, there may be all the more silence in the passing of it, for a full cup needs careful handling, but oh, what a blessing when it reaches the man's lips! Out of a full vessel he may drink his full. Out of a full Church the world shall receive salvation, but never out of an empty one! The first thing we need, as a Church, is to be filled with the Holy Spirit! The gift of utterance will then come as a matter of course.

They ask me, "May the sisters speak anywhere? If not in the assembly, may they not speak in smaller meetings?" I answer, yes, if they are full of the Holy Spirit. Shall this Brother or that be allowed to speak? Certainly, if he is filled, he may flow. May a layman preach? I know nothing about laymen except that I am no cleric, myself—let all speak who are full of the Holy Spirit! "Spring up, O well." If it is a fountain of living water, who would restrain it? Who *could* restrain it? Let him overflow who is full, but mind he does not set up to pour out when there is nothing in him—for if he counts it his official duty to go pouring out, pouring out, pouring out at unreasonable length and yet nothing comes of it—I am sure he acts not by the Holy Spirit, but according to his own vanity.

The next Pentecostal symbol was *utterance*. As soon as the Spirit of God filled them, they began to speak at once. It seems to me that they began to speak before the people had come together. They could not help it—the inner forces demanded expression and they must speak! So when the Spirit of God really comes upon a man, he does not wait till he has gathered an audience of the size which he desires, but he seizes the next opportunity! He speaks to one person. He speaks to two. He speaks to three—to anybody—he must speak, for he is full and must have vent! When the Spirit of God fills a man, he speaks so as to be understood. The crowd spoke different languages and these Spirit-taught men spoke to them in the language of the country in which they were born. This is one of the signs of the Spirit's utterance.

If my friend over yonder talks in a Latinized style to a company of fruit sellers, I will guarantee you the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with him! If a learned Brother fires over the heads of his congregation with a grand oration, he may trace his elocution, if he likes, to Cicero and Demosthenes—but do not let him ascribe it to the Holy Spirit—for that is not after His manner! The Spirit of God speaks so that His words may be understood—and if there is any obscurity, it lies in the language used by the Lord, Himself.

The crowd not only understood, but they *felt*. There were lancets in this Pentecostal preaching and the hearers "were pricked in the heart." The

Truth of God wounded men and the slain of the Lord were many, for the wounds were in the most vital part. They could not understand it—they had heard speakers before, but this was quite a different thing. The men spoke fire flakes and one hearer cried to his fellow, “What is this?” The preachers were speaking flame and the fire dropped into the hearts of men till they were amazed and confused! Those are the two effects of the Holy Spirit—a fullness of the Spirit in the ministry and the Church—and next, a fire ministry and a Church on fire, speaking so as to be felt and understood by those around!

Causes produce effects like themselves and this wind and fire ministry soon did its work. We read that this “was noised abroad.” Of course it was, because there had been a noise as of a rushing mighty wind. Next to that we read that all the people came together and were confounded. There was naturally a stir, for a great wind from Heaven was rushing! All were amazed and astonished and, while some enquired believingly, others began to mock. Of course they did—there was a fire burning and fire is a dividing thing—and this fire began to separate between the precious and the vile as it always will when it comes into operation.

We may expect, at the beginning of a true revival, to observe a movement among the people—a noise and a stir. These things are not done in a corner. Cities will know of the Presence of God and crowds will be attracted by the event. This was the immediate effect of the Pentecostal marvel and I shall now ask you to follow me to my third point, which is this—

**III.** The Holy Spirit being thus at work, what was THE MOST PROMINENT SUBJECT which these full men began to preach about with words of fire? Suppose that the Holy Spirit should work mightily in the Church—what would *our* ministers preach about? We should have a revival, should we not, of the old discussions about predestination and free agency? I do not think so! These are happily ended, for they tend towards bitterness and, for the most part, the disputants are not equal to their task. We should hear a great deal about the pre-millennial and the post-millennial advent, should we not? I do not think so! I never saw much of the Spirit of God in discussions or dreams upon times and seasons which are not clearly revealed. Should we not hear learned essays upon advanced theology? No, Sir—when the *devil* inspires the Church, we have modern theology—but when the Spirit of God is among us, that rubbish is shot out with loathing!

What *did* these men preach about? Their hearers said, “We hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” Their subject was the wonderful works of God! Oh, that this might be, to my dying day, my sole and only topic—“The wonderful works of God.” For, first, they spoke of Redemption, that wonderful work of God! Peter’s sermon was a specimen of how they spoke of it. He told the people that Jesus was the Son of God—that they had crucified and slain Him—but that He had come to redeem men and that there was salvation through His precious blood. He preached Redemption! Oh, how this land will echo again and again with, “Redemption, Redemption, Redemption, Redemption by the precious

blood!” when the Holy Spirit is with us! This is fit fuel for the tongue of flame—this is something worthy to be blown by the Divine wind.

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans us from all sin.” This is one of the wonderful works of God of which we can never make too frequently mention. They certainly spoke of the next wonderful work of God, namely, Regeneration. There was no concealing of the work of the Holy Spirit in that primitive ministry! It was brought to the front. Peter said, “You shall receive the Holy Spirit.” The preachers of Pentecost told of the Spirit’s work by the Spirit’s power—conversion, repentance, renewal, faith, holiness and such things were freely spoken of and ascribed to their real Author, the Divine Spirit. If the Spirit of God shall give us, once again, a full and fiery ministry, we shall hear it clearly proclaimed, “You must be born again,” and we shall see a people forthcoming which are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of the will of God and by the energy which comes from Heaven! A Holy Spirit ministry cannot be silent about the Holy Spirit and His sacred operations upon the heart!

And very plainly they spoke on a third wonderful work of God, namely, remission of sins. This was the point that Peter pushed home to them—that on repentance they should receive remission of sins. What a blessed message is this—pardon for crimes of deepest dye—a pardon bought with Jesus’ blood! Free pardon, full pardon, irreversible pardon given to the vilest of the vile when they ground their weapons of rebellion and bow at the feet that once were nailed to the Cross! If we would prove ourselves to be under Divine influence, we must keep to the Divine message of fatherly forgiveness to returning prodigals. What happier word can we deliver?

These are the doctrines which the Holy Spirit will revive in the midst of the land when He works mightily—Redemption, Regeneration, Remission. If you would have the Spirit of God resting on your labors, dear Brothers and Sisters, keep these three things always to the front and make all men hear in their own tongue the wonderful works of God!

**IV.** I shall close by noticing, in the fourth place, what were the GLORIOUS RESULTS of all this. Have patience with me if you find the details somewhat long. The result of the Spirit coming as wind and fire, filling and giving utterance, was, first, in the hearers’ deep feeling. There was never in the world, perhaps, such a feeling excited by the language of mortal man as that which was awakened in the crowds in Jerusalem on that day! You might have seen a group here, and a group there, all listening to the same story of the wondrous works of God and all stirred and affected, for the heavenly wind and fire went with the preaching and they could not help feeling its power.

We are told that they were pricked in the heart. They had painful emotions. They felt wounds which killed their enmity. The Word of God struck at the center of their being—it pierced the vital point. Alas, people come into our places of worship nowadays to hear the preacher and their friends ask them on their return, “How did you like him?” Was that your errand, to see how you liked him? What practical benefit is there in such a mode of using the servants of God? Are we sent among you to give op-

opportunities for criticism? Yet the mass of men seem to think that we are nothing better than fiddlers or actors who come upon the stage to help you while away an hour!

O my Hearers, if we are true to our God and true to you, ours is a more solemn business than most men dream! The objective of all true preaching is the *heart*—we aim at divorcing the heart from sin and wedding it to Christ! Our ministry has failed and has not the Divine seal set upon it unless it makes men tremble, makes them sad and then soon brings them to Christ and causes them to rejoice! Sermons are to be heard by the thousands and yet how little comes of them all because the heart is not aimed at, or else the archers miss the mark! Alas, our hearers do not present their hearts as our target, but leave them at home and bring us only their ears, or their heads! Here we need Divine aid. Pray mightily that the Spirit of God may rest upon all who speak in God's name, for then they will create deep feeling in their hearers!

Then followed an earnest enquiry. "They were pricked in their heart and they said to Peter and the rest of the Apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'" Emotion is, of itself, but a poor result unless it leads to practical action. To make men feel is well enough, but it must be a feeling which impels them to immediate movement, or at least to earnest enquiry as to what they should do. O Spirit of God, if You will rest on me, even me, men shall not hear and go their way and forget what they have heard! They will arise and seek the Father and taste His love! If You would rest on all the brotherhood that publish Your Word, men would not merely weep while they hear and be affected while the discourse lasts, but they would go their way to ask, "What must we do to be saved?"

This is what we need! We do not require new preachers, but we need a new anointing of the Spirit. We do not require novel forms of service, but we need the fire Spirit, the wind Spirit to work by us till everywhere men cry, "What must we do to be saved?" Then came a grand reception of the Word. We are told that they gladly received the Word of God and they received it in two senses—first, Peter bade them repent and they did. They were pricked to the heart from compunction on account of what they had done to Jesus—and they sorrowed after a godly sort and quit their sins. They also believed in Him whom they had slain and accepted Him as their Savior, then and there, without hesitancy. They trusted in Him whom God had set forth to be a Propitiation and thus they fully received the Word of God. Repentance and faith make up a complete reception of Christ and they had both of these. Why should we not see this Divine result today? We shall see it in proportion to our faith.

But what next? Why, they were baptized directly! Having repented and believed, the next step was to make confession of their faith—and they did not postpone that act for a single day—why should they? Willing hands were there! The whole company of the faithful were all glad to engage in the holy service and that same day they were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! If the Holy Spirit were fully with us, we should never have to complain that many Believers never confess their faith, for they would be eager to confess the Savior's name in His own appointed way! Delay to be baptized comes too often of fear of

persecution, indecision, love of ease, pride, or disobedience—but all these vanish when the heavenly wind and fire are doing their sacred work! Sinful diffidence soon disappears! Sinful shame of Jesus is no more seen! Hesitancy and delay are banished forever when the Holy Spirit works with power!

Furthermore, there was not merely this immediate confession, but, as a result of the Spirit of God, there was great steadfastness. “They continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine.” We have had plenty of revivals of the human sort and their results have been sadly disappointing. Under excitement, nominal converts have been multiplied—but where are they after a little testing? I am sadly compelled to admit that, so far as I can observe, there has been much sown and very little reaped that was worth reaping, from much of that which has been called “revival.” Our hopes were flattering as a dream, but the apparent result has vanished like a vision of the night! But where the Spirit of God is really at work the converts stand—they are well-rooted and grounded and, therefore, they are not carried about by every wind of doctrine! They continue steadfast in the Apostolic Truths of God!

We see next that there was abundant worship of God, for they were steadfast not only in the doctrine, but in breaking of bread, in prayer and in fellowship. There was no difficulty in getting a Prayer Meeting then! There was no difficulty in maintaining daily communion and holy fellowship, then, for the Spirit of God was among them and the ordinances were precious in their eyes. “Oh,” say some, “if we could get this minister or that evangelist, we should do well.” Brothers and Sisters, if you had the Holy Spirit you would have everything else growing out of His Presence, for all good things are summed up in Him!

Next to this there came striking generosity. Funds were not hard to raise—liberality overflowed its banks, for Believers poured all that they had into the common fund. Then was it, indeed, seen to be true that the silver and the gold are the Lord’s! When the Spirit of God operates powerfully, there is little need to issue telling appeals for widows and orphans, or to go down on your knees and plead for missionary fields which cannot be occupied for need of money. At this moment our village Churches can scarcely support their pastors at a starvation rate—but I believe that if the Spirit of God will visit all the Churches, means will be forthcoming to keep all going right vigorously! If this does not happen, I tremble for our Non-conformist Churches, for the means of their existence will be absent—both as to spiritual and temporal supplies they will utterly fail.

There will be no lack of money when there is no lack of Grace. When the Spirit of God comes, those who have substance yield it to their Lord! And those who have but little grow rich by giving of that little! And those who are already rich become happy by consecrating what they have! There is no need to rattle the box when the rushing mighty wind is heard and the fire is dissolving all hearts in love! Then came continual gladness. “They did eat their meat with gladness.” They were not merely glad at Prayer Meetings and sermons, but glad at breakfast and at supper! Whatever they had to eat, they were for singing over it. Jerusalem was the happiest city that ever was when the Spirit of God was there! The disciples

were singing from morning to night and I have no doubt the outsiders asked, "What is it all about?"

The Temple was never so frequented as then—there was never such singing before—the very streets of Jerusalem and the Hill of Zion rang with the songs of the once despised Galileans! They were full of gladness and that gladness showed itself in praising God. I have no doubt they broke out, now and then, in the services with shouts of, "Glory! Hallelujah!" I should not wonder but what all propriety was scattered to the winds. They were so glad, so exhilarated—that they were ready to leap for joy! Of course we never say, "Amen," or, "Glory!" now. We have grown to be so frozenly proper that we never interrupt a service in any way, because, to tell the truth, we are not so particularly glad, we are not so specially full of praise that we want to do anything of the sort! Alas, we have lost very much of the Spirit of God and much of the joy and gladness which attend His Presence—and so we have settled into a decorous apathy! We gather the links of propriety instead of the palm branches of praise.

May God send us a season of glorious disorder! Oh for a sweep of wind that will set the seas in motion and make our ironclad Brethren now lying so quietly at anchor to roll from stem to stern! As for us, who are as the little ships, we will fly before the gale if it will but speed us to our desired haven! Oh for fire to fall again—fire which shall affect the most stolid! This is a sure remedy for indifference. When a flake of fire falls into a man's bosom, he knows it. And when the Word of God comes home to a man's soul, he knows it, too. Oh that such fire might first sit upon the disciples and then fall on all around!

And, to close, there was then a daily increase of the Church—"The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." Conversion was going on perpetually! Additions to the Church were not events which happened once a year, but they were everyday matters, "so mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed." O Spirit of God, You are ready to work with us, today, even as You did then! Delay not, we beseech You, but work at once! Break down every barrier that hinders the incomings of Your might! Overturn, overturn, O sacred wind! Consume all obstacles, O heavenly fire, and give us now both hearts of flame and tongues of fire to preach Your reconciling Word for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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# A YOUNG MAN'S VISION

## NO. 806

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 16, 1868,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,**

**Being the Annual Sermon of the Young Men's Association in Aid of  
the Baptist Missionary Society.**

*"Your young men shall see visions."  
Acts 2:17.*

MANY visions have led to the most disastrous results. When Napoleon had a vision of a universal monarchy over which he should preside, with the French eagle for his ensign, he drenched the lands in blood. Many visions have been wretchedly delusive. Men have dreamed of finding the fairy pleasure in the dark forest of sin. Carnal joys have danced before their eyes as temptingly as the mirage in the desert, and they have pursued the phantom forms to their misery in this world and to their eternal ruin in the next. Mistaking license for liberty, and madness for mirth, they have dreamed themselves into Hell! Many dreams have sucked the life-blood out of men as vampires do.

Men have passed from stern reality into dreamland and while seemingly awake, have continued like sleepwalkers to do all things in their sleep. Many pass all their days in one perpetual daydream—speculating, building castles in the air, thinking of what they would do—and vowing how they would behave themselves. With fine capacities they have driveled away existence! As their theory of life was born of smoke, so the result of their lives has been a cloud. The luxurious indolence of mere resolve, the useless tossing of regrets—these have been all their sluggard life.

But for all this, good and grand visions are not unknown—visions which came from the excellent glory. Visions which, when young or old men have seen them, have filled them with wisdom, Divine Grace and holiness. Visions which have worked with such effect upon their minds that they have been lifted up above the level of the sons of men and made sons of God, co-workers with the Eternal! Such visions are given to men whose eyes have been illumined by the Holy Spirit—visions which have come of that eye-salve which only the Holy Spirit can apply. Visions which are not bestowed on carnal men nor unveiled to the impure in heart. Visions reserved for the men elect of God who are sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and made meet to be partakers of the witness of God and the testimony of His Son.

All Divine things, when they first come to men from the Lord, are as visions because man is so little prepared to believe God's thoughts and

ways that he cannot think them to be real. They appear to us to be too great, too good to be real. We look at them rather as things to be desired and wished for, than as things that may be actually ours. It must be so while Jehovah's ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts. It must be so, that even Divine mercy should at first be a burden to the Prophet who has its message to deliver, and that the eternal promise should be a vision to the Seer who first receives it.

We are so gross and carnal, even when most clarified and made fit to receive Divine impressions, God's spiritual messages and directions to us must usually at the first float dimly before the sense, and only in after thoughts become solid and clear. We must take care that we do not neglect heavenly monitions through fear of being considered visionary. We must not be staggered even by the dread of being styled *fanatical*, or out of our minds—for to stifle a thought from *God* is no mean sin. How much of good in this world would have been lost if good men had quenched the first half-fashioned thoughts which have flitted before them!

I mean, for instance, had Martin Luther taken the advice of his teacher when he said to him, "Go your way, silly monk! Go to your cell and pray God, and if it be His will He will reform the abuses of this Church, but what have *you* to do with it?" Supposing the agitated monk had administered an opiate to his soul, what then? Doubtless the Gospel to Luther at the first was dim enough, and the idea of reform most vague and indistinct—but had he closed his heart to his vision, how long might not the Romish darkness have brooded over the multitudes of Europe? And George Fox, that most eminent of dreamers who dreamed more and more vividly than any other man! Where had been all the testimonies for a spiritual religion? Where all the holy influences for benevolence, for peace, for anti-slavery, for I know not what besides which have streamed upon this world through the agency of the Society of Friends, if the wild Quaker had been content to let his impressions come and go and be forgotten?

These things, which nowadays are ordinary Christian doctrines, were considered in his day to be but the prattle of fanatics, even as the reforms which some of us shall live to see are denounced as revolutionary, or ridiculed as Utopian. O young men, if you have received a thought which dashes ahead of your times, hold to it and work at it till it comes to something! If you have dreamed a dream from the Lord, turn it over and over again till you are quite sure it is not steam from a heated brain, or smoke from Hell—and when it is clear to your own heart that it is fire from off God's altar—then work and pray and wait your time.

Perhaps it may take 50 years to work that thought out, or what is worse, you may never live to see it realized, but what of that? You may have to leave that thought sown in the dust, but the thought will not die. It may produce a harvest when you are with the angels! Do not, I pray you, because the thing happens to seem new, or too enthusiastic, or too far ahead, be snubbed into putting it into a corner. But take care of it and

nurture it—and if it is not of God, a little experience will disabuse you of it, let us hope. But if it *is* of the Lord, you will grow in your attachment to it and by-and-by God will find an opportunity for you to make it practical.

The great Father of spirits does, in fact, say to you when He puts a great design into your keeping, as Pharaoh's daughter said to Jochebed, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." And though the Moses that you nurse may not deliver Israel in your life-time, yet shall you have your wages if you nurse the thought for God. Many suggestions which come from God to men are not so much visions to *them* as they are to the outside world. And need we wonder at this? Why, men of science and art have to endure the same ordeal! Stephenson declares that he will make a machine which will run, without horse-power, at the rate of 12 miles an hour—and how the Tory benches of the House of Commons, loaded then, as now, with stupidity, roared at the man as a born fool!

How was it proved to a demonstration that if the engine began to work, the wheels might revolve, but the engine never would move an inch! Or if it moved at a great speed, the passengers would not be able to breathe! Yet Stephenson lived to see his dream fulfilled and we have lived to see it a much more wonderful power still. Now, if men of science can endure this, and if we members of the Baptist Mission remember still the roars of laughter which were launched by Sydney Smith against "the inspired cobbler," when he talked about the conquest of India for the Lord Jesus Christ, we may well be prepared, when we obtain an inspiration from God, to put up with a world of scorn, opposition and contempt for a little time, and to say, "Never mind, there is a day coming that shall reverse the hasty judgment of this world. You sons of darkness are not a fair jury to sit upon questions of light. You blind men who know not God, nor the glory of His power are not qualified to mount the bench and sit in judgment upon thoughts which flash from the eternal mind. You may give your judgment, but the Lord shall reverse it, and time, which is always with the Truth of God, will before long turn the laugh in another direction.

With this rather too long preface about dreaming, I will now confess that, after my own fashion, I, too, have seen a vision. And though you should say of me in days to come, "Behold, this dreamer comes," yet, as he that has a dream is bid to tell his dream, so I tell mine. My dream is this—I have seen in vision, missionary spirit in England, now so given to slumber, marvelously quickened, awakened and revived! I have seen—the wish was father to the sight—I have seen the ardor of our first missionary days return to us! I have seen young men eager for the mission field, and old men and fathers sitting in united council to correct mistakes, to devise new methods, or to strengthen the old ones, so that by any means the great chariot of Christ might roll onwards and that His victories might be more rapid.

I thought that I saw, from one end of England to the other, the Christian Church stirred with a deep sense of her duty to the heathen Christian ministers full of pangs and sorrows on account of dying myriads. I thought that I saw Christian men and women universally contributing liberally of their substance, while men fitted for the work pushed forward at the call of the great Lord of the harvest to toil in the great harvest field. I have seen such a vision. By God's Grace, we shall see it a fact! Would to God that the captivity of our Zion might be turned—then should we be like they that dream! Then should our mouth be filled with laughter and our tongue with singing while the heathen would cry, "The Lord has done great things for them."

First, this evening, I shall try to justify my vision and show that it is by no means unreasonable. Secondly, I shall, in a few words, elaborate the vision or give the details of it. And then, in the third place, as time may suit us, I shall endeavor to promote its realization.

**I. First, LET US JUSTIFY OUR VISION.** We have dreamed that the missionary spirit was suddenly revived among us, that missions were pushed on with greater ardor and that God vouchsafed to them a far greater blessing than He has done of late. There have been more incoherent dreams than *that* in this world, and for this reason—first, that which we have dreamed of is evidently needed. Brethren, we are not among those who are prepared to croak and complain at the very first difficulty that may arise in a great enterprise, but no man can look upon our own Baptist Mission—and I suppose we are not much worse than others—without feeling that there is a pretty general flagging in missionary interest.

And albeit that the funds may not much have fallen off, yet the annual recurrence of a debt, which is far from being welcome, together with other matters goes to show that missionary zeal needs rekindling. This results partly from the fact that the novelty of the thing has worn off—the work having now been on the anvil for 50 years and more—and partly because we have had few very startling incidents of late to evoke a display of enthusiasm.

That the missionary fire exists is certain, for when the recent events in Jamaica acted, as it were, as a refreshing breeze, the embers glowed and flamed anew. It is there, certainly, for the heart of the Church is alive. It is there, but it is slumbering. You who remember the thundering voice of William Knibb and the great meetings which would be gathered when some such Brethren returned home to tell what God had done among the heathen, must feel that you have fallen upon dull, uninteresting days in mission life. It is as when the thing is flat and stale, and when men have reached the dregs of the wine and the new wine is not in the cluster.

Well, then, if it is so, let it be remembered that missionary zeal ought not to flag—if there is any one point in which the Christian Church ought to keep its fervor at a white heat, it is concerning *missions* to the heathens. If there is anything about which we cannot tolerate lukewarmness,

it is in the matter of sending the Gospel to a dying world. How can we expect, in such an enterprise, with difficulties to our poor weakness so insuperable, that we shall ever succeed if any of our strength is left unused? With all we have we are weak enough, but if we send but *part* of the army to the battle—if we exert but half of our strength—how can we expect that the blessing of God shall rest upon us? Depend upon it, that the flagging of zeal at home acts like a canker abroad!

When the heart of Christianity in England does not throb vigorously, every single limb of the missionary body feels the decline, and there is not a missionary anywhere, from the snows of Labrador to the burning heats of Africa, who is not enervated and injured when the Christian public at home begin to weary in well doing. It needs then, it *imperatively* needs, that our vision should be made a *fact*. We may be excused our vision because it is very possible that it may be realized. It is not a thing too hard to look for. It was far harder work, surely, to have *established* the mission than it will be most thoroughly and earnestly to *revive* it!

If we will but enquire into what may have been the causes of any decline that exists, we shall not find them, I think, to be very deep, nor to be difficult of remedy. They are but superficial, and a little loving earnestness will soon remove them. Brethren, as a denomination we are beginning to cluster more closely around our standard. We have been up to now somewhat scattered over the field—isolated, divided—and therefore weak. But now we feel that our strength must lie, under God, in our *unity*, and our ranks are classing each man to his Brother. We feel the fire of sacred love burning in our hearts, and as we come together and begin to talk of the difficulties before us in a fraternal spirit, they will all vanish!

Lovingly correcting errors, carefully removing excrescences and boldly advancing, the stone shall be rolled away from the sepulcher before we reach it, for if not in God's name and by His strength, we will never roll it away ourselves. And if there has been a flagging, this very meeting, in which there are young and ardent spirits, shall help to supply the material with which to kindle a fire which shall nevermore grow dim. More than that—it is not only possible that our dream may become a reality, but it is very probable—for so it always has been. If ever God's Church has declined for a little while, unexpectedly there has been yielded a season of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord. We know not what God has in store. He is great at surprises! His best wine last amazes us all.

When the devil is most secure upon his throne, then God springs a mine and blows his empire into atoms. Just when the wise virgins and the foolish alike have allowed their lamps to burn low, then is the cry heard, "Behold, the bridegroom comes!" and those virgins arise and trim their lamps. So will it be among us. I am hopeful that, in answer to earnest prayer, God will speedily send among us a general intensity of desire for the glory of Christ, accompanied by broken hearts and weeping eyes for the perishing heathen, and a solemn resolve that, in Jehovah's strength

we will spare no pains and neglect no efforts by which we may make the Gospel known unto the ends of the earth!

Yes, a thorough renovation of the missionary society, a resurrection of the mission spirit, and an arousing of our Churches is delightfully probable—it were wretched, indeed, if it were not so. One thing more we will say upon this topic, namely, that such a renewal is solemnly required of us. What are our personal obligations to the Crucified? What owe we not to the Gospel which has delivered us from an eternity of woe and has guaranteed to us an everlasting career of blessedness? This night, redeemed, regenerated, adopted, justified, sanctified, with your feet upon the rock, a song in your mouth, and your goings established—will you not feel it to be a call from Heaven that you should be in earnest to gather in the Lord's chosen out of all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth?

Did our Savior slumber in His life-work? Was He tardy in His service for our redemption? Then might we grow lax? But if, setting His face to Jerusalem, He panted for the baptism in which He was to be baptized, and was straitened until it was accomplished, then He claims of us, according to our measure, the same steadfastness of resolve and perseverance of purpose, and sacrifice of self! I charge you, young men, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, be not slow to spend and be spent for Him. *All* is too little—shall we give Him *less* than all? Fervent services are too poor—shall we be lukewarm? Descend, O heavenly fire, and now inflame us, for less than Your flames cannot enable us to live as live we should! I will not tarry upon this point. You have already forgiven me my dream.

**II. LET US PROCEED TO ELABORATE THE VISION.** I was asked principally to address young men this evening. I am a young man myself, and therefore if I utter anything exceedingly visionary, you will observe its justification in the text, "Your young men shall see visions." My dream seemed to take this shape: In order that missionary work should be reformed, revived and carried on with energy and with hope of success, it seemed necessary that especially among our young members there should be a revival of intense and earnest prayer, and anxious sympathy with the missionary work.

The power of prayer can never be overrated. They who cannot serve God by preaching need not regret it if they can be mighty in prayer. The true strength of the Church lies there. This is the sinew which moves the arm of Omnipotence. If a man can but pray, he can do anything! He that knows how to overcome the Lord in prayer has Heaven and earth at his disposal. There is nothing, Man, which you cannot accomplish if you can but prevail with God in prayer!

Now, I will not say that we ought to have our Prayer Meetings for missionary objects more largely attended—everybody knows this—but does everybody try to attend? But I will say this, which is more likely to be forgotten—that it were well if we had *settled* private seasons of devotion, each of us, especially to intercede with God for the conversion of the hea-

then. It will be a notable day when the young men of this society say, "Not only will we attend the Prayer Meetings for this object, but we will, each one, as before the Lord, make it a matter of conscience that there shall be at least one hour in the week sacredly hedged around and spent in private prayer for the missionary work."

Beneath the banyan tree you will not stand surrounded by black faces to tell of Krishnu's Christ—but in your *own* little room, by the old arm-chair you will as surely be bringing down showers of blessings upon the heathen by importunate entreaties. Here our old men and our matrons, as well as our young men and maidens, may unite. If it is so, that the entire Church shall send up one impassioned, continuous, prevalent cry to God, "O Lord, make bare Your arm for Christ and for His Truth!" verily, verily, I say unto you He shall avenge you speedily though He bear long with you! Your prayers shall come up unto the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth and He will reveal the glory of His power!

Next, if our young men who see visions will follow up their prayers with practical *effort*, then we shall see in our Churches a larger and more efficient staff of collectors and contributors. We should then find men who would give of their substance as a matter of principle, give themselves, or in other fair proportion so that the kingdom of Christ should never have an empty treasury. I speak to some who sit often in this place who need not to have a word said to them by way of stirring them up to liberality, for I can glory in them in this respect, that they do beyond all that I could expect! But I wish that the same spirit of giving were paramount throughout all the Church that men would give, not because they are asked, nor by way of emulation or compulsion, but because *God* has given to *them*, and they recognize their stewardship. A few men in a Church may often move the whole to liberality. The example of a few and those few, perhaps, not the richest, may be contagious to the whole mass. And a few earnest young people, especially, may often push right and left with their proverbial enthusiasm till they have stirred the inert mass and constrained the whole body to be liberal to the cause of Jesus Christ!

Up till now my dream has been reasonable, you will say. I will now be more visionary. If we were all *praying* for missions, and all *giving* for their support, it might be very well asked of us, "What do you do more than others?" for what Romanist is there who is not zealous for the spread of *his* religion? What *heathen* is there who does not give quite as much as any of us give, yes, and a great deal more than we give, to his superstitions? But, supposing next to this, that there should be a number of young men here who know each other very well—young men who have been trained in the same sanctuary, nurtured in the same Church—who should meet together tomorrow, or at such other time as shall be convenient, and say to one another, "Now, we are in business, we have just commenced in life, and God is prospering us, more or less. We are taking wives to ourselves. Our children are coming around us. But still, we trust

we are never going to permit ourselves to be swallowed up in a mere worldly way of living—now, what ought *we* to do for missions?”

And suppose the enquiry should be put, “Is there one among us who could devote himself to go and teach the heathen for us? As we, most of us, may not have the ability, or do not feel called to the work, is there one out of 12 of us young men who have grown up side by side in the Sunday school who has the ability and who feels called to go? Let us make it a matter of prayer, and when the Holy Spirit says, ‘Separate So-and-So to the work,’ then we, the other 11 who remain, will do this—we will say to him, ‘Now, Brother, you cannot stay at home to make your fortune or to earn a competence. You are now giving yourself up to a very arduous and earnest enterprise, and we will support you. We know you—we have confidence in you. You go down into the pit—we will hold the rope. Go forth in connection with our own denominational society, but we will bear the expense year by year among ourselves!’

“Have you faith enough to go trusting that the Lord will provide? Then, we will have faith enough, and generosity enough to say that your needs shall be to our care. You *preach* for Christ—we will make money for Christ. When you open the Bible for Christ, we will be taking down the shop shutters for Christ. And while you are unfolding the banner of Christ's love, we will be unfolding the calicos, or selling the groceries. And we pledge ourselves *always* to set aside your portion, because, as our Brother, you are doing *our* work.”

I wish we had such godly clubs as these—holy confederacies of earnest young men who thus would love their Missionary, feel for him, hear from him continually—and undertake to supply his support. Why, on such a plan as that, I should think they would give 50 times, 100 times as much as ever they are likely to give to an impersonal *society*, or to a man whose name they only know, but whose face they never saw! I wonder whether I shall ever live to see a club of that kind? I wonder whether such a club will ever spring up in the midst of this Church, or any of the Churches in London? If it shall be so, I shall be glad to have seen a vision of it!

Further, I have dreamed, also, that there would spring up in our Churches a very large number of young men who would count it to be the very highest ambition of their lives to give themselves up to the work of Jesus Christ abroad, and who, seeing that in London and throughout England men may hear the Gospel if they will, while many of the heathen cannot hear it, like or no, would feel it to be their duty to serve Christ in the foreign field. And I have wondered whether we should have these noble fellows coming by the score, and saying, “Here am I, send me.” Then I have considered whether God would pour out enough of the missionary spirit upon these men to make them say, “Well, the missionary society is in debt and cannot take us—it has enough men to support already—it is doing a good work enough.

“I will not interfere with it. I do not want to be a burden to any Brethren. Will you send me out and let me exercise my faith in God, only having this for my comfort—that you will stand at my back and give me what you can, while I will only draw upon you for what I cannot get for myself”? I wonder whether we shall see 50 or 100 missionaries within the next year or two leaving our shores, whose passage has been paid and who will land in some foreign country with just enough about them to keep them till the language has been learned, and who will then, in confidence in God, set about working to support themselves?

I set Paul before you, young men. When he preached the Gospel at the first, he was a tent-maker and he earned his own living. Are there no occupations in these days by which a man may earn his living and yet preach the Gospel? It is not the best thing to do—the best thing is for a man to give all his time to his ministry. But if you cannot have the best, you must have the second best. Are there not to be found physicians who, in China and in India, would not only procure a subsistence, but much more, and might proclaim the Gospel at the same time? Thank God there is such a thing as a medical mission! Thank God that the profession of medicine has not been behind in sending heroes to the field! But are there no other occupations?

Young men, are there no clerkships to be had in India? I find men going out there by scores to make their fortunes, and ruin their constitutions. And I see young women going out to get married to Indian settlers almost on speculation. Have we no young men and women who will go across the sea and find their way round the Cape of Good Hope to preach the Gospel, intending to use their commercial pursuits as a means of introduction and support? Surely it must be so! I know that at this present moment there are hundreds of Christian men living along the coasts of South America, especially of the Brazils and the Argentine Republic, where skilled artisans, engineers, and such like are in constant request by the government. And I have often hoped to hear that some of these men were originating Christian missions.

I have often wondered why more has not been done of that kind. We hear of our young Brethren going forth to Morocco, to Algiers, to Turkey and Egypt—they are in demand in almost every part of the earth—for the young men of England are the very pick and prime of humanity! The various trades which are connected with machinery are scarcely to be taught except by their means. What about their *faith* if they do not become evangelists? O young men and women, what grand opportunities must open up before some of you! I am sure they must, and if you did but set your hearts to it with a full resolve that you would not live the dead-and-alive life of most of us, but would distinguish yourselves in Christ's service, what might you not achieve!

If there were a will, there would be a way—and if there were a fixed purpose, God would send the means! And He who quickened you to such

a degree of spiritual life that you could not rest unless you were telling the Gospel to the ungodly would not let His Providence so obstruct His Grace as to shut the door in your face when you were willing to be serviceable to His cause. "That is a dream," says one! Well, may some of you dream it, and in the midst of the dream may there rise up before you a face which, as it shall by degrees settle and become clear, and you shall discern its features, shall be wonderfully like your own—and as you wake may you have to say, "Here am I, Lord, send me, for where You would have me go, there will I go to proclaim the name and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Oh when shall I see once again the missionary going from door to door, determined, according to his Master's command, that whatever things they set before him he will eat, believing that the laborer is worthy of his hire, and that he is to expect to find his hire among those to whom he preaches the Gospel? When shall I see once again the missionary believing that the acceptance of hospitality is the master-key of missions, and that the eating of the strangers' salt is the nearest way to put before them the Bread of Life and the reception of hospitable courtesy the very stepping-stone towards the giving out of the precious Gospel? May we live to see this! We shall, by God's Grace, if His Spirit visits us.

**III.** Lastly, and but very briefly—what shall we do to assist THE REALIZATION OF THIS VISION? We can *all* do something if we love the Lord and that something will be eminently a blessing to ourselves. If ever we are to see the missionary spirit brought to its very highest and most perfect condition, it must be by each individual's own personal piety mounting to the very highest degree of elevation. Why, we are not half saints—we seem, many of us, to forget what sainthood means!

We are content to be just saved, like the drowning man dragged to shore just alive, and that is all. O that we were not satisfied with this, but that our love to Christ were flaming! Our hope in Jesus Christ bright and clear! Our faith in God firm and unstaggering! O that we served Christ, not at a snail's pace, but within the utmost energy of the best conditioned manhood! O that we loved Christ and worked for Christ up to the last ounce at which the engine could be driven! O that we could but just for *once* see what manhood could do when God was in it! O that some of us were raised up to be as Brainerd, living, dying, through love to Christ! O that we were men who were conquered by Divine love, led in fetters as slaves to the blessed captivity of love to the souls of men!

May it grow into a passion with you, Men and Women, to snatch fire-brands from the flame! You will never be very useful until it is so. If holy work is a mere diversion for your leisure moments, you will do nothing. You must make a trade of it, a solemn occupation of it. It must be your *calling*, your meat, and your drink to do the will of Him that sent you. When the Christian Church glows in this fashion it will swell with an intense heat like a volcano whose tremendous furnaces cannot be contained

within itself, but its sides begin to move and bulge—and then after a rumbling and a heaving—a mighty sheet of fire shoots right up to Heaven and afterwards streams of flaming lava run from its red lips down, burning their way along the plain beneath.

Oh, to get such a fire for God's cause into the heart of the Christian Church till she began to heave and throb with unquenchable emotion! Then a mighty sheet of the fire-prayer should go up towards Heaven, and afterwards the burning lava of her all-conquering zeal should flow over all lands till all nations should enquire, "What is this new thing in the earth, and what is this modern miracle, and what is this Cross of Christ for which men live and die?" I would say, as subsidiary to this great thing—which is the main matter tonight—that young men and young women would do well to feed the flame of their zeal with greater information as to the condition of the world in reference to our mission-work.

I wish that those who supply us with our periodical missionary literature had an idea of the great difficulty there is in keeping awake while reading it. I should be glad if they could, by any means, put a small allowance of salt into it, or serve it up in a more tempting form. I do not plead for making it into light literature, far from it! But if our editors could give us something that would tempt the literary or the spiritual palate, it would be well. But, young men, you are not dependent upon periodical literature—I almost regret that there is such a thing—there are solid books to be read. There are libraries teeming with the works of missionaries—their travels, their adventures. You can read of the history of heathen nations—their desolations, their needs, their crimes, their idolatries, their infamies.

There is a great literature for you. You may not have time to get through it all, but if you read *some* of it I think you will feel a great accession to your zeal. When you have gained such information, which may be as fuel to the fire, I pray you keep yourselves right in this matter by constant, energetic efforts in connection with works at home. Those who do not serve God at *home* are of no use *anywhere*. It is all very well to talk about what you would do if you could speak to the Hindus. Nonsense! What do you do when you are in the streets of Whitechapel? You will be of no use whatever in Calcutta unless you are of use in Poplar or Bermondsey!

The human mind is the same everywhere. Its sins may take another form, but there are just the same difficulties in one place as in another. It is all very well for you to turn a sort of Don Quixote in imagination, and dream of what you would do if you went out upon a spiritual crusade as a heavenly knight-errant, tilting against windmills. Just try your hand at the conversion of that young man who sits next to you in the pew! See what you can do for Jesus Christ in the shop! See whether you can serve your Master in that little Bible class of which you are a member. Rest assured that no missionary ardor really burns in the breast of that man who

does not love the souls of those who live in the same house and dwell in the same neighborhood!

Give me that man for a missionary of whom it is said that when he took a lodging in a house, all the other inhabitants were brought to God within six months! Or he was a son, and his father was unconverted, but he gave the Lord no rest till he saw his parent saved! Or he was a tradesman, and while he was pushing his business earnestly, he always found time to be an evangelist! *That* is the man who will maintain missionary fervor alive at home, and *that* is the man who will help to promote missionary effort abroad.

Brothers and Sisters, here are the practical points—have a higher degree of piety, a wider and more extensive knowledge, and a more practical zeal in God's work near to your hand. But oh, do make sure that you are saved yourselves! Do make sure that you yourselves know the Christ whom you profess to teach! That missionary-box, what is it but an infamous sham if you put into it your offering but withhold your heart? You talk about missionary collecting, missionary meetings, lectures to the young, and I know not what, when you yourself are a stranger to the power of vital godliness! No, my dear Friends—begin at home! May the Lord begin with *you*.

O young men, young women, are you yet unsaved? Then instead of your pitying the heathen, the heathen may well pity you! How might a heathen with a tender heart stand here and say, "If that Bible is true. If that Gospel which you talk of has really come from God. If Christ is the Savior. If there is no salvation but of Him, then how I pity you who have heard about it and yet have rejected it! How I pity you, because your own Savior, whom you profess to serve, out of His own mouth of love has said it—that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you!"

Oh, then, let it be tonight that you give your heart to God! And when you have given your heart to Him, *then* think of the matter of which I have spoken. God grant that my vision may become a fact. May you help to make it so, and Christ shall have the glory. Amen.

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

# BONDS WHICH COULD NOT HOLD NO. 2712

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1901.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 28, 1880.

*“Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death,  
because it was not possible that He should be held by it.”*  
*Acts 2:24.*

PETER is here speaking of the risen Christ, whom God had raised up, “having loosed the pains of death.” So it is clear that whatever those pains were, our blessed Lord Jesus Christ *felt them*—He felt them much more than His followers do, for, in His death-agony, He was left without the sustaining help of God and the light of His Father’s Countenance was hidden from Him. His death was a bitter one, indeed! He took the deepest draughts of wormwood and gall, for He had to “taste death for every man,” whatever that mysterious expression may mean. We must never imagine that there was about Christ’s death anything which took away from its bitterness. There was much that increased it, but nothing that diminished it. He was bound, as with strong cords, by the pains of death. All His powers were, for a time, fettered. He was held captive and He did really die. After death, He was buried. But there was this remarkable fact about His dead body—it saw no corruption. In the case of ordinary corpses, corruption begins very speedily. In a climate like that of Jerusalem, it is very quick in doing its work of dissolving the mortal fabric. But, although our Lord did truly die, no taint of corruption came upon His precious body.

The reason for that was, first, because it was not necessary. Corruption is not a part of the sentence which Christ had to bear. The penalty of sin is *death*—and that He bore to the utmost. But there was no necessity that He should also endure the usual consequences of death and, therefore, although He died, His flesh was not permitted to see corruption.

Again, as it was not necessary, so it would not have been seemly that our Lord Jesus Christ’s body should ever be tainted by decay as all other bodies are. It was not right that One who was so pure and holy as He was, One who stood in what theologians call, “hypostatical union with the Godhead”—(it is not easy to explain exactly what is meant by that term, but it refers to our Lord’s intimate and complete union with the Godhead)—it would not have been comely that such a body as His should see corruption and, therefore, it was preserved from the defilement which death usually brings in its train.

And, further, it was not even *natural* that the body of Christ should see corruption, for albeit that it was like our bodies in many respects, yet

we must never forget that there was a vast difference even in His birth. Through the Immaculate Conception of our Lord, no taint of sin was in His Nature—by a mysterious overshadowing which we must not attempt to understand—“that holy Thing” which was born of the virgin was truly “the Son of God”—“holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” And as there was no original taint about that sacred body, so there was never, afterwards, a single action, or even *thought*, by which its chaste and perfect purity could have been defiled. If our first parents had never sinned, it would not have been necessary for these bodies of ours to die and to become corrupt. And in taking our place, and suffering in our stead, there did come upon Christ the necessity that He should die, but there was no natural necessity that His dead body should become corrupt. And it did not pass into a state of decay, for it was not the will of God that His soul should be left in Hades, or that His holy body should see corruption. While it is quite true that Christ is made in all things like unto His brethren, yet there is always some point of distinction to indicate that, although He is our Brother, He is “the first-born among many brethren,” “the chief among ten thousand.” And if others are lovely, “He is altogether lovely.” So, although He really died and His body was laid in the tomb as the dead usually are, yet, inasmuch as it was preserved from corruption, it is marked out as being above and different from all the rest.

**I.** I am now going to speak upon the fact mentioned in the text, that IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE THAT THE BONDS OF DEATH SHOULD HOLD OUR LORD. God raised Him up, “having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.”

Why was it impossible that the bonds of death should hold Christ? There are several reasons. The first is that *Christ had in Himself the inherent power to die, and to live again*. I will not enlarge upon this Truth of God, but simply give you our Lord’s own Words concerning it. “Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of My Father.” Now, in the realms of the dead, before that time, there had never been seen any person who had the inherent power to take up his life again. Neither had there ever been one there who had possessed the inherent power to lay down his life when he pleased, for no mere man has ever been the absolute master of his own life—so that our Lord Jesus was the first who ever entered the portals of the tomb bearing within Himself the power to rise again whenever He pleased.

Next, *the dignity of His Person* rendered it impossible that He should be held by the cords of death, apart from the consent of His own will, for, though Jesus Christ was truly Human—and let that blessed fact never be forgotten—yet His Humanity was in so close an alliance with the Godhead that, though we do not say that the Humanity did really become Divine, yet, “Jesus Christ Himself” is altogether Divine and is to be worshipped and adored in the completeness of His blessed Person. And, therefore, that flesh, which He took upon Himself for our sake, was lifted up, exalted, ennobled, by being taken into mysterious unity with His Deity. It could not be that a body in which dwelt the fullness of the God-

head could be held by thin bonds of death—He who slept in Joseph’s tomb was the Son of God! It was He who is without beginning of days or end of years. It is He with whom Jehovah took counsel when He laid the foundations of the heavens and built all worlds, for “without Him was not anything made that was made.” It was not, therefore, possible that He should be held by the bonds of death. Marvelous condescension, not human weakness, brought Him into the sepulcher—it was by His own free will that He was laid in the tomb and, consequently, He had but to exert His royal prerogative and He could rise again from the dead whenever He pleased.

Those two reasons might be sufficient to prove the assertion I made concerning our Lord, but I want you to notice, with delight, a third one. It was not possible that the dead Christ should be held by the bonds of death any longer than the third morning *because His redeeming work was done*. Remember—and oh, how well some of you know it, and how gladly do you welcome it!—that the reason why Jesus died was because He took the sin of His people upon Himself and, being found in the sinner’s place, He had to suffer the sinner’s doom, which was death. But after He had endured the penalty, that is, after He had died and remained the appointed time in the tomb, how could He be held any longer in the grave? After He had said, “It is finished,” and after the predestinated hours for a full examination of His work before the Throne of God had passed, why should He be detained any longer? He was the Hostage for our debt, but when the debt was paid, who could keep Him in durance vile? Having borne the penalty, He was free forever and so, as Paul writes, “Christ, being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him.” In that He has satisfied all the claims of the Law of God, what hand can arrest Him, what power can hold Him captive? He died for our sins, but He rose again for our justification! And His rising proved that all His people were accounted righteous in the sight of God! It was not possible, while there was a just God in Heaven, that Christ should remain in the tomb. As His work was done, justice demanded that He should be let go—

**“And now both the Surety and sinner are free!”**

In the next place, it was not possible that Christ should remain in the tomb because *He had His Father’s promise that He should not*. I have already reminded you that David, speaking by Inspiration, had said, “You will not leave My soul in Hades” (the abode of departed spirits) “neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption.” That promise must be kept, so it was not possible that Christ should remain in the grave beyond the appointed period. Indeed, this was part of the Father’s purpose and plan—and an essential part of the great work of the redemption of His elect—that He who died should rise again. And what is in Jehovah’s plan and purpose, none shall ever gainsay. When He opens the door, no man is able to shut it. And where He shuts it, no man can possibly open it. Even Nebuchadnezzar, when he came to his right mind, said concerning the Most High, “None can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What are You doing?” So, when the Father had purposed and decreed that His Son, Jesus Christ, should not be held any longer by the bonds of death, it was not possible for Him to be detained!

Remember, too, dear Friends, that there is a fifth reason for Christ's deliverance that is to be found in *the perpetuity of His offices*. You scarcely need for me to remind you that our Lord Jesus Christ was a Priest, but not after the order of the Aaronic priests, for they died and there was an end of them so far as their priesthood was concerned. But to Christ it was said, "You are a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." But a man cannot be a priest when he is dead! Therefore, since Christ's is a Melchisedec priesthood, He, "is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." And, in order that He might have that endless life, it was necessary that He should rise from the dead—His Melchisedec priesthood required it.

Next, Jesus was King as well as Priest. You know what sort of a King He was, for it is written, "Your Throne, O God, is forever and ever." Now Christ must reign. It is also written that "He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet." But a dead king cannot reign and, therefore, Christ must rise from the tomb. He must have death under His feet, for death is one of His enemies. But if He had not risen from the dead, He would have been under the feet of death, and that could never be. So that both His priestly and kingly offices required that He should rise from the grave.

Yes, and so did His office as our Redeemer, for when He undertook to become our next of kin and to redeem us, it was essential that He should continue to live, or else that ancient cry of the Patriarch Job would not have remained true, "I know that my Redeemer lives." Therefore, Jesus must rise from the dead. I cannot stay to go further into this argument, but if you will think it over yourselves, you will see that because Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever"—because each of His offices is everlasting, ordained of God in perpetuity—therefore He must rise from the dead.

But, to come to the close of this part of our subject, it was not possible, *in the very nature of things*, for Christ to be held by the bonds of death. If He had been, think what the consequences to us would have been, for, first, we should have had no assurance of our own resurrection! The blessed hope that those who have been called away from us and whose bodies we have committed to the earth, shall rise again, would have been without any substantial foundation. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." When you get the first fruits of a harvest, you feel certain that the rest of it will be garnered in due time. So Christ has risen as the first of a great host and we, thus, have an assurance which otherwise we could not have had, but which is essential to the comfort of Christians.

Only imagine what would have been the consequences to us if that assurance had not been ours. There would have been no evidence of our justification. I might have said, "Yes, Christ took my debt, but how do I know that He paid it? Christ bore my sins, but how do I know that He put them away?" So, if He had never risen from the dead, we would have had no proof that we were justified.

Then, too, if He had never risen and gone up to Heaven in His human body, we would not have had anyone to take possession of Heaven on our behalf. Now we have "a Man in possession." We have a wondrous

Representative before the Throne of God who has taken possession and grip of the Divine estates. What a joy it is to us to know that He is there to represent us before God!

Further, if Christ's body had remained in the grave, there could have been no reign of Christ, and no sitting down at the right hand of God as there now is. He would have been in Heaven in the same respect as He is here as God—but there would have been no visible appearance of the representative Man, and the once-crucified Redeemer—and the ransomed ones could not have sung, "For You were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood," for He would not have been there to hear the song! They might have remembered the Sacrifice on Calvary, but He, as the Lamb that had been slain, wearing the marks of His priesthood and death, would not have been there.

**II.** Now I pass on to my second observation, which is that, AS CHRIST COULD NOT BE HELD BY THE BONDS OF DEATH, HE COULD NOT BE HELD BY ANY OTHER BONDS.

If He was more than a match for death, who or what shall ever be able to stand against Him? Death, the slaughterer of all mankind, before whom kings and princes, as well as the meanest of their subjects, lie prostrate in the tomb—death, before whom giants bend as a rush sways to and fro in the wind—even death is vanquished by Christ! He is the destroyer of destruction, and the death of death! Then what power can possibly stand in opposition to Him? I want to cheer you, dear Friends, in these dark and evil days, with a strong belief in our great Master's Omnipotence and invincible might. His Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom! With such a hero as He is to lead us on, victory is sure, however stern may be the conflict!

Think, for a few minutes, how many things have tried to bind the Christ of God and to overthrow His righteous rule. At first, and even until now, *old established error* has assailed the Truth of God. What fools some people thought that those few fishermen were when they imagined that they could upset the firmly-established Judaism of the chosen people and the deeply ingrained idolatry of other nations! The systems of the heathen were beautiful with art, adorned with poetry, intensely lascivious—and they had a tremendous power over the popular mind. If we had lived in those days and had been unbelievers who had seen those fishermen start out to preach, we would have said to them, "Go home with you! Do you think you are ever going to overthrow the philosophies of Plato and Socrates, and all the reverence for the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome?" Ah, but from their deep foundations, that little band of men plucked up by the very roots those old idolatries, for Christ could not be held in bondage by them!

Then there came another period, in which men thought themselves exceedingly wise. And the *wisdom of this world* set itself in array against the Gospel of Christ, even as it does today. But He who was Victor over death can never be defeated by the Academy. Think not, Beloved, that the most learned fools can be a match for Him who overcame death itself! When Christ's cause was at the lowest, ebb—when He Himself was dead and all His disciples were scattered—yet even then He snatched the crown from the hands of the skeleton king and won a complete victory

over him. Do you think that He, who is Wisdom Incarnate, does not know how the wise men and the scribes of today jest and jeer at Him? Yet there is no philosopher who can bind the Christ any more than Samson could be bound by the green withs of the Philistines!

Next, there came a time when men tried to bind up the Kingdom of Christ with *the bonds of ignorance*. They took away the Bible from the people. They concealed the Gospel in the Latin tongue and the nations were steeped in midnight darkness. Yet Christ could not be bound, even then. He had only to call Wycliffe, and Huss, and Jerome, and Luther, and Calvin, and Melancthon, and Zwingli—and very soon they let men know that Christ could not be held in the bonds of the Pope! The Conqueror of death was not to be vanquished by any mortal man, whoever he might be!

Since then we have come to times in which *wealth, and rank, and fashion, and prestige* are all against the Gospel. But what does it matter? Nowadays the multitudes pour their scorn upon righteousness and call it, “cant and hypocrisy,” which is really a defense of that which is right and true. And Satan is casting a fatal spell over the professing church itself, so that it is getting worldly and is giving up its primitive simplicity. Sometimes I am inclined to sit down and weep and grieve as I see how sadly the battle seems to go against us today. We seem to be losing ground instead of gaining the victory. But will I wring my hands in despair? God forbid! “The Strength of Israel will not die,” neither shall His cause fail! Let men forsake Him if they will, or let them come out armed against Him if they dare—His Kingdom shall still stand fast, for He must reign—and as death cannot bind Him, nothing else can! The pleasure of the Lord must prosper in His hands, therefore in patience possess your souls! Go on quietly witnessing for Christ and if you do not see the rulers of the nations converted to Christ, and the great and learned men bowing humbly before Him, remember that it was never so, and is never likely to be so! Take care that you remain steadfast in faith in the Eternal, and all shall be well with you.

**III.** Now, in closing my discourse, there is a Truth of God upon which I wish to insist with great earnestness. It is this—AS CHRIST COULD NOT BE HELD BY THE BONDS OF DEATH, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO KEEP IN BONDAGE ANYTHING THAT BELONGS TO HIM.

You remember that when Pharaoh told Moses that the men among the children of Israel might go into the wilderness to offer sacrifice, he said that they must leave their little ones behind. But Moses would not accept that condition. The next time Pharaoh said, “Go, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you.” But Moses answered, “You must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind.” All that was of Israel was to go with Israel—and that is still our Master’s will and way. “Where I am,” He says, “there shall My people be also. If I am in the grave, they must be in the grave, too, buried with Me. If I rise, they also shall rise, for I will not rise without them. And if I go to Heaven, I will not go without them.” This is our joy! And with dear old Rowland Hill we can sing—

***“And this I do find, we two are so joined,  
He’ll not be in Glory, and leave me behind.”***

Now, My Friend, where are you—you who are struggling to get to Christ? I truly believe you are somewhere in this place,. You have been resolving to find Christ and you have really put your trust in Him. It is a very poor little trust as yet, and no sooner have you begun to think seriously about Divine things than you are in great trouble. There are your old sins and you wonder how you will ever get rid of the guilt of former years. Ah, my dear Hearer, if you fully trust in Christ, your old sins shall vanish away through His precious blood! They are bonds that cannot hold a soul for whom Christ has died. “Oh, but there are also my old habits,” says one, “My tendency to do what I have been doing for years. ‘Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?’ How then shall I, who have been accustomed to do evil, learn to do well?” Put your trust in Christ and those old habits shall not be able to hold you! They may, perhaps, take some time to break, but they shall all be broken and you shall be set free! Christ could not be held by the bonds of death, neither shall you who truly trust Him, be held by the bonds of habit!

Possibly you say, “My old companions get round me and they worry me to go back to them.” Let them worry you as much as they like—if you trust in Christ, God will give you Grace to set your face like a flint against them—and you shall be a bolder and braver soldier of Christ because they oppose you! Perhaps it is better for you to be persecuted than to be allowed to live too easily. The other day I put some primroses in my conservatory. Those that were left out in the open to endure the cold windy nights, bloomed splendidly—but those that were in the warmer atmosphere did not get on nearly so well. There are some Christians that are like the primrose—they need a little cold weather and do not get on so well where it is too warm. The Lord sends you opposition to make you all the stronger. But the bands of the wicked cannot hold you—break loose from them, I pray you, through the power God gives you, by His Grace!

“Ah,” you say, “but Satan himself breaks in upon me.” Very likely he does, but just resist him, steadfast in the faith. Possibly he is throwing blasphemies into your mind, injecting evil thoughts which you never had before. But if a thousand devils were to bind you thus with cords, so that you could not move hand or foot, yet, depend upon it, you shall slip out of the cords and come into perfect liberty—for all the devils in Hell cannot hold a soul that belongs to Christ—and you do belong to Him if you truly trust Him.

Perhaps I am also speaking to *some child of God who has fallen into great trouble*. You are an old Christian and yet you have got into a sad scrape. You were never in such a condition, before, and you seem to be bound with the cords of trouble after trouble—as if they were tightly knotted around you so that you could not get loose! There are also the cords of depression of spirit and they, sometimes, cut very painfully and hold you bound like a poor captive. Perhaps, also, the devil, as well as your own depression, has tied you up. There is a diabolical temptation that has come to you—you are even afraid that you are not a child of God at all—and you begin to doubt everything. You were never before bound

as you are now—you seem to be thrust into the inner prison and your feet made fast in the stocks.

If so, I believe that God has sent me to do to you as the angel did to Peter. You know that the angel went to Peter, when he was asleep in the prison, and struck him on the side. Well, I cannot get near enough to you to do that, so you must take it as done. Then what did the angel do to Peter?—He raised him up, his chains fell off his hands and the angel said to him, “Gird yourself, and bind on your sandals. And so he did.” Then the angel said, “Cast your garment about you and follow me.” And Peter did so, and he walked through the first and the second ward of the prison. At last they came to the iron gate leading into the city—that great gate that needed half-a-dozen men to open it! And Peter was surprised to see it open of its own accord. He never saw anything like *that* before—and he soon found himself with the cool night air playing on his forehead—and he was a free man again!

All the Herods and all the devils cannot shut up a man who trusts in God! So, my Friend, you will come out of your prison again! You are like a cork in the water—men may press you below the surface, but you are bound to come to the top again! You know what Haman planned for Mordecai—he meant to hang him up on the high gallows that he had erected. He was not satisfied with that, for he intended to also kill all who belonged to the same race as Mordecai. He meant that not a Jew should be allowed to live! But when his plans could not be carried out as he intended, his wise men and his wife said to him, “If Mordecai is of the seed of the Jews before whom you have begun to fall, you shall not prevail against him, but shall surely fall before him.” And so it came to pass—for there swung Haman on the gallows that he had erected for the execution of Mordecai!

My dear Friends, there may be a Haman plotting against you—leave him alone! If he is making the gallows, let him finish them—they will come in for himself in due time. If you belong to Jesus Christ and if you belong to the seed of the Believers, before whom Satan has begun to fall, he will never prevail against you, but you will overcome him, for you must reign with Christ forever, for He Himself has said so!

Finally, Beloved, there is a part of Christ’s redeemed possession that is under mortgage at present. It is not yet delivered from the bond that holds it. What part is that? It is *this poor body—these bones, this flesh and blood*—for although “the Spirit is life because of righteousness,” the body is still “dead because of sin.” And soon that poor body of yours, unless Christ shall come first, will see corruption and mold, and go back to dust. But mark this, as I have already said—Christ will not leave any fragment of His people in the hands of the enemy! He will not leave any portion of His people—no, not so much as a bone of them—under the dominion of death! The hour shall come when the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised! And as the soul has been redeemed, so shall the body also enter into the fullness of the joy of adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body!

We have buried many of the godly. There is many a *Campo Santo* round about this great city, where sleep the pious dead. And we have wept as we have committed them to the silent clay. But they are not

lost—not one of them is lost! No baby, chosen of God to see Heaven before it saw much of the world. No man or woman in middle life, taken from the midst of the conflict, no gray-headed man or woman who leaned upon his staff for very age, and came to the grave like a shock of corn to the garner—there shall not one of them be lost, nor an eye, nor a foot, nor a hand of any one of them—yes, and the very hairs of their head are all numbered! The Lord has taken an inventory of all that He has bought with His precious blood, and He will have it all—not merely the souls and spirits of His people, but their bodies, too! Who is to stop Him? Death knows His power and must yield to it. The strong man armed did keep the sepulcher, but a stronger than he came in and burst the bands of the tomb—and He came forth alive. And—

**“As the Lord our Savior rose,  
So all His followers must”**

for, as it is written, “A bone of Him shall not be broken.” And it is not possible that they who are, as it were, the bones of His mystical body, should be held by the bonds of death! O happy people, who belong to Christ! God grant that we may all be numbered among them, for His great name’s sake! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ACTS 2.**

**Verse 1.** *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.* The first lesson that we ought to learn from this Inspired record of what happened on the day of Pentecost is that we cannot expect a revival until there is unity among Christians. The Spirit of God will not visit and bless a church where there is strife. These disciples in Jerusalem “were all with one accord in one place,” “in prayer and supplication,” as the 14<sup>th</sup> verse of the previous chapter tells us.

**2-6.** *And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation under Heaven. Now when this sound was heard, the multitude came together. It was a great cause for surprise that men should be able to speak in foreign tongues without any previous instruction! The sound was heard outside the upper room where they were gathered—many pressed to the door to listen—and then went away to tell the strange news, and thus “the multitude came together.”*

**6, 7.** *And were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans? “These men are Jews, and they come from a country district where the people are more than ordinarily illiterate. It is strange that they should be able to speak in foreign languages.”*

**8-11.** *And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopo-*

*tamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. "I think you, good Sir, come from Parthia?" "I do, and I am astonished to hear these Jews speak the Parthian tongue." "And you, Sir?" "I am from Media, and I am amazed to hear them speak the language of the Medes. 'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange. We hear every man in our own tongue wherein we were born!"*

**12, 13.** *And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What does this mean? Others mocking, said, These men are full of new wine.* They heard languages which they did not understand as well as those they did understand, so, putting the worst possible construction upon the wondrous scene, they said that the speakers were drunk! It is the mark of a wicked mind when we are ready to attribute evil reasons in the lack of any other. Let us never do this, but always be ready to believe all the good of men that we can.

**14, 15.** *But, Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, You men of Judaea, and all you that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. "It is but nine o'clock in the morning—you cannot really imagine that these men are drunk." We might have thought it hardly worth while to take notice of such an observation, but Peter knew how to conciliate the crowd and to meet them upon their own ground. He began where they left off, but he went on to say what they little expected to hear.*

**16-21.** *But this is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel, And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams: and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy, and I will show wonders in Heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord comes and it shall come to pass, that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.* Peter was speaking to a Jewish audience, so he began by quoting from the Old Testament. He was wise to win their attention by a long passage out of one of their own Prophets. Now he comes nearer to his main point—

**22, 23.** *You men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.* How boldly he puts the Truth of God before his hearers! He charges home the murder of Christ upon them, yet he skillfully softens it by that introduction about "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." This is a very wonderful verse because it shows us that everything is predetermined and foreknown by God! And yet when men do wickedly, they are responsible for it. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowl-

edge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

There is no man in this world who knows where these two great Truths of man’s free agency and Divine Predestination meet. There have been all sorts of schemes and inventions to make the two Doctrines agree—and one set of men has denied one of the Truths, and another set has denied the other—but do you nothing of the kind! Believe them both, yet do not pretend that you can reconcile them. It may be that, in another state, with larger capacity of mind than we at present possess, we shall be able to reconcile these two Truths of God. I am not sure that we shall do so and I do not know that even angels can understand this great mystery. But it is a grand thing to exercise faith where we cannot comprehend what is revealed to us. He who only believes what he can understand will have a very short creed, and soon he will have none at all—but he who believes what he cannot understand simply because it is taught him by Revelation from God—is the man who walks humbly with his God and he shall be accepted. I thank God for the mystery that conceals so much from us—where would there be room for faith if all things were as plain as A B C?

**24-28.** *Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. For David speaks concerning Him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because You will not leave my soul in Hell, neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You shall make me full of joy with Your countenance.* Note how Peter keeps to the Old Testament. Those quotations added force to his argument, for his hearers believed the ancient Scriptures to be the very voice of God and, therefore, he gave them much of it. Having quoted from the Psalms, Peter goes on to make this comment upon David’s words.

**29-32.** *Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a Prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before, spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in Hell, neither His flesh did see corruption. This Jesus has God raised up, of which we all are witnesses.* Standing up with the eleven Apostles, and with the greater company of disciples behind them, it was a noble utterance of Peter—“This Jesus has God raised up, of which we all are witnesses.”

**33.** *Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has shed forth this, which you now see and hear.* “This, which is a mystery to you, is the result of Christ’s exaltation at the right hand of His Father.”

**34-36.** *For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he says himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit You at My right hand, until I make Your foes Your footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ.* There does not seem very much that is original or striking in

that sermon! Certainly it is not a very sensational one. There is no fine metaphor in it, no garnishing of poetry, but, in plain, simple language, Peter proves that it is Jesus Christ of whom David spoke in the Psalms. This was exactly what the people needed to have proved—many of them were ready to receive such proof as that—and they did receive it!

**37-40.** *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. That is to say, “Come out from among the ungodly; leave the world behind and escape for your lives.”*

**41-47.** *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Oh, that we might have the same blessed experience! God grant it, for Christ’s sake! Amen.*

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—872, 309, 302.**

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

# **“PRICKED IN THEIR HEART”**

## **NO. 2102**

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S -AY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 1, 1889,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and Brethren, what shall we do?”***  
***Acts 2:36, 37.***

THIS was the first public preaching of the Gospel after our Lord was taken up into Glory. It was thus a very memorable sermon, a kind of first fruits of the great harvest of Gospel testimony. It is very encouraging to those who are engaged in preaching that the first sermon should have been so successful. Three thousand made up a grand take of fish at that first cast of the net. We are serving a great and growing cause in the way chosen of God, and we hope in the future to see still larger results produced by that same undying and unchanging power which helped Peter to preach such a heart-piercing sermon.

Peter's discourse was not distinguished by any special rhetorical display—he used not the words of man's wisdom or eloquence. It was not an oration, but it was a heart-moving argument, entreaty and exhortation. He gave his hearers a simple, well-reasoned, Scriptural discourse, sustained by the facts of experience. And every passage of it pointed to the Lord Jesus. It was in these respects a model of what a sermon ought to be as to its contents. His plea was personally addressed to the people who stood before him and it had a practical and pressing relation to them and to their conduct. It was aimed, not at the head, but at the heart.

Every word of it was directed to the conscience and the affections. It was plain, practical, personal and persuasive. And in this it was a model of what a sermon ought to be as to its aim and style. Yet Peter could not have spoken otherwise under the impression of the Divine Spirit—his speech was, as the oracles of God, a true product of a Divine inspiration. Under the circumstances, any other kind of address would have been sadly out of place. A flashy, dazzling oration would have been a piece of horrible irreverence to the Holy Spirit—and Peter would have been guilty of the blood of souls if he had attempted it.

In sober earnestness he kept to the plain facts of the case, setting them in the light of God's Word. And then with all his might he pressed home the Truth of God upon those for whose salvation he was laboring. May it ever be the preacher's one desire to win men to repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! May no minister wish to be admired, but may he long that his Lord and Master may be sought after! May none bewilder their people with the clouds of theoretic philosophy, but refresh

them with the rain of the revealed Truth of God. Oh, that we could so preach that our hearers should be at once pricked in their hearts and so be led at once to believe in our Lord Jesus and immediately to come forward and confess their faith in His name!

We must not forget, however, to trace the special success of the sermon on the day of Pentecost to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, in which Peter had shared. This, it is, which is the making of the preacher. Immersed into the Holy Spirit, the preacher will think rightly and speak wisely—his words will be with power to those who hear. We must not forget, also, that there had been a long season of earnest, united, believing prayer on the part of the whole Church. Peter was not alone—he was the voice of a praying company and the Believers had been with one accord in one place crying for a blessing.

And thus not only was the Spirit resting upon the *preacher*, but on all who were with him. What a difference this makes to a preacher of the Gospel, when all his comrades are as much anointed of the Spirit as himself! His power is enhanced a hundred-fold! We shall seldom see the very greatest wonders worked when the preacher stands by himself. But when Peter is described as standing up, “with the eleven,” then is there a twelve-man ministry concentrated in one. And when the inner circle is further sustained by a company of men and women who have entered into the same Truth of God and are of one heart and one soul, then is the power increased beyond measure!

A lonely ministry may sometimes effect great things, as Jonah did in Nineveh. But if we look for the greatest and most desirable result of all, it must come from one who is not alone but is the mouthpiece of many. Peter had the one hundred and twenty registered Brethren for a loving body-guard, and this tended to make him strong for his Lord. How greatly I value the loving co-operation of the friends around me! I have no words to express my gratitude to God for the army of true men and women who surround me with their love, and support me with their faith. I pray you, never cease to sustain me by your prayers, your sympathy, and your co-operation—until some other preacher shall take my place when increasing years shall warn me to stand aside.

Yet much responsibility must rest with the preacher himself. And there was much about Peter’s own self that is well worthy of imitation. The sermon was born of the occasion, and it used the event of the hour as God intended it to be used. It was earnest, without a trace of passion—and prudent, without a suspicion of fear. The preacher himself was self-collected, calm, courteous and gentle. He aired no theories, but went on firm ground, stepping from fact to fact, from Scripture to Scripture, from plain truth to plain truth.

He was patient at the beginning, argumentative all along, and conclusive at the end. He fought his way through the doubts and prejudices of his hearers. And when he came to the end, he stated the inevitable conclusion with clearness and certainty. All along he spoke very boldly, without mincing the truth—“You with wicked hands have crucified and slain

Him whom God has highly exalted." He boldly accused them of the murder of the Lord of Glory, doing his duty, in the sight of God and for the good of their souls, with great firmness and fearlessness. Yet there is great tenderness in his discourse. Impulsive and hot-headed Peter, who, a little while before, had drawn his sword to fight for his Lord, does not, in this instance, use a harsh word.

He speaks with great gentleness and meekness of spirit, using words and terms all through the address which indicate a desire to conciliate and then to convince. Though he was as faithful as an Elijah, yet he used terms so courteous and kindly that, if men took offense, it would not be because of any offensiveness of tone on the speaker's part. Peter was gentle in his manner but forceful in his matter. This art he had learned from his Lord. And we shall never have master-preachers among us till we see men who have been with Jesus and have learned of Him.

Oh, that we could become partakers of our Lord's Spirit and echoes of His tone! Then may we hope to attain to Pentecostal results, when we have preachers like Peter, surrounded by a band of earnest witnesses and all baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

When we follow the run of Peter's argument, we do not wonder that his hearers were pricked in their hearts. We ascribe that deep compunction to the Spirit of God. And yet it was a very reasonable thing that it should be so. When it was clearly shown to them that they had really crucified the Messiah, the great hope of their nation, it was no wonder that they should be smitten with horror. Looking as they were, for Israel's King, and finding that He had been among them and they had despitefully used Him—had even crucified Him—they might well be smitten at the heart!

Though for the result of our ministry we depend wholly upon the Spirit of God, yet we must adapt our discourse to the end we aim at. Or, say rather, we must leave ourselves in the Spirit's hand as to the sermon itself, as well as in reference to the result of the sermon. The Holy Spirit uses means which are adapted to the end designed. Because, Beloved, I do desire beyond all things that many in this congregation may be pricked in the heart, I have taken this concluding part of Peter's discourse to be the text of my sermon this morning. Yet my trust is not in the Word itself, but in the quickening Spirit who works by it. May the Spirit of God use the rapier of His Word to pierce the hearts of my hearers!

First, note that Peter speaks to his hearers about their evil conduct to the Lord Jesus. And, secondly, he declares to them the exaltation that God had bestowed upon Him. When we have dwelt on these two things, we will notice, in the third place, the result of knowing this grand fact—"Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

**I.** First, then, Peter dwelt tenderly, but very plainly, upon THEIR EVIL CONDUCT TOWARDS THE LORD JESUS. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not."

As a nation, Israel had rejected Him whom God had sent. The inhabitants of Jerusalem had gone further and had consented unto His death.

No, had even clamored for it, crying, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” Solemnly had the Jews exclaimed, “His blood be on us and on our children.” None of them had protested against the murder of the Innocent One. But many of them had been eager to make an end of Him. This, Peter, in plain words, charged upon them and they could not deny it—nor did they pretend to do so. It is well when a sense of guilt compels a man to stand silent under the rebuke of God. We then have hope of him that he will seek pardon.

Brothers and Sisters, we are not in Jerusalem and the death of our Lord happened more than eighteen hundred years ago. Therefore we need not dwell upon the sin of those long since dead. It will be more profitable for us, practically, to consider how far *we* have been guilty of similar sins against the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us look at home. Let each one consider his own case. I may be addressing some today who have blasphemed the name of the Lord Jesus. I do not suppose that you have been guilty of the vulgar language of blasphemy, which is coarse and revolting, as well as profane.

But there are politer methods of committing the same crime. Some, with their elaborate criticisms of Christianity, wound it far more seriously than atheists with their profanities. In these days, wiseacres, with their philosophy, derogate from the glory of our Lord’s nature and, with their novel doctrines, undermine His Gospel. Denying the Atonement, or teaching it as something other than a substitutionary sacrifice, they try to make away with that which is the very heart and soul of the Redeemer’s work.

Men nowadays drink in opinions which lessen the guilt of sin and, of course, lower the value of the atoning blood. The Cross is still a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. Men do not now accept the Words of the Bible as authoritative, nor the teaching of the Apostles as final. They set themselves up to be teachers of the great Teacher, reformers of the Divine Gospel. They do not accept the teaching of the Lord Jesus one half so much as they criticize it. If any here present have been thus guilty, may the Holy Spirit convict them of their sin!

Since the Lord God has made this atoning Jesus both Lord and Christ and set Him on His right hand, any teaching which does despite to Him—however learned, however advanced, however cultured it may seem to be—is a grievous sin against the Lord God, Himself. By such conduct we are, as far as in us lies, again putting the Lord Jesus to death. We are attempting to make away with that which is the very life and glory of Christ. O my Hearer, if you have denied His Deity, rejected His atoning blood, ridiculed His imputed righteousness, or scoffed at salvation by faith in Him, may you be pricked in the heart as you see that God has made that same Jesus to be Lord of All!

Much more common, however, is another sin against our Lord Jesus—namely, neglecting Him, ignoring His claims and postponing the day of faith in Him. I trust that none here are willing to die unconverted, or would even dare to think of passing away without being washed in His

precious blood. Yet, my Hearers, you have lived to manhood. You have lived, by God's Divine Grace, to ripe years—perhaps even to old age—without yielding your hearts to the Lord Jesus and accepting Him as your Savior. To say the least of it, this is a very sad piece of neglect. To ignore a man altogether is, in a certain sense, as far as you are concerned, to kill that man.

If you put Him out of your reckoning, if you treat Him as if He were nothing, if your estimate of life is made as if He were a cipher, you have put your Lord out of existence in reference to yourself. You treat Him with empty compliment by observing His day and hearing His Word. But you have no real regard for Him. Is not this a cruel fault? From morning till night your Lord is not in all your thoughts. He never affects your dealings with your fellow men. You never endeavor to catch His spirit of love and considerateness and meekness. And thus, as a Leader and Exemplar, He is dead to you.

You have never confessed your sins before Him, nor sought for pardon at His hands, nor have you looked to see whether He has borne your sins in His own body on the tree. O soul, this is base neglect—ungrateful contempt! God thinks so much of His Son that He cannot set Him too high. He has placed Him at His own right hand, and yet you will not spare Him a thought! The great God thinks Heaven and earth too little for Him and magnifies Him exceedingly above all, as King of kings and Lord of lords. And yet you treat Him as if He were of no account and might be safely made to wait your time and leisure. Is this right? Will you treat your Savior thus? May this prick you in the heart and may you cease from this base ingratitude!

There are others who have done more than this—for they have absolutely rejected Christ. I now allude to those of you who have not been able to resist the appeals made to you by the Lord's ministers. You have felt a good deal—felt more than you would like to confess. You have been so inclined to seek the Savior that you have almost done so—sin has flashed in your face like the flames of Tophet and in alarm you have resolved to seek salvation. You have gone home to bend the knee in prayer, you have read the Scriptures to learn the way of eternal life. But, alas, an evil companion crossed your path and the question came, "Shall it be this man, or Christ?" You chose the man—I had almost said, you chose Barabbas and rejected Jesus.

A sinful pleasure came before you when you had begun to be serious and the question arose, "Shall I give up this pleasure, or shall I renounce all hope of Christ?" You snatched at the pleasure and you let your Savior go. Do you not remember when you did violence to your conscience? There was an effort about it, as you stifled conviction. You had to put forth a decided act of the will to quench the Spirit of God and to escape from the strivings of your awakened conscience. I know not to whom this may apply. But I am certain—as certain as Peter was when he spoke to the crucifiers of Christ—that I am speaking to some who have been rejecters of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some of you have distinctly rejected Him almost every Sabbath, but especially when the Word of the Lord has been with extraordinary power and you have felt it shake you, as a lion shakes his prey. Thank God, you are not past feeling yet! I pray you, do not presume upon the continuance of your tenderness. You will not always feel as you have felt—the day may come when even the thunders of God may not be heard by your deafened ear—and the love of Christ will not affect the heart which you have made callous by willful obstinacy. Woe to the man when his heart is turned to stone! When flesh turns to stone, it is a conversion unto eternal death—just as the turning of stone to flesh is conversion to eternal life. God have mercy upon you and prick you in the heart this morning, while you yet have tenderness enough to feel that you have rejected Him whom you ought to embrace with all your heart!

I must come a little closer to some of you, who have forsaken the Lord Jesus Christ. There are a few unhappy persons here this morning, over whom I greatly grieve, because of their wanderings. And yet I am glad that they have not quite forsaken the courts of the Lord's House. These once professed to be disciples of Christ. But they have gone back and walk no more with Him. They were once numbered with us and went in and out of our solemn assemblies for prayer and breaking of bread. But now we know them not. They were not backward to confess themselves Christians but now they deny their Lord.

In former days they were zealous and apparently devout. They were quick in the service of God and sound in their creed. But there came a day—I need not describe the circumstances, for they differ in different cases—when two roads were before them and they must go either to the right or to the left. And they took the road by which they turned their back upon Christ and upon the vitality of godliness. They went off into sin and apostatized from the faith. We fear, "they went out from us but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us."

They have gone aside unto crooked ways and we fear that the Lord will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity. O my backsliding Hearer, I hope you are not a Judas—my trust is that you may be a Peter! You have denied your Master, but I hope you will yet weep bitterly and be restored to your Lord's service. For your good I must bring home your wanderings to you. May the Lord prick you in the heart about them! Why have you left your Lord? Wherein has He wearied you? There may be present persons from the country, or friends from America, who were once glad to be numbered with the children of God—but now they care nothing for God, or His people. Alas, they take part with the adversaries of Christ and the despisers of His precious blood!

Friend, you are here this morning that I may bring your sin to remembrance and ask you why you have done this thing! Were you a hypocrite? If not, why have you turned aside? God has exalted to His Throne the Savior, on whom you have turned your back. Have you not acted madly in what you have done? The Most High God is on the side of Jesus and you

are avowedly on the other side—is this right, or wise? It is painful to me to speak of these things. I hope it is far more painful for you to hear them. I want you to feel as David did, when his heart smote him. What have you been doing? Has the Lord Jesus deserved this at your hands? Turn, I pray you, from your evil ways and turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart.

**II.** After Peter had dwelt upon the sin of his hearers in treating the Lord so ill, he declared to them **THE EXALTATION BESTOWED ON HIM BY GOD.**

The great God loved and honored and exalted that same Jesus whom they had crucified. O my Hearers, whatever you may think of the Lord Jesus, God thinks everything of Him! To you He may be dead and buried, but God has raised Him from the dead. To God He is the ever-living, the ever well-beloved Christ. You cannot destroy the Lord Jesus, or His cause. If you could do all that the most malicious heart could suggest, you could not really defeat Him. Men wreaked their vengeance on Him once—they put Him to a felon's death, they laid Him in the grave and sealed the stone. But He rose again, for God was on His side.

My Hearer, whatever you do, you cannot shake the Truth of the Gospel, nor rob the Lord Jesus of a single beam of His glory. He lives and reigns and He will live and reign, whatever becomes of you. You may refuse His salvation but He is still a Savior and a great one. His Gospel chariot rolls on and every stone which is placed to hinder it is crushed into the earth and compelled to make a road for Him. If you resist the Lord, you do it at your peril. And, Fool, you do it in vain.

You might as well hope to reverse the laws of nature, quench the sun and snatch the moon from her orbit, as hope to overthrow the cause and kingdom of the Lord Jesus. For God is on His side and His Throne is established forever. God has raised His Son from the dead and taken Him up to sit at His right hand—and there He will remain while His enemies shall be made His footstool. By this you may see what evil you have done through rejecting Christ and may know who He is whom you have neglected, refused and forsaken.

Let me remind you that when we read of our Lord as being at the right hand of God, we perceive that He enjoys infinite felicity. At the right hand of God there are pleasures forevermore. And David said, as the representative of our Lord, "You have made known to me the ways of life; you shall make me full of joy with Your countenance." He who was the Man of Sorrows now overflows with gladness. All His work and warfare done, He rests in boundless blessedness. His priestly work being finished, He sits down. No more does He feel the Cross and nails, no more does He endure the mockery of cruel eyes and ribald lips.

He is full of joy, that joy which He bids His people share when He says, "Enter you into the joy of your Lord." His portion is measureless, infinite, inconceivable delight. Can it be that you are opposed to Him and neglect Him, while God lavishes upon Him more than all the bliss of Heaven and makes Him to be the fountain of unspeakable delight to all His redeemed

ones? Grieve that you should grieve Him whom God thus loads with blessedness.

Moreover, remember that at the right hand of God our Lord sits in infinite majesty. Jesus, whom you think little of—Jesus, from whom you turn aside—is today adored of angels, obeyed by seraphs, worshipped by just men made perfect. He is the highest in the highest heavens. Do you not hear the blast of Heaven's trumpets which proclaim Him head over principalities and powers? Do you not hear the song which ascribes to Him honor and glory and power and dominion and might? My faith anticipates the happy day when I shall stand a courtier in His unrivalled courts and behold Him, the Lamb upon the Throne, reigning high over all, with every knee in Heaven and in earth gladly bowing before Him!

Can it be that you have neglected Him whom God has exalted? Can it be that you have refused Him, that you have done despite to Him, that you have, as far as you could, put Him to death—whom Jehovah has made Lord of All?

Nor is this all—for the place at the right hand of God, to which He is now exalted, is the place of power. There sits the Mediator, the Son of God, the Man, Christ Jesus, while His enemies are being subdued under Him. Do not believe it, O proudest of doubters, that you can take away from Christ any measure of His power! He overrules all mortal things. He directs the movements of the stars. He rules the armies of Heaven. He restrains the rage of His adversaries and what He allows to be let loose He turns to His glory. All power is given to Him in Heaven and earth. He reigns in the three realms of Nature, Providence and Grace.

His kingdom rules over all and of His dominion there shall be no end. O Sirs, what do our hearts suggest but that we bow at His feet? That we worship Him with loving reverence? That we yield to that supreme power which is used for purposes of love? Yet it is this Christ, this mighty Christ, who is set at nothing by some of you, so that you run the risk of perishing because you have no heart for Him and His great salvation.

Learn, next, that He is at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, seated as our Judge. If we refuse Him as a Savior, we shall not be able to escape from Him as Judge in the Last Great Day. All the acts of men are being recorded, and in that Day, when the Great White Throne shall be set in the heavens, all things shall be made manifest and we must stand unveiled in His Presence. You have often heard and sung of Him whose face was more marred than that of any man, when He was here as a Sacrifice for guilty men. If you refuse Him, you will have to stand before His bar to answer for it.

The most awful sight for the impenitent in the Day of Judgment will be the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not find that they cry, "Hide us from the tempest," nor, "Hide us from the angelic guards," nor, "Hide us from their swords of fire," but, "Hide us from the face of *HIM* that sits on the Throne and from the wrath of the Lamb." Love, when once it turns to wrath, is terrible beyond compare. As oil when set on fire blazes with great

force, so the meek and loving Jesus, when finally rejected, will exhibit a wrath more terrible than death—

***"You sinners, seek His Grace,  
Whose wrath you cannot bear;  
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,  
And find salvation there."***

Perhaps, through ignorance you have rebelled—repent and take another course. You supposed that when you kicked against a sermon, you had only put down the minister's words. But in reality you resisted the Savior's love. You thought that when you turned away from Christ and His people, it was only leaving a Church and having your name crossed out of a book.

Ah, Sirs, take heed, for I fear you have left the Lamb of God and renounced your part in His Book of Life! At the last it may turn out to have been an awful thing to have been put forth from the Church of Christ on earth. For when we, as a Church, do our Lord's bidding, that which we bind on earth is bound in Heaven. In refusing the Lord's Word, you refuse Him who speaks from Heaven—you refuse not only His Words but Himself and He shall be your Judge—your Judge most just, most holy. Oh, how will you bear it? How will you bear to stand at the bar of the despised Savior?

Peter also showed his hearers that the Lord was greatly exalted in Heaven as the Head over all things to His Church, for He had that day shed abroad the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes, He comes from Christ and as the witness of His power. He proceeds from the Father, and the Son, and He bears witness with both. Christ's power was marvelously proved when, after He had been but a little while in Heaven, He was able to bestow such gifts upon men—and especially to send the tongues of fire and the rushing mighty wind, which betoken the energy of the Holy Spirit. He is such a Lord that He can save or destroy.

The Christ that died upon the Cross has all things committed into His hands. He can, this morning, send forth salvation to the ends of the earth, so that multitudes shall believe and live. For Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins. Or, He can turn the key the other way and shut the door against this unbelieving generation. For He opens, and no man shuts. And He shuts and no man opens. In any case, be sure of this, you Gentiles, even as Peter would have the house of Israel be sure of it, that, "God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

I notice that, at this time, few writers or preachers use the expression, "Our Lord, Jesus Christ." We have lives of Christ and lives of Jesus. But, Brethren, he IS THE LORD. Jesus is both Lord and Christ—we need to acknowledge His Deity, His dominion, and His Divine anointing. He is "God over all, blessed forever," and we can never praise Him too much. A great and grievous error of the times is a want of reverence for our Lord and His sacrifice. To sit in judgment on His sacred teaching is to spit in His face. To deny His miracles is to strip Him of His own clothes. To make Him out to be a mere teacher of ethics is to mock Him with a purple robe.

And to deny His atonement, in philosophical phraseology, is to crown Him with thorns and crucify Him afresh and put Him to an open shame. Be not guilty of this, my Hearers, for God has made this same Jesus, "both Lord and Christ." Let us worship Him as Lord and trust Him as Christ.

**III.** Now I come to my closing point, which is, THE RESULT OF KNOWING THIS ASSUREDLY. May I here pause to ask—do you know this assuredly? I hope all of you believe that God has made Jesus Christ, the Mediator, in His complex Person, as God and Man, to be "both Lord and Christ." He was Lord, as God, always. But as God and Man, He is now Lord and Christ. Manhood and Godhead are in Him united in one wondrous Person, and this Person is, "both Lord and Christ."

You believe it. But do you so believe it that it is a fact of the utmost importance to you? Will you assuredly believe it, that the man of Nazareth, who died on Calvary, is today both Lord and Christ? If you do now believe this, what are your feelings, as you review your past misconduct towards Him? Does not your past neglect prick you in the heart? If you do not so believe, it is of little use for me to describe what the result of such belief would be, for that result will not take place in you. But if you have so believed, and Jesus is to you Lord and Christ, you will look on Him whom you have pierced and mourn for Him.

As you remember your negligence of Him, your rejection of Him, your backsliding from Him, and all your ungrateful acts which show contempt of Him, your heart will be ready to break and you will be seized with a great sorrow and a hearty repentance. The Lord work it in you, for His Son's sake!

Observe, that as the result of Peter's sermon, his hearers felt a mortal sting—"They were pricked in their heart." The Truth of God had pierced their souls. When a man finds out that he has done a fearful wrong to one who loved him, he grows sick at heart and views his own conduct with abhorrence. We all remember the story of Llewellyn and his faithful dog. The prince came back from the hunt and missed his infant child but saw marks of blood everywhere. Suspecting his dog, Gelert, of having killed the child, he drove his vengeful sword into the faithful hound, which had been bravely defending his child against a huge wolf, which lay there, all torn and dead, "tremendous still in death."

Yes, he had slain the faithful creature which had preserved his child. Poor Gelert's dying yell pierced the prince to the heart. And well it might. If such emotions fitly arise when we discover that we have, in error, been ungenerous and cruel to a *dog*, how ought we to feel towards the Lord Jesus, who laid down His life that we, who were His enemies, might live?

I recall an awfully tragic story of an evil couple, who kept an inn of base repute. A young man called one night to lodge. They noticed that he had gold in his purse and they murdered him in the night. It was their own son, who had come back to gladden their old age and wished to see whether his parents would remember him. Oh, the bitterness of their lam-

entation when they found that through the lust of gold they had murdered their own son!

Take out of such amazing grief its better portion, and then add to it a spiritual conviction of the sin of evil—entreating the Son of God, the Perfect One, the Lover of our souls—and you come near the meaning of being "pricked in the heart." Oh, to think that we should despise Him who loved us and gave Himself for us and should rebel against Him that bought us with His own blood while we were His enemies! I would to God that everyone here that has not come to Christ, would feel a sting in his conscience now—and would mourn that he has done this exceeding evil thing against the ever-blessed Son of God, who became man and died for love of guilty men.

When we read, "they were pricked in their heart," we may see in it the meaning that they felt a movement of love to Him—a relenting of heart, a stirring of emotion towards Him. They said to themselves, "Have we treated Him thus? What can we do to show our horror of our own conduct?" They were not merely convinced of their fault so as to be grieved but their desires and affections went out towards the offended One and they cried, "What shall we do? In what way can we acknowledge our wrong? Is there any way of undoing this ill towards Him whom we now love?"

To this point I would have you all come. I would have you know the meaning of Newton's hymn—

***"I saw One hanging on a tree,  
In agonies and blood,  
Who fixed His languid eyes on me,  
As near His Cross I stood.  
Sure never till my latest breath  
Can I forget that look;  
It seemed to charge me with His death,  
Though not a word He spoke.  
My conscience felt and owned the guilt,  
And plunged me in despair;  
I saw my sins His blood had spilt,  
And helped to nail Him there.  
Alas, I knew not what I did;  
But now my tears are vain;  
Where shall my trembling soul be hid?  
For I, the Lord, have slain."***

Let us tearfully enquire how we can end our opposition and prove ourselves to be His friends and humble servants.

As a consequence of Peter's sermon, preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, these people exhibited obedient faith. They were roused to action, and they said, "Brothers and Sisters, what shall we do?" They believed that the same Jesus whom they had crucified was now Lord of All, and they hastened to be obedient unto Him. When Peter said, "Repent!" they did, indeed, repent. If repentance is grief, they grieved at their hearts. If repentance is a change of mind and life, they were, indeed, altered men.

Then Peter said, “Be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” Take the open and decisive step—stand forth as Believers in Jesus and confess Him by that outward and visible sign which He has ordained. Be buried with Him in whom your sin is buried. You slew Him in error. Be buried with Him in Truth. They did it gladly, they repented of the sin. They were baptized into the sacred name. And then Peter could tell them—“You have remission of sins: the wrong you have done to your Lord is cancelled: the Lord has put away your sin forever. Remission of sins comes to you through Jesus, whom you slew, whom the Father has raised up.

“You shall not be summoned before the bar of God to account even for the hideous crime of murdering the Lord, for by His death you are forgiven. In proof of forgiveness you shall now be made partakers of the great gift which marks His ascending power. The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, even upon you, His murderers, and you shall go forth and be witnesses for Him.”

O my Hearers, to what a place have I brought you now! If, indeed, the Holy Spirit has helped you to follow me in my discourse, see where we have climbed! However black your crime, however vile your character—if you have seen the wrong that you have done. If you have repented of having done it because you see that you have sinned against your loving Lord. And if you will now come to Him repenting and believing and will confess Him, as He bids you confess Him in Baptism—then you have full remission and you shall be partakers of the gifts and Graces of His Holy Spirit!

And from now on you shall be chosen witnesses for the Christ whom God has raised from the dead. Beloved, you need no choice speech from me—pure gold needs no gilding—and as I have told you the most wonderful of all facts in Heaven or in earth, I let it remain in all its simple grandeur.

May God write out this old, old, story on your hearts! Oh, that He would issue a new edition of His Gospel of Love, printed on your hearts! Every man’s conversion is a freshly-printed copy of the poem of salvation. May the Lord issue you, hot from the press this morning, a living Epistle to be known and read of all men. And especially to be read by your children at home and your neighbors in the same street! The Lord grant that hearts may be pricked by this sermon, for His name’s sake! Amen.

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# HEART PIERCING NO. 3094

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 28, 1908.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 12, 1874.**

***“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart,  
and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles,  
Men and brethren, what shall we do?”  
Acts 2:37***

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text (together with verse 36,) is  
#2102, Volume 35—“PRICKED IN THEIR HEART—  
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

I DARESAY you have seen collections of celebrated sermons which have been chosen with more or less discretion. I suppose that the sermon of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, was one of the most celebrated discourses that was ever delivered, for it was the means of bringing 3,000 persons to conviction, to conversion, to profession of faith and to union with the visible Church! Yet I do not believe that any library collector would ever have put this sermon by Peter among the most famous. It does not seem to me to be very eloquent—there is no climax in it, nothing of that fashionable thing called a “peroration.” It is all plain speaking and hard hitting, very personal, very much to the point, very full of clear Scriptural reasoning—but there is nothing at all oratorical about it. It is just such a simple speech as you might expect from a fisherman as Peter had been! I should think that Peter’s discourse was delivered calmly and deliberately. He was at a white heat of earnestness and was altogether too earnest to lose his self-control. His whole being was so thoroughly possessed by what he had to say that he thought little of how he said it.

It was a very powerful sermon, but where did the power lie, do you think? Well, instrumentally and speaking after the manner of men, I think it lay partly in Peter’s vivid realization of what he was saying. He knew that his Lord and Savior had, with wicked hands, been crucified and slain—and that He had risen from the grave and had gone back again to Heaven. You could see, by his whole manner, that he was not talking about myths and fancies, but about truths and things of which he knew for certain. There is always a power about a man’s message when his hearers know that he who delivers it believes what he is saying and has no latent doubts, no concealed skepticisms, but speaks what he knows and testifies what he has seen.

The next secret of the power of Peter’s discourse was, I think, that it was full of Scripture. There is a quotation, first of one Psalm, and then of another—David said this, and David said that—Peter’s superstructure of

argument was built upon the solid rock of Holy Scripture. Peter had a great mass before him that day needing to be moved and I do not wonder that he got such good leverage with such a fulcrum as he had. The more of Scripture, yes, of the very words of Scripture that we can use in preaching, the better and, certainly, the more of such thing as can begin with, "Thus says the Lord." Men will not care about what we say, or, "Thus says Mr. Wesley," or, "Thus says John Calvin"—it is, "Thus says the Lord" that will have power over them! McCheyne says that you will generally notice that conversions are worked rather by the preacher's text, or by some passage of Scripture quoted by him, than by his sermon, "For," he adds, "it is God's Word, not our comment upon God's Word, which is usually blessed to the salvation of souls." I think it is so, though the rule is not without many exceptions, and our Lord hints at that when He says, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word," as if the message of God-sent servants was not only God's Word, but also *their* word—and men were led to believe on Jesus through hearing it.

But the real strength of Peter's sermon lay in this, that he had been that very day baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Sitting in that upper room with the rest of the disciples, he had heard "the sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" which "filled all the house where they were sitting." And the "cloven tongues like as of fire" had sat upon Peter as well as upon the rest—and he, too, had been "filled with the Holy Spirit," so that through him the Holy Spirit spoke. Therefore it was that when he delivered that very simple sermon, his hearers were pricked in their heart, and thousands of them cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Oh, that some such power might fall upon this congregation this evening, especially upon the unconverted part of it, that they might be "pricked in their heart" as Peter's hearers were!

**I.** My subject is the pricking in the heart and my first observation is that A SAVING IMPRESSION IS ALWAYS A PRICK IN THE HEART.

A prick in the heart is very painful. To be pricked anywhere is not a thing to be desired, but a prick in the heart would not merely be painful, but, in a natural and literal sense, it would be fatal. There are a great many different kinds of impressions made by preachers upon their hearers, but blessed is that preacher who makes a wound right in their hearts!

A saving impression must be made in their heart, *because all their religion must begin there*. A great many attempts have been made to make men religious from the outside. Some have thought that a very low coat, reaching almost to the ground, and a strange kind of hat—a biretta, I think it is called—have a great deal of religion in them. It is amazing how much religion is supposed to depend upon tailors and hatters! But I fail to see how anybody's heart can be affected by the cut of his coat, or the shape of his hat! Some try to affect a man by the performance of certain ceremonies. They take him in his childhood and "regenerate" him after their fashion. And later they "confirm" him in something or other and external ceremonies of various kinds are performed upon him. They

remind one rather of Babylon than of Jerusalem. But I have never heard of anyone being brought to Jesus Christ in that way, or of any conscience being awakened, or any man finding peace with God in that fashion!

Some have tried what could be done by advising abstinence from meats and drinks. This is a very proper thing in its place and may lead to useful results. But Christ's teaching is, "Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man, but that which comes out of the mouth that defiles a man." It is the *heart* which must be affected! And nothing that comes of man, or that can be manipulated by the human hand seems able to touch that. "Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God," is the demand even under the old Law of God—and one of the first laws of pure spiritual religion is this—"God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." And, therefore, no impression can be of any saving use to a man unless it reaches his heart.

Many of you, dear Friends, have made a profession of religion and you are moral enough to be reckoned consistent with that profession and attentive enough to outward religious duties to consider yourselves to be all that you should be. But, oh, I do implore you never to be satisfied with any religion which does not affect your heart, and with no religious exercise which is not true heart-work. You might as well be sitting in your own homes as be here without your hearts. It is no more useful to sing a hymn than to sing a song unless you sing it with the heart and so make melody to God. The heart, the heart, the heart, the heart—that is the vital place! Out of it are the issues of life and unless it is savingly affected, the whole life will still be estranged from God!

If those who hear the Gospel are to be blessed by it, they must be impressed and pricked in their heart *because other impressions may even be evil*. They may be forcible, yet they may be productive of no good results. Another of Peter's discourses made a very singular impression upon his hearers. If you turn to Acts 5:33 you will find these words, "When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them." That time, you see, the wound went just as far as the heart, but it stopped there—"they were cut *to* the heart." It was a deep cut—to the heart, but not *in* the heart! And the consequence was not that they cried out, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" but they, "took counsel to slay them." Oftentimes if the Word is delivered earnestly and with power, men cannot help feeling the force of it. But what do they do after feeling it? They gnash their teeth for very rage, or they try to besmear and bespatter the preacher and to ridicule or misrepresent what he has said. If anything has pointedly come home to them, they twist it into quite another form and say, "The preacher said such-and-such," when he really said nothing of the kind! That is a way of taking counsel to slay him—they dare not kill his body, but they kill his reputation as far as they can. You may be deeply impressed by a sermon so as to feel under it

in a way which you will never forget and yet, for all that, you may only be cut *to* the heart!

Yet I would rather that people were cut to the heart than not wounded at all, because I hope that the sword of the Spirit will penetrate a little further and really enter the heart. I have often been told this sort of story—"I came to hear you preach, Sir, on such an occasion, and I went away very angry. I could not bear the Doctrine that was proclaimed and I went out hating the man who had talked in that fashion. Yet I could not forget it. It rankled in my mind until, at last, I began to think there was something in it. By-and-by, I saw that it was true and then I said, 'What a fool I am to struggle against it!'" I do not mind my hearers being angry with me because of my preaching, for it is a good deal like fishing. If you have a good large salmon at the end of the line, he will struggle and pull with all his might—and thus he will swallow the hook all the more deeply and there will be the less likelihood of his getting away. And an obstinate resistance to the Gospel is sometimes an indication that the Gospel is piercing and pricking the hearer—and making him snap at it as a wounded beast tries to bite the spear which has been thrust into him and which he cannot pull out. So, when a man is cut *to* the heart, I hope that he will soon be cut *in* the heart, but if the sword of the Spirit does not prick him in the heart, no permanent good will be effected.

And further, supposing the impression made should be good in itself, yet if the hearer is not pricked in the heart, *the impression will be only transient* and we shall have to say to the man, as the Lord said to Judah, "Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away." Or if the impression lasts a little longer, it will only need enough of the fervent heat of the rising sun upon the blade which has begun to spring up, but under which there is no depth of earth—and in due season its verdure will vanish and it will perish. If it is not real heart-work, it will not last. The reason why so many backslide is that they built on the sand—there was no deep foundation-work. The soul-saving work, the work which lasts, is that where God plows deeply into the conscience and sows the good Seed of the Kingdom in the heart. It is principle, not passion—full conviction, not merely a profession of faith—that will endure unto the end. If the impression made does not prick the heart, it will be only transient—and when it disappears, evil will come of it, for perhaps the people who are most difficult to be moved are those who have been impressed a great many times, yet not saved. The first time you heard God's faithful servant preach, you felt ready to weep yourself away under the power of the Truth of God which he proclaimed, but now his voice has grown so familiar that even when it is most pathetically earnest, you go to sleep under it! I have been in a mill when there has been such a clatter of wheels that I could not hear myself speak, yet the miller has told me that he was so used to the noise that he could go to sleep in it. And there are persons who have sat so long under a faithful minister that they have got used to his message and do not feel its force as they did when first they heard it. To use a common expression, they have become Gospel-hardened. And this is a very serious state for any

man to reach. May God save us from that perilous condition by causing us to be pricked in the heart!

When the Truth pricks the hearers of it in the heart, *the impression becomes operative*. In the case before us, if you read the narrative, you will find that these men became earnest enquirers. They said to Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, “Men and brethren—what must we do?” Being told what to do, merely, “Repent and be baptized, everyone of you,” they did repent. There was a change of mind which was followed by a corresponding change of life—and they were baptized—they obeyed the command of Christ and made an open declaration of their faith in Him in His own appointed way. Thus they were added to the Church, “and they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ Doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

All this followed because they had been “pricked in their heart.” It was a sorrowful beginning, yet it was a good beginning, for it was God’s way of beginning the work of Grace in their souls. I wish that all converts began in that way. Some seem to me to jump into religion as if they were going into a bath—and then jump out of it again just as quickly. I do not believe in the faith that is unaccompanied by repentance. Some have spoken in disparagement of repentance by saying “that the original word means nothing more than a change of mind.” And you might imagine that it was a very unimportant change of mind. But their knowledge of Greek is not very deep and their experimental knowledge of true religion would seem to be still more shallow. This change of mind, I believe, was never better pictured than in that verse of the children’s hymn—

**“Repentance is to leave  
The sin we loved before  
And show that we in earnest grieve,  
By doing so no more.”**

A faith that has no tears in its eyes is a blind faith, for where there is sight there will be weeping. Never did a soul look to Christ, whom it had pierced, without weeping and mourning because of its sin. Faith and repentance are twins—they are born together and they will live together—and as long as a Christian is in this world both will be needed. Rowland Hill used to say that the only thing that he would be sorry to leave when he went to Heaven was that sweet, lovely, sorrowful Grace of repentance—he supposed he could not repent in Heaven, but it was such a sweet experience to keep on repenting that he would wish to repent forever if such a thing might be.

**II.** Now, in the second place, let us notice WHAT TRUTHS GOD USES AS DAGGERS TO PRICK SINNERS IN THE HEART.

I have known some pricked in the heart merely *by discovering that the Gospel, the Bible, was really true*. They have been skeptical—they have perhaps been blasphemers but, all of a sudden, being honestly convinced that the Bible was true, they have been broken down at once, just as Saul of Tarsus was. He would not have persecuted Christ if he had believed Him to be the Messiah, but he thought He was an impostor and, therefore, honestly determined to put down His followers. He says

concerning himself, "I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." The moment the Lord Jesus called to him out of Heaven, and said, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?...I am Jesus who you persecute," he was pricked in the heart and soon he became, as many others have become, just as earnest in the defense of the Truth of God as he had before, in his ignorance, been in opposition to it!

I have known others pierced in the heart *by shame through some particular sin*. I will give you an instance in which that was the case. A young man has been moral from his youth up. He has had much to thank God for with regard to what he has been. He has never mixed with the wanton or wicked world, yet there is always a danger as well as a benefit in this state of things. This young man becomes self-righteous. He thinks himself a great deal better than others. Perhaps he says that he is a sinner because everybody says that out of a sort of compliment to God, but he does not feel that he has ever done much that was wrong and he wishes that other people were half as good as he thinks that he is! But one day he commits a certain definite sin. I do not know whether the young Brother is here, but he told me of a case of just this kind. He said that when he was in the workshop one day, he upset the oil can and an enquiry was made as to who had been so careless. He was asked—and he said that he had not done it. And from his usual character everybody believed his denial. "But," he said, "as I went home that night, it came to my mind, 'You are a liar. You are a liar.' I felt so mean," he said to me, "I never felt like that before. I had always acted like a man and like a good man, I thought, but now I felt that I had been a liar. When I got up in the morning, I did not like to go among the other men in the workshop. I thought they would all look at me and say, 'You are a liar.' I could not bear to think of it and a sense that I had lied brought me down on my knees before God."

Now I do not say that I was glad that young man had told a lie, but I did feel thankful that he had discovered what a liar his heart had been all his life—for his heart had always been saying to him, "You are a good fellow," yet he had not been so in reality! If there had not been lies in his heart, that lie would not have come out of his mouth. If there were rats under that floor, you might not know it was so until one happened to pop his head up through a hole in the boards—yet he only shows you what was there all the while! And so, sometimes some one sin has crept up into the light to let a man see what always was secretly in his soul—and that one sin has proved to be, in the hands of God, a sharp sword which has cut right into his heart and convinced him that he is a sinner in the sight of God.

In a great many other cases, God has used *teaching concerning His Law as the means of pricking sinners in the heart*. A man reads the Ten Commandments and he says, "All these have I kept from my youth up." But he is told, upon Christ's authority, that every Commandment contains within itself a great deal more than appears on the surface, as, for instance, "You shall not kill," is a Commandment which is broken by *anger*. "He that hates his brother" so that he wishes that there were no

such person, is, in heart, the perpetrator of the crime of murder! Then take the Command, "You shall not commit adultery." "Oh," says one, "I never sinned in that way!" And some excellent woman says, "I could not bear even to *think* of such a thing!" Yet there have been unchaste *desires, glances, thoughts, imaginations*—and the Commandment covers all those. I do not need to go into the details of each command—it will suffice to sum all up as that "certain lawyer" did. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself." Did you ever do that? Has anyone among us come anywhere *near* to doing that? When the Law of the Lord, in its wide sweep and wondrous compass of all our thoughts and imaginations and devices comes to be thoroughly understood by us, then it is that God causes us to be pricked by its sharp point!

I have known some also pricked in the heart when they have discovered that *there is to be a judgment about everything that we have done*—no, more than that—about everything that we have said and everything that we have thought—and that that judgment will be most solemn and its sentence most severe. There will be pronounced, from the lips of God, a sentence of condemnation upon the ungodly which will rest upon them forever and ever, so that they shall abide in a living death in which there shall be no gleam of light or joy, but all shall be a desolation and a ruin, where misery shall lift up its doleful notes forever proclaiming the Infinite Justice of God. Many have been "pricked in their heart" when they have found that though some preachers make our sin to be only a trifle, God's Word does not. Man may try to make the penalty of sin seem small, but God's Word does not. God's scale of sin and man's scale of sin differ very widely. God regards sin as a vast evil requiring an Infinite Atonement, while some who profess to be His servants treat it as quite an insignificant thing. I pray that the Truth, as revealed in God's Word, may be applied with power to every unwounded heart here, and that many may be "pricked in their heart," and caused to cry out, as they did after Peter's discourse on the day of Pentecost, "Men and brethren, what must we do?"

On the other hand, a great many have been "pricked in their heart" *by a sense of the great goodness of God*. They have said, "Has God been so good, so kind, so tender to us and have we never loved Him or sought His Glory?" And they have felt ashamed as they have thought of their base ingratitude. There is one thing I often feel—I do not know whether you feel as I do and I do not know whether I can quite make you see what I mean—I often feel a great pity for God, I feel as if I could weep tears of blood because God is so shamefully treated by His own creatures. God Himself feels their ingratitude, for He says, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master's crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider." He feels that it is a hard case that He should be treated

thus, and when *men* feel that it is a hard case, it is a proof that they have been “pricked in their heart.”

But the chief instrument, I think, that God uses for pricking sinners in their heart is *the dying love of Jesus Christ*. Nothing wounds like the Cross of Christ, just as nothing heals like the Cross. When we discover that out of Infinite love and pity, Jesus came to this earth and took upon Him our sins, our sorrows, our sicknesses and died in our place upon Calvary’s Cross, we say, “How can we stand out against One who is so disinterested, so condescending and so kind?” Looking to Him whom we have pierced by our sin, we are made to weep on account of it. Are not your hearts, my fellow Christians, always most tender when you get nearest the Cross? I am sure you agree with the poet who wrote—

***“My sins, my sins, my Savior,  
How sad on You they fall!  
Seen through your gentle patience  
I tenfold feel them all.  
I know they are forgiven,  
But still their pain to me  
Is all the grief and anguish  
They laid, my Lord, on Thee.”***

Yes, a bleeding Savior makes men’s hearts bleed. When He is pieced, they also are pierced. Of one thing I am sure, that nothing ever pierced my heart like the discovery of God’s boundless love in giving His well-beloved Son to die for me. I will put it to any man here, even if he is living this day an ungodly life, even if he has plunged into the very worst and most infamous of sins—if tonight he could know that God had loved him from before the foundation of the world—that long before the stars began to shine, electing love had pitched on him to be its peculiar object—that Christ died especially for him—that for him there was appointed pardon and acceptance. And for him a crown already made in Heaven and a white robe which would fit no one but himself, and a harp which no hand but his could ever play, oh, I think he would loathe himself, and say, “I did not know this, or else I would not have lived as I have lived. I did not know that I was the favorite of Heaven. I did not know that I was bought with the precious blood of Jesus! I did not know that God had ordained me unto eternal life, else had I long ago fled into my Father’s arms and cried, ‘I have sinned against Heaven, and before You.’” O Spirit of the living God, make such a Revelation to some of God’s elect here now! Wound thus their hearts and then lead them to the wounded Savior, and let them know that whoever believes in Him was loved of God before time began and shall be loved of God when time shall be no more!

**III.** Now I want to notice very briefly, in the third place, WHOSE HAND USES THESE SHARP DAGGERS SO THAT SINNERS GET “PRICKED IN THEIR HEART.”

Not Peter’s, my Brothers and Sisters, nor mine, nor the hand of any Gospel minister! It must be a more powerful hand than any of these—even *the hand of the Holy Spirit*. The fact is that He who wrote these Truths in the Bible must Himself write them on men’s hearts, or else they will forever remain inoperative except to condemn! There is One who

knows all about the human heart—the Holy Spirit searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men—and He knows how to apply the Truth of God so as to make it quick and powerful, and to drive home to the heart that sword which, because He uses it, is called “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” I pray that He may take the Truth this very moment and use it thus. A sword hanging on the wall does not wound anybody. Our daily prayer ought to be, “O almighty Spirit, gird Your sword upon Your thigh and wield it in Your Omnipotent might, that sinners may be ‘pricked in their heart,’ and so be brought to repentance and salvation!”

One very comforting thought is that *He who alone can pierce sinners’ hearts, is named “the Comforter.”* Catch at that, Sinner, catch at that! He who wounds the heart is also the Comforter! He who kills is the Quickener who makes alive! The Spirit who convicts is also the Spirit who consoles! He has come to convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, but it is also His office to take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us. Though one of His hands holds a sharp dagger, the other hand bears the remedy with which to heal the wound, for still is that saying true, “I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal.” Only He who kills can make alive, but blessed be God that the same Divine Spirit is both Wounder and Healer!

Therefore let us, who are the children of God, cry mightily unto the Spirit and entreat Him to make the preaching of the Gospel, here and everywhere else, to be like a sharp sword piercing the hearts of sinners! How many preachers, nowadays, are using a sword without either edge or point? I recollect hearing a sermon and before it was preached there was a prayer offered that souls might be saved by it, yet I could not see how any soul could have been saved by that sermon unless the hearer had misunderstood what the preacher said and then, perhaps, he might have been converted. Yet many people called it “a very fine sermon.” The man had put the sword of the Spirit into a splendid scabbard decorated all the way up with gold and diamonds—and then he waved it about and prayed the Lord to kill somebody with it! But the Lord could not do it unless He acted directly contrary to His usual method of working! He often uses our weakness and our infirmity to glorify Himself, but He cannot do many mighty works with some instrumentality. Brothers and Sisters, pray to God to send us the Holy Spirit—that is what we need above everything else! Pray day and night for this and believe and expect that God will grant your request. If the preacher does not happen to be the man you like best to hear, say to yourself, “God can use that man,” and then pray, “O Lord, give him Your Holy Spirit!” I remember that Mr. Matthew Wilkes once preached from the text, “You are our Epistle written in our hearts...written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.” He compared the preacher to a pen and said that some pens needed mending now and then, and that all pens, however good they were, must be dipped in the ink if they were to do any writing at all. And he added, “You ought to pray all the more for your preacher when he does not write

well, 'Lord, dip him in the ink! Give him more of the unction of the Holy Spirit and then his word will have power over the hearts of men!'”

**IV.** Our last enquiry must be, HOW CAN THESE PRICKS IN THE HEART BE HEALED?

You had the answer in the first hymn we sang tonight—

***“When wounded sore the stricken soul  
Lies bleeding and unbound.  
One hand only, a pierced hand,  
Can salve the sinner’s wound.  
When sorrow swells the laden breast,  
And tears of anguish flow,  
One heart only, a broken heart  
Can feel the sinner’s woe.”***

Is your heart bleeding? Then bring it to the bleeding heart of Jesus, for that will stanch its wound! Does your brow ache? Then put it near that brow which was crowned with thorns and its aching will soon be gone. Are you sorely wounded? Then lay your wounds close to the wounds of Jesus and they shall be healed.

This is the whole story. You are guilty and God must punish sin. He cannot be a just God and yet not exact the penalty for sin. But Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and He has stood as the Substitute for His people, bearing their sins in His own body up to the tree and on the tree. And there He endured the wrath of God against sin, “being made a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree.” You ask, “Did Christ bear *my* sins?” Let me ask you—do you believe in Him? Do you trust Him as your Savior? Will you confide your everlasting destiny into His dear hands? Will you abandon your self-righteousness and will you rest in Jesus alone? Will you take Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to be your soul’s only confidence? If you can truly say, “Ah, that I will, and glad will I be to have such a Christ to trust in,” then I can assure you that He did die for you—and that your sins are pardoned and shall never be mentioned against you any more forever! Go in peace, for you are justified by faith, and you are dear to the heart of God. Remember that glorious declaration, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Go away singing of Substitution—the richest word in all our language—Christ standing in my place that I may stand in Christ’s place! Christ on the Cross for me, Christ in the grave for me and now I in Heaven where Christ is, for God “has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” I at the right hand of God, beloved and honored because Christ has gone there to prepare a place for me that where He is, there I may be also!

Yet, before you go, let me urge you, if you are trusting in Christ, to confess your faith as the converts did on the day of Pentecost—

***“Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!  
The trumpet call obey!  
Forth to the mighty conflict,  
In this, His glorious day!  
You that are men, now serve Him,  
Against unnumbered foes***

***Your courage rise with danger  
And strength to strength oppose.”***

You who really love the Lord ought to be ashamed to make any difficulty of confessing your faith in Him. I remember, when I was a lad of fifteen, resolving that as a Believer in Christ, I ought to join the Church in the place where I was then living. I asked the deacon about it and he said that I must see the pastor. I remember well going to see him on a Monday and receiving a reply that he could not see me. I called again on Tuesday and Wednesday and got an answer that he was busy and could not see me. But when I made up my mind to do a thing, even in those days, I meant to do it. So I managed to get to the door of his study and I said to him, “As I have come three times to see you, Sir, and the Church Meeting is to be held tomorrow evening, I will go to the Church Meeting and propose myself as a member. I mean to be united to the visible Church of Christ. So if you cannot see me, I will go to the members and ask them to receive me.”

When he saw how determined I was, he found time to see me directly, and I was very soon admitted into the Church. Now, you will not have as much trouble as I had, for you will find many Christians ready to welcome you into our fellowship. It is no trouble at all compared with what Christians found it in the olden times. I think I see, in the early days of Christianity, a good old saint at one of the meetings down in the catacombs, talking with a young man who says to him, “I wish to be a follower of Christ.” The old saint says, “I rejoice, Brother, to give you the right hand, but do you know what it means to be a follower of Christ?” “Well,” he says, “I think I do.” “Come with me,” says he, “and we will take a walk to the Coliseum.” And in the dead of night, while the moon is shining upon that vast amphitheatre, the old man says to him, “Do you see there tens of thousands of seats?” “Yes.” “Well, if you do become a follower of Christ, it is very likely that everyone of those seats will be filled with a cruel spectator who will gaze upon you one of these days.” “But, Brother, what would happen to me then?” “Come with me,” he says, “across this great arena. Do you see those bones? They are the bones of some of the soldiers belonging to the army that you wish to join. Now step across to this low arch. Can you hear those growls?” “Yes, Brother, what animals are those?” “Lions, tigers, and other savage beasts from Africa and Gaul.” “Why are they there, Brother?” “To tear the Christians limb from limb when they shall be placed in the middle of that amphitheatre. If you are with them, there will be tens of thousands looking down upon you, eager for your death, and not one of them will pity you. Are you prepared to follow Christ here?” I think I can hear the young Christian hero, when he thoroughly appreciates the risk, saying, “It will be hard for flesh and blood to die like that, yet, by the Grace of God, I will never bow before an idol. My hope is fixed on Jesus Christ who bled and died for me. Brother, put my name down! Introduce me to the pastor of the Church and let me be immersed into Christ, for His I am, and if I am called to die here, by His Spirit’s help I will not draw

back! I will face the lions and die the martyr's death, that I may wear the martyr's crown."

You young men and young women who have lately been converted here, are not called to such a death as that. Will you shrink from the little trials and petty persecutions of the present time? Are you afraid of someone who will point the finger of scorn at you and say, "There goes a Christian"? Then, what poor stuff you must be made of and how little of the Spirit of God can be in you! You have grave need to question whether you have been born-again, for if you are, indeed, the Lord's own—if He has bought you with His blood—you will come forward and say, "His I am, and I am not ashamed to admit it! No, but I even glory in it."

The Lord bless you, dear Friends! If you have been wounded in heart, may He heal you! And if you never have been thus wounded, may there be such a wound produced in your heart right speedily that only the pierced hand of Christ shall be able to salve—and to Him shall be the Glory forever and ever! Amen.

### **HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—537, 584.**

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

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

# A FAR-REACHING PROMISE

## NO. 2586

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 15, 1883.

*“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”*  
*Acts 2:39.*

WE learn from the text a fact worth remembering, namely, that in the first stage of the Christian ministry, the thing to be aimed at is that men should be pricked in the heart. Then, in the second stage, the thing to be desired is that they should gladly receive the Word of God. Notice what is said in the 37<sup>th</sup> verse—“When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart.” Then in the 41<sup>st</sup> verse—“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized.” Hence, in the beginning, the preacher’s business is not to convert men, but the very reverse! It is idle to attempt to heal those who are not wounded, to attempt to clothe those who have never been stripped and to make those rich who have never realized their poverty. As long as the world stands, we shall need the Holy Spirit, not only as the Comforter, but also as the Convincer, who will “reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

I am inclined to think that the large number of backsliders who, after they have professed to be converted, turn back to the world, may be accounted for by the fact that they never seriously felt their guilt and were never brought low by the work of the Holy Spirit convicting them of sin. Give me the old-fashioned form of conversion in which our fathers rejoice. I have lived long enough to see people jump into what they call salvation, and jump out of it as men plunge into a cold bath when they get up in the morning! Here is a person with a diseased leg. The doctor has looked at the limb, but he has not used his knife, he has not cut out the proud flesh—but he has applied a liniment and an ointment—and he has made a wonderful cure! Marvelous are the healing powers of the clever man. According to common reports he is in high repute everywhere around. Yes, so he may be, but that limb will never be right again—the surgeon has done a permanent injury to it under the pretense of having rendered its owner a great service. I believe that some men who are said to have been converted many times need to be converted now—and that multitudes of those who are trumpeted forth as having found the Savior do not yet know why they *need* a Savior and have *not* really found Him—

but have exercised presumption in the place of faith and a belief in their own excited feelings instead of in the Lord Jesus Christ!

It must be so, I am sure, because we constantly see, on all hands, men who have been washed into deeper stains and who are worse after their so-called conversion than they were before. There must be, dear Friends, a probing of men's hearts with the Law of God before we can rightly bring to them the healing of the Gospel. Old Robbie Flockhart's simile was a good one. He said, "You may take a piece of silk thread and try to sew with it as long as you like, but you will do nothing with it, alone—you need a sharp, piercing needle to go, first, and that will draw the silken thread after it. The needle of the Law of God prepares the way for the thread of the Gospel." There must be birth-pangs, or there will be no child born. The old-fashioned Grace of repentance is not to be dispensed with—there must be sorrow for sin—there must be "a broken and a contrite heart." This, God will not despise. But a "conversion" which does not produce this result, God will not accept as genuine.

So we shall still continue to preach the Law of God. We shall thunder out the terrors of the Lord. We shall not be fashionable and popular, and prophesy smooth things lest our labor should be declared to have been in vain when the Lord shall come. I charge all Brothers who are anxious for the true conversion of sinners, to be sometimes a little backward in dealing out comfort to them. Wait till you see that it is really needed! Wait till you perceive that there is a wound before you apply the healing balm. Until people are willing to confess their sins, you have no ground upon which you can comfort them. It is the man who "confesses and forsakes them" who "shall have mercy." Christ is a sinner's Savior and if a man is not a sinner, Christ has no salvation for him. Until he will take the sinner's place and frankly acknowledge his guilt, what is the use of preaching to him? Remember Christ's own words—"They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Now I am going to try to preach as wide, plain and open a Gospel as I can, but I have no hope of its being accepted by anybody unless, first of all, he has been pricked in the heart. I am persuaded that even the wondrous illimitable liberality of God is a thing which is despised by men until they have a sense of their need of His bounty. When that sense of need is worked within them by the Holy Spirit, then they leap at the very sound of the Gospel! But until then, their heart is gross, their ears are dull of hearing and they care not for the Free Grace of God.

Now let us come to our text—"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

**I.** First, notice that the promise which God has made to man in Christ Jesus is A PROMISE WHICH EXACTLY MEETS THE NEED OF MANKIND. What is that promise?

First, it is *the promise of the Holy Spirit*. The Apostle Peter quoted from the Prophet Joel the promise which God had made that in the latter days He would pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh. That Holy Spirit is one of

man's most urgent needs. We are fallen, Brothers and Sisters—fallen through the agency of the evil spirit—and we need the help of the good Spirit that we may be raised again. Our nature is polluted at its very center! The old serpent has poured poison into the innermost fountain of our being and, therefore, we need that the Holy Spirit should come and pour life into us, renewing us in the spirit of our mind. We need the Holy Spirit to illuminate us, for we are both blind and in the dark. We need the Holy Spirit to instruct us, for, by nature, we are ignorance, itself, and it is His office to teach men. We need the Holy Spirit to soften our heart. Naturally, it is harder than the nether millstone, which is always the harder of the two, as it has to bear the grinding of the upper stone. We need the Holy Spirit to quicken us, for, by nature, we are dead in trespasses and sins, and to all good things callous and indifferent. Brothers and Sisters, we need the Holy Spirit that we should be regenerated, for it is written, "You must be born again," and we can only be born again, born from above, through the operation of the Spirit of God! When we are born again, we still need the Holy Spirit that He may sanctify us, that He may preserve us, that He may perfect us and make us qualified to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

Therefore, Sinner, if you say, "I feel myself to be powerless, incapable, like one that is dead," let not that stand in your way, for God gives the Holy Spirit on purpose to meet just such need as yours! Everything that is necessary to be done, which you cannot do, the Spirit of God will help you to do. And that which you can do, in a measure, but which you do very badly and inefficiently, the Spirit of God is given to help you to do, for He helps our infirmity. There is no strength needed in you, Sinner—He will be your strength! There is no good operation needed on your part—the Holy Spirit has come to work all your works in you. He works in us to will and to do according to His own good pleasure and then we, in consequence, thereof, work out our own salvation with fear and trembling! If you will but believe in Christ, you need not come to Him with a new heart—here is the Spirit of God to give you that new heart. You need not strive to make yourself tender and humble in spirit—here is the Spirit of God to make you tender and humble. There is nothing that you need endeavor to produce in yourself, for this Divine Being, who brooded over chaos and brought order out of primeval confusion, is ready to come and brood over *you*—over your dark, disordered, chaotic soul! He can spread His clove-like wings over it till you shall come to light, and love, and life, and liberty, and joy! Oh, is not this a mercy that inasmuch as we are so weak and helpless, the promise of God is that He will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?

But this is not all that a man needs in order that he may be saved. He needs, secondly, *the remission of his sin* and there is a promise that God will give to the penitent the remission of their sins. Hence Peter said, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Harken, guilty One, there is remission of sin even for you! You who have lain soaking in sin till you are crimsoned with it, till your sin is ingrained

into your very nature, there is power with God to make that crimson white as snow, for, “all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” Whenever I repeat those gracious words of our Lord, I feel as if I had said something far more sweet than the choicest poetry, something infinitely more deserving to be written in letters of gold than all the sayings of the wisest philosophers of old! Tell the guilty man that God has mercy reserved for him and is prepared to forgive him—what better news can he ever hear? Tell him that it is not true, as some say, that everything we have ever done must necessarily remain upon us, to injure and to hurt us in this life and in the next, as long as we have any being—it is not so, there is a remedy provided by God for the disease of sin! Yes, God can remove the very scars which that disease has left behind when it is healed! Sin can be perfectly forgiven and forever put away. Remember the Lord’s declaration: “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins.”

Now, when a cloud is gone, the sky is none the darker, it is just as blue as it was before that cloud was formed. Another emblem of God’s Grace is that when He has washed us, we shall be whiter than snow. Snow, when it first falls, bears no trace of ever having been stained, it is so perfectly white. And God can wash you, poor Sinner, though you are guiltiest of the guilty, till not a speck of sin remains. “You are clean every whit,” said Christ to His disciples. Oh, what a word was that, and it is true of all who trust Jesus! Being cleansed in His blood, no trace of sin remains!

Now put those two things together—the Holy Spirit working in us a change of heart and Jesus Christ working for us and preparing pardon for sin—and in those two things you have the supply of man’s great need, which, put in a word, is *salvation*. In verse 21 you can see the promise about that matter—“Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” He shall be *saved*—that is, perfectly and completely saved both from the guilt of sin and from the power of sin! He shall not be half-saved, or saved in one particular form of salvation, but he shall be *saved*. Whoever, then, repenting, trusts in Christ and confesses his faith according to Christ’s own rule, shall be saved! “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” This is the glorious promise which, in its wide sweep, comprises all that a sinner needs—the Holy Spirit, the remission of sin and salvation!

**II.** Now, secondly, let us enquire—TO WHOM IS THIS PROMISE MADE? According to my text, “the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

I never like to accuse my Brothers of being tricky, but have you ever heard this text quoted as far as this, “For the promise is unto you, and to your children”? And then a full stop is put in, to prove not that an infant ought to be baptized, but that an infant ought to be sprinkled? The argument used by many ministers is that the blessings of the Covenant are for Believers *and their children*—and some of you may sometimes have thought that the argument is rather difficult to answer. I do not like to

think that there has been any dishonesty in such a matter, still, one cannot approve of a Brother chopping a text off in the middle like that and trying to make it say exactly the opposite of what it really says!

Instead of this passage teaching that there is some special blessing for Christian people and their children, it teaches nothing of the sort! Peter declares that there is no limit of that kind to the range of this promise. Listen—"The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Suppose that I were to try and argue thus—"The promise is unto you, and to your children, therefore your children ought to be baptized." Go on with the text—"and to all that are afar off," therefore all that are afar off ought to be baptized. That would be the same kind of reasoning, but it would be the drivel of an idiot, with no reasoning in it! But the passage, instead of speaking of anything being a privilege to certain people and their children, expressly declares that while it is their privilege, and their children's privilege, it is equally the privilege of all that are afar off—"as many as the Lord our God shall call." That is to say, that great Covenant promise, "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved," is meant for you, is meant for your children, is meant for Hottentots, is meant for Hindus, is meant for Greenlanders, is meant for everybody to whom the Lord's call is addressed!

Our commission is, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." There is not any person in this place who does not come within the sweep of my text! The promise is to you if you are a Jew! It is to you if you are the child of a Jew, or if you are the child of a godly man—but it is also to you if you are afar off! If any are afar off because of sin, having gone into the far country away from God, or if they are afar off, literally, living in distant foreign lands, to them is the word of this salvation sent! The promise is for all to whom the message comes and, in its innermost and special sense, it is for all whom God shall effectually call by His Spirit, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, bond or free! That is the very glory of the text and upon that I want to reflect while I pass on to the next point.

**III.** That next point is this. Inasmuch as everything that a sinner needs for his salvation is made a matter of promise, and that promise is made to all that hear the Gospel, then, Brothers and Sisters, THIS IS A CAUSE FOR VERY GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT.

I hope that I am addressing some who are pierced in the heart and who, therefore, want to find Christ. Well, see what a promise you have to come upon! *And many have come to the Lord with far less encouragement.* When Jonah went to Nineveh, to utter his mournful and monotonous message, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," the king believed it and his people believed it—and they humbled themselves before God. Yet what had they to go upon? Only this, "Who can tell?" They said, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" So they came to God with no other encouragement but, "Who can tell?" Take heed, you who hear the Gospel, that

the men of Nineveh do not rise up in judgment against you to condemn you!

Take another case. There was the prodigal who came back to his father. Had he any promise from his father that he would receive him? No, nothing of the sort. It was only the prodigal's belief in his father's goodness that brought him back and his father did receive him. Take another case, that of the importunate widow who went to the judge, crying, "Avenge me of my adversary." Had she a promise that the judge would relieve her? Not at all! He was one who feared not God, nor regarded man—yet she kept on pleading with him and, though he even told her, no, perhaps scores of times, yet she pressed on with her suit till, at last, her importunity won the case!

Now see what vantage ground you stand upon compared with these people. You do not go to God with the question, "Who can tell?" You do not come to God merely with an inference drawn from the kindness of His Nature. You do not come to God merely persuaded that He will hear importunate prayer. But if you come to Him, you come with a *promise*, for, "the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off." And this is the promise—"Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Oh, I think you ought to come to God with joy on your face, for with such a sweet promise as this, you must, you shall prevail!

The second encouragement is that *God is always true*. It would be a dreadful supposition to imagine that God could lie. In fact, that would be sheer blasphemy! If a man is a righteous man and he makes a promise, he will keep it if he can. A good man "swears to his own hurt and changes not." Much more is the good God faithful to every promise He has ever made. "Has He said, and shall He not do it?" Then, if God has promised that whoever believes in His Son shall be saved, you may be sure that he will be! And whoever you may be, if you believe in Christ, you must be saved. "Lord, I know that You cannot lie." You may plead in that fashion with Him. Take His promise in your hand and say to him, "Do as You have said."—

***"You have promised to forgive  
All who on Your Son believe."***

Plead that promise and you shall find it certainly fulfilled, for God did never yet draw back from a promise which He had made—and He never will! Oh, how that ought to encourage you in prayer! "But," says one, "may I grasp that promise, 'Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved?'" Of course you may! And if the devil says that you must not claim that promise, tell him that Peter said, "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off." And as you are one of those that are a long way off Jerusalem—and, certainly, the British islands must have been esteemed very far off in Peter's day—then you are one of those to whom that promise has come! Plead it and you shall find that it will be fulfilled to you.

Further, take encouragement from the next point, which is that *if God has made a promise, He certainly must be prepared to fulfill it*. I have

known a great many very promising young men who never were performing young men. They promise to do this and that, and the other—but they never do anything of the sort. I heard of one, the other day, who owed a great deal of money. He got the bill for the debt renewed and after that was done, he said to a friend, “Now that is all settled. How comfortable a fellow feels when he has no debts to trouble him!” He had not paid anything, he had not anything with which he could pay, he had only renewed his promise to pay—yet he felt perfectly content! Some people are willing to enter into any kind of promise or bond, but it never seems to occur to them that they must fulfill the obligation into which they have entered. We put them down as bad men and we do not want to trade with them—or associate with them!

But God never made a promise unless He was quite prepared to fulfill it. Men sometimes make promises because it is not convenient, or in their power to perform the promise at once, so they postpone its fulfillment. But when God makes a promise, He can fulfill it at once and He will always be ready to fulfill it whenever He is called upon to do so. Friends, if God has promised to give the Holy Spirit, He can do it! The Holy Spirit waits to descend into men’s hearts. If God has promised to give the pardon of sin, He can do it. The ransom price is paid. The Atonement has been presented and accepted—

**“There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins.”**

It has not to be filled. The sacrifice is not to be found, or to be offered when found. “It is finished.” Everything that is required for your salvation is ready and I am sent to you to say, “Hungry souls that need a feast of mercy, the oxen and fatlings are killed! All things are ready, come to the supper.” So that the Lord’s promise ought to cheer you very much, since God is ready at once to fulfill it.

Yet again, here is another word of good cheer to you. *God has put salvation upon the footing of promise.* Not on the footing of *merit*—not on the footing of *purchase*—not on the footing of anything you can do, but on the footing of, “He has promised it.” That is how the Covenant of Grace runs—“I will” and, “you shall.” It is not, “You are to do this, to feel that and to be the other.” But it is, “A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them.” It is all promise, promise, promise, promise! When you call on a man for money and he says to you, “On what ground do you ask for this sum?” and you say, “Why, Sir, because you promised it,” that is a good ground to go upon with one who is both able and willing to pay. If he said to you, “But I need to know whether you deserve this”—you are such an undeserving person that you would feel that you were out of court with him. But when your answer is simply this, “Whatever I may be, is not the question. I come because you promised”—that makes grand pleading! That is the way to be enriched with heavenly mercy, simply to say, “O Lord, You have promised Grace to all who trust

Your Son, and here I am —empty, naked, poor and undeserving—but I plead Your promise! For Your truth's sake, and for Your mercy's sake, fulfill that promise unto me."

Is not all this encouraging? I do not say to you, "The *law* is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off." But I say, with Peter, "The *promise* is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off." The word of promise is preached to you—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes on Him is not condemned." "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Or, putting it in Peter's words: "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Now observe, in conclusion, that no exception is possible in this case. Let me repeat that expression—no exception is possible in this case. Addressing all the Jews who were gathered around him, Peter said, "The promise is unto you!" Looking forward to all the future generations of Jews that were to be born, he added, "and to your children." And then, lifting up his eyes to the far-off Gentile world, looking in vision as far as "The Pillars of Hercules," and across "the silver streak" that separates these islands from the mainland—looking still further to Ireland as well and then to the great continent which Columbus afterwards discovered, he seemed to see red men, black men, white men and brown men—men of every race and clime and age! And he included them all by saying, "and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Comprehending the vast population of the whole globe, throughout all time, Peter says, "This promise is to you all, 'Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'"

Therefore, that is a promise to me! Well do I recollect the time when I first laid hold of that Truth of God. I was in great sorrow of soul, for I thought that there was no Gospel for me. But I caught a ray of hope from that blessed word, "whoever"—oh, how I love that word, "whoever"—"whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." And there was another cheering message. "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." I read what John Bunyan said about that text—"What, 'him,' is this? Why, it is any 'him that comes.' Any him, in all the world, that comes unto Christ, He will in no wise cast out." Perhaps you know how the blessed dreamer goes on about the rest of that verse—"He will in no wise cast out.' Lord, I am a big sinner! 'I will in no wise cast out.' Lord, I have been a blasphemer! 'I will in no wise cast out.' Lord, I am an old sinner—I am 80 years old! 'I will in no wise cast out.' Lord, I have been an adulterer. I have been a fornicator. I have been a thief. I have been a murderer! 'I will in no wise cast out.'" So he goes over, and over, and over, and over with it to show that whoever comes to Christ, He cannot possibly cast him out, for if He did, it would make Christ a liar and it would make a lie of hundreds of texts! "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Look, Sirs, look! *It is not for God's honor to cast out a soul that comes to Him.* Suppose that there should be cast out one soul that came to

Christ? Suppose that one sinner who trusted in Christ should perish? I know what men would do. They would directly publish all round the world, "God has broken His Word! The Gospel has failed, for here is a soul lost that trusted in Christ!" You do not suppose God will allow that, do you? In imagination, I see that poor soul going down to Hell. He is no sooner there than the devil says to him, "Did you trust Christ?" "Yes, I did." "Did He refuse to save you?" "Yes, He did." "Do you mean to say that you fulfilled the Word of God, 'He that believes and is baptized?'" "Yes, I did." "And yet you are not saved!" Oh, what a roar of laughter would go all round the Pit! How every fallen spirit, rising from his dungeon, would begin with unhallowed glee to shout and yell! How through the deep compound of pandemonium, where evil reigns supreme, there would go up their hisses and their hoots against a defeated Savior—against a conquered Christ—against a lying God—against One that said, and did not do, and that spoke, and was not true. "Aha, aha, Emmanuel, Diabolus has defeated You! Aha, aha, Jehovah, Your Word is forfeited!" Shall such a thing ever be? You shudder as I picture it. It never shall be! Heaven and earth shall pass away and, as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bears it, and is lost forever, so shall the universe pass away, but never shall a sinner come and cast himself on Christ—and yet be allowed to perish! Try it, Sinner! Try it! Try it now! God help you to try it, and to prove that, still, Christ receives sinners and casts out none who trust Him! The Lord bless you, for His name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
ACTS 2:1-42.**

We cannot too often read the story of that wondrous outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. And let us never read it without asking the Lord to manifest in our midst the fullness of the Spirit's power. We may not have a repetition of the miraculous gifts which were then bestowed upon the Apostles and those who were with them, but we may have that gracious influence which shall convince and convert those who gather to hear the Word. Our success in preaching the Word is entirely dependent upon the Presence and working of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, let our prayer be—

***"Lord God, the Holy Spirit,  
In this accepted hour,  
As on the day of Pentecost,  
Descend in all Your power.  
The young, the old inspire  
With wisdom from above  
And give us hearts and tongues of fire,  
To pray, and praise, and love."***

**Verses 1-13.** *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit,*

*and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under Heaven. Now when this was heard abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What does this mean? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. The people who came together were greatly astonished to find the disciples of Christ speaking to them in their own tongues. Though all the speakers were Jews and naturally knew no tongue but their own, yet they were able to talk in divers languages. Therefore some of their hearers, mocking, said, "These men are full of new wine."*

**14-21.** *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, You men of Judaea, and all you that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel—And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will show wonders in Heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord comes: and it shall come to pass that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. I did not detain you to speak about the moon turned into blood, or the sun darkened into midnight—those matters are of small consequence to you and to me compared with this sentence: "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." What a blessed door of hope is this! What a window, letting the light of Heaven shine into the darkest despondency! Whoever shall address himself to God by repentance, by faith, by prayer, shall be saved!*

**22, 23.** *You men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. This was bold talking, for Peter was doubtless addressing many of the very people who had put the Lord to death—and he charges them with it! Observe how he declares that Christ's death was in accordance with "the determinate*

counsel and foreknowledge of God,” yet he expressly says that, “by wicked hands” they had crucified and slain Him. It never occurred to Peter that the counsel of God deprived men of the responsibility and guilt of their actions. No, neither need it ever occur to you! If anyone shall ask you, “When anything is according to the foreknowledge and counsel of God, how can God blame the doer of it?” you may tell him that he has first to explain to you what he means; and if he says there is a difficulty in it, ask him to tell you what the difficulty is. Those who knew better than the objector, could see none. The inspired Apostle Peter could see none, but when he was most vehement in charging these men with guilt, yet, at the same time he said that it was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God! Surely he was a bad pleader to introduce into his argument anything that could be readily construed into an excuse for those he was accusing! But there is no real excuse in it—the free agency of man is as true as the predestination of God—the two Truths stand fast forever! It is the folly of man to imagine that they disagree. If you do wrong, you are accountable for the wrong. And if there is a Providence which ordains everything—as certainly there is—yet that Providence takes not away from any man the full responsibility for anything that he does. So, truly did Peter say to these Jews concerning Christ, “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

**24-32.** *Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be held by it. For David speaks concerning Him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because You will not leave my soul in Hades, neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You shall make me full of joy with Your countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a Prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in the abode of the dead, neither His flesh did see corruption. This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.* Here Peter appealed to the eleven, and to all the disciples then present who had seen Jesus after He had risen from the dead. It must have been a very impressive sight as they all stood up bearing witness that they had seen the Christ, who was crucified, alive after His death! It was a wonderful public attestation to that grandest of all facts—the raising again from the dead of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God!

**33.** *Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has shed forth this, which you now see and hear.* Was not that enough to convince them? They saw and they heard the proofs of the working of the Spirit among them—and Peter told them that “this” was the gift of Christ, who had as-

cended up on high. It must have been a very striking thing to have been there, and to have heard and seen these tokens of God setting His seal to the work of Jesus.

**34-36.** *For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he says himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit You on My right hand, until I make Your foes Your footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ.* What a climax to Peter's sermon! How simple and yet how triumphant is the argument! We do not wonder that men were convinced by it.

**37.** *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart.* There is a great distinction between being cut to the heart and being pricked *in the heart*. Those who were cut to the heart stoned the preacher, but they who are pricked in the heart yield a sweet obedience to the will of God! "They were pricked in their heart."

**37-40.** *And said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.* Not, "save yourselves," but, "save yourselves *from this untoward generation.*" Come out from among them! They are guilty of the death of Christ. You will be found guilty of it, too, unless you now disown the people who committed that awful crime! Come right out from among them and be altogether separated from them.

**41, 42.** *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

### **HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—488, 498, 499.**

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

# ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH

## NO. 1167

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 5, 1874,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.”  
Acts 2:47.***

WE are just coming to the most beautiful season of the year—Spring—when everything around us is shaking off the chill grave clothes of winter and putting on the beautiful array of a new life. The Church of God was in that condition at Pentecost—her winter was past and the flowers appeared on the earth. She enjoyed the spring breezes, for the breath of the Holy Spirit refreshed her garden. There was spring music—the time of the singing of birds was come, for her preachers testified faithfully of Jesus. And so many and varied were the sweet notes which welcomed the new season, that many nations of men heard in their own tongue the wonderful works of God!

There were, also, the spring blossoms—the fig tree put forth her green figs and the vines with the tender grapes gave a good smell—and all around multitudes inquired, “Men and brethren, what must we do?” And many also avowed their faith in Jesus. There were the spring showers of repentance, the spring sunbeams of joy in the Holy Spirit and the spring flowers of newly-given hope and faith! May we behold just such another springtime in all the Churches of Jesus Christ throughout the world! And meanwhile, let us arouse ourselves suitable to so gladsome a season. Let us rise up and meet the Well-Beloved, and in concert with Him let us sow in hope and look for a speedy springing up. The Sun of Righteousness is coming forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and the weary night is melting into welcome day—let us hear the Beloved’s voice as He cries to us, “Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away.”

It seems from the text that the additions to the Church which were made in the Pentecostal springtime did not occur always in one form. Sometimes they came in crowds and at other times by gradual increase. Upon one day there were 3,000 added—that is an instance of conversion in the mass, when a nation is born at once! In such a work we are bound to believe. I mean not merely in the *possibility* of it, but in the *probability* of it, for it stands to reason that what should convince one man in a particular condition of heart would as readily convince 3,000 or 30,000 if they were in the same state. Granted the same soil, the same seed, the same season and the same wonder-working God—and I cannot imagine any reason why a limit should be set to results!

The Holy Spirit is Divine and consequently He knows how to influence all kinds of men, and He can, by the instrumentalities now in use, reach

just as many as He pleases. I remember well, when I first preached in London, a remark made by a friend which very greatly encouraged me at the time, and has proved true in my experience. When he heard that my little country Chapel had been filled by the inhabitants of the village in which I had preached, he gave me hope of filling a far larger place in London. “For,” he said, “what will draw 200 will draw 2,000, and what was useful to a few may be made just as useful to a multitude.”

I saw at once that it was so. When we are dealing with *spiritual* forces we have not to calculate by pounds and ounces, or by so many horse power. We have not to think of *quantity*. As an illustration—give me fire, I will not bargain for a furnace—give me but a single candle and a city or a forest may soon be in a blaze. A spark is quite sufficient to begin with, for fire multiplies itself. So give us the Truth of God, a single voice and the Holy Spirit with it—and none can say where the sacred conflagration will end! One Jonah sufficed to subdue all Nineveh by one monotonous sentence often repeated! And in spite of the weakness of our present instrumentality, if God does but bless the Gospel, there is no reason why it should not speedily be felt by the whole of London!

The sermon preached by Peter at Pentecost was the arrow of the Lord’s deliverance to 3,000—there is no reason why the Lord should not cause one of ours to be the same! Three thousand cannot be converted if only a hundred are present to hear—but with this vast assembly, and thousands of smaller ones within gunshot—why should not the slain of the Lord be many? Assuredly the Divine Comforter can as readily bless three millions as three individuals! But it would appear from our text that the additions to the Pentecostal Church were not made in a mass at all times. The Spirit of God was still with them, but their increase was more gradual. “The Lord added to the Church daily of such as should be saved.”

You have seen a heavy shower of rain in the Spring—in a moment a big drop has fallen upon the pavement and before you were ready to escape from it, a deluge followed, so plenteous that you half suspected a cloud had been torn in two right over your head! Such a sudden and impetuous shower may serve for a figure of the conversion of 3,000 souls at once. But at other times rain has fallen gently and has continued to descend hour by hour—a soft, warm, Spring watering—which in its own way and fashion has done its work of blessing quite as surely as the heavier down-pour. We must be very thankful if we do not see 3,000 converted in one day. If we see 300 every day for 10 days, or if we see 30 every day for a hundred days, we ought, indeed, to be grateful for all success so long as sinners really come to Jesus.

Whether they come in troops, or one by one, we will welcome them! The woman who lost her money was glad to find one piece, although she would have been even *more* glad to have found a purse full if they had been lost. I want you to think about additions to the Church as they used to occur among the early Christians. Certain people are always talking about the “early Church,” and very strange notions they seem to have of the aforesaid early Church. *Their* early Church was very different from

anything we meet with in the Acts of the Apostles, for it was very *particular* in its architecture, millinery, and music. Their “early Church” could not worship at all unless it had a visible altar, with reredos and frontal, at which gentlemen in gorgeous attire of blue and scarlet and fine linen made many postures and not a few low bows.

The “early Church” of which they speak, it seems, believed in baptismal regeneration, transubstantiation, priestcraft and sacramental efficacy. Well, that may or may not be, but there was an *earlier* Church which had no such notions! And it is for us to get right away from any such early churches to the earlier Church or the earliest Church, and there, I guarantee you, you shall find no priestcraft nor nonsense of sacramental efficacy! There was but simplicity, Truth of God and the power of the Holy Spirit! The early Church, so much admired by Anglicans, was a degenerate vine, a field of wheat and tares, a mass leavened with antichristian error—in a word—baptized heathenism!

After its own fashion, it set up, again, the many deities of the heathen, only calling them *saints* instead of gods— putting the Virgin into the place of Venus and setting up Peter or Paul in the niches formerly occupied by Saturn or Mars. Our present “revived early Church” is only paganism with a border of crosses! We are resolved to return to the primitive Church of which we read, “then they that gladly received the Word were baptized, and they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine.” In connection with this Church we shall handle our subject, trusting to the Holy Spirit to be with us as He was with them.

**I.** First, then, ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH, WHAT ABOUT THEM? “The Lord added to the Church daily of such as should be saved.” *It seems to have been the custom in the earliest times for persons who had been converted to Christ to join themselves with the Church of Jesus Christ.* From that fact, I feel persuaded that they did not conceal their convictions. It is a strong temptation with many to say, “I have believed in Jesus, but that is a matter between God and my own soul. There can be no need that I should tell this to others. Can I not quietly go to Heaven and be a Nicodemus, or a Joseph of Arimathea?”

To which I reply, Yes, you can quietly go to Heaven, and we hope you will do so, but that is a different thing from being cowardly and ashamed of Christ! We shall not object to your being a Nicodemus if you will go with him when he carries spices to the grave of Jesus. And you may be a Joseph of Arimathea if you will attend him when he goes boldly in unto Pilate and begs for the body of Jesus! Neither of these two Brothers were cowardly after the Cross had been set up before their eyes. Neither were they ashamed to identify themselves with Christ crucified. Follow them, not in the infancy of their love, but in its mature days! Remember, dear Friends, the promise of the Gospel runs thus—“He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved.”

Do not, I charge you, neglect one half of the command! The Gospel commission which we have received is this—“Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized

shall be saved.” That is the message as we find it. We did not insert the clause concerning Baptism, neither dare we leave it out, or advise you to neglect it. I give you the very words of the Savior. Do not, therefore, divide the Gospel command in order to throw half of it behind your back, but both believe and acknowledge your belief, and be added to the Church. It is quite clear, too, that Believers in those days did not try to go to Heaven alone. There has been a great deal said in these latter days about being simply a Christian and not joining any particular Church—a piece of cant mostly—and in all cases a mistake.

In the name of unity this system is preached up, and yet it is clear to all that it is the *reverse* of unity and is calculated to put an end to all visible Church fellowship. The good people mentioned in our text joined themselves with the Church of God in Jerusalem at once. I dare say that even in those days, had they criticized the Church, they would have found faults in her—certainly within a few weeks great faults had to be remedied—but these converts felt that the society at Jerusalem was the Church of Christ and, therefore, they joined themselves to it. All of you can meet with Churches of Jesus Christ if you choose to look for them. If you wait for a *perfect* Church, you must wait until you get to Heaven! And even if you could find a perfect assembly on earth, I am sure they would not admit you to their fellowship, for you are not perfect yourself.

Find out those people who are nearest to the Scriptures—who hold the Truths of God in doctrine and in ordinance, and are most like the Apostolic Church—and then cast in your lot with them and you will be blessed in the deed. Consider the matter, and reflect that if it would be right for *you* to remain out of Church fellowship, it must be right for every other Believer to remain in the same condition. And then there would be no visible Church on earth at all and no body of people banded together to maintain the Christian ordinances. Christian fellowship, especially in the breaking of bread and the maintenance of an evangelistic ministry, would become an impossibility if no one openly avowed the Savior’s cause. Act, then, according to your duty. And if you are a Christian, join with Christians. If you love the Master, love the servants. If you love the Captain, unite with the army and join that regiment of it which you think cleaves closest to the Master’s Word.

Observe next, that *the persons who were reached at Pentecost were added to the Church by the Lord*. Does anybody else ever add to the Church? Oh, yes, the *devil* too often thrusts in his servants! Who was it that added Judas, Ananias and Sapphire, and Simon Magus and Demas to the Church? Who was it that stole forth by night and cast tares among the wheat? That evil spirit is not dead! He is still busy enough in this department and continually adds to the Church those who are not saved. His are the mixed multitude which infest the camp of Israel and are the first to fall a lusting. His the Achan who brings a curse upon the tribes. His are those of whom Jude says, “certain men crept in unawares who were before of old ordained to this condemnation.” These adulterate the Church and by so doing, they weaken and defile it, and bring it much

grief and dishonor. When the *Lord* adds to the Church, that is quite another matter!

Moreover, the Church, itself, cannot avoid adding some who should not be received. With the greatest possible care and prudence we shall still make mistakes, And some are thus added whom the Lord never added to the Church. You have heard Mr. Hill's story of meeting a man in the street one night, who hiccupped up to him and said, "How do you do, Mr. Hill? I am one of your converts." "Yes," said Rowland, "I should say you are, but you are none of God's, or else you would not be drunk." Converts of that sort are far too numerous. Converts of the preacher, converts of friends, or converts of a certain fashion of making profession—but not true-born children of the Lord.

Dear Friends, I invite all of you who are thinking about joining the Church to search and see whether you are such as the Lord would add to a Church. If you are, you have been converted by the Lord. You have been wounded by the Lord and you have been healed by the Lord. And in the Lord is your righteousness and trust. It has not been man's doing, whoever may have been the instrument. The Holy Spirit has worked all your works in you. You must have been the subject of a Divine agency. Something more than you could do for yourself, or any man could do for you, must have been worked in you by the Lord. He who made you has made you new. Oh, dear Friends who love the Lord, join in earnest prayer that the Lord would add to the Church daily the saved ones, for we long for such.

Then, *additions to the Church of a right kind are described in the text by the words, "such as should be saved."* Only those words are not quite a correct translation of the original. I suppose they were borrowed from the vulgar Latin—they are not in the Greek. The translation should be either, "The Lord added to the Church daily the saved," or, "The Lord added to the Church daily those who were being saved." Saved persons were added to the Church—and only such are fit to be added. We are not authorized to receive into our number those who *desire* to be saved, as certain Brethren do—I commend their design in so doing, but I am sure they have not Scripture for it. Those who are being saved, in whom the work of salvation is really begun, are the only proper candidates—and these are spoken of in the 44<sup>th</sup> verse as "Believers."

The proper persons to be added to the visible Church of Christ are those who *believe* to the salvation of their souls. They are they who are, from day to day, experiencing the saving power of the name of Jesus by being delivered from sin. They are being saved from the customs of the world and are being saved in the sense of sanctified from the various corruptions and lusts which rule among the sons of men. These are the sort of persons who should be added to the Church. So let the question go round—Am I saved? Have I believed in Jesus? If I have, the process of salvation within me is going on. I am being delivered from the reigning, ruling power of sin each day. I am being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation and I shall be kept and presented, at last, spotless be-

fore the Presence of God with exceeding joy! We set the door wide open to all who are saved, however little their faith may be.

The Church has no right to exclude any of the saved because their knowledge or experience is not that of advanced Believers. If they believe in Jesus and are saved, the babes are of the family and ought to be received. The lambs belong to the flock and ought not to be kept outside the fold. Church membership is not a *certificate* of advanced Christianity—it is simply the recognition of the profession of saving faith in Jesus Christ. May the Lord add to this Church many of the saved! And may we sit at the Lord's Table together and sing of redeeming Grace and dying love, as those who love the Savior. Come here, you who are the Lord's little ones, but stay far from here you unbelievers and unregenerate!

Again the text says, "The Lord *added* to the Church daily such as should be saved." They were really "*added*" to the Church. I am afraid certain persons' names are added to the Church, but they themselves are not! They increase our numbers. They are added like figures on a slate, but they do not augment our *strength*. The Church is a vital body and to add to a vitalized body requires a Divine operation. The Church is like a tree—if you want to add to a tree you cannot take a dead bough and *tie* it on—that is not adding to it, but encumbering it. To add to a tree there must be *grafting* done, which requires skill—and the branch, itself alive—must be knit to the living trunk by a living junction so that the vital sap of the tree flows into the grafted bough. A true Church is a living thing and only *living* men and women made alive by the Spirit of God are fit to be grafted into it—and the grafting must be made by the Lord Himself—otherwise it is no true addition to the Church of God.

Some members are only tied on to the Church—they are neither useful nor ornamental—as a dead bough fastened to a tree would add no beauty to it and would certainly bring forth no fruit. There must be a *living* union, so that the life which is in the Church shall join with the life that is in the man—and the one life of the one quickening Spirit shall flow through the whole of the body. When I hear professors railing at the Churches to which they belong. When I see disunion and disaffection among Church members, I can well understand that the Lord never added them! And it would be a great mercy to the Church if the Lord would take them away. When the Lord adds them, added they are for time and for eternity, and they can say to the Church, "Where you dwell I will dwell; your people shall be my people, for your God is my God."

One more point in the text is this, that "the Lord added to the Church *daily* such as should be saved." There were additions to the Church every day! Some churches, if they have an addition once in 12 months make as much noise over that one as a hen does when she has laid an egg! Now, in the early Church they would not have been content with so small an increase. They would have gone weeping and mourning all over Jerusalem if there had been additions but once in the year. But, cries one, "If we have an addition every month, is not that enough?" Well, it is enough for *some* people, but when hearts are warm and full of love to Christ, we want Him

to be praised from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same—and we long to have added to the Church *daily* of such as are saved—and why not? “But,” you reply, “we are not daily *preaching*.” That may be, but we ought to be! If not daily in the pulpit, there should be the daily preaching of the *life*, and if all the members of the Church were daily teaching of Jesus Christ from house to house, a daily sowing would bring a daily reaping!

If we were daily praying with earnestness, and daily using every effort we could by the power of the Holy Spirit—and if daily the Church abode in fellowship with her Master—we should soon see added to it daily of those who are saved. “Why do we not see it,” asks one, “in many Churches?” Why? Because many Churches do not believe in it! If there were many converts added to them, they would say, “Yes, we hear of a great many additions, but what are they? We hope they will hold on,” or some such ungenerous remark. If to some Churches there should come a large increase, there are Brethren who would not believe it to be genuine and would despise the little ones!

God will not cause His children to be born where there are none to nurse them—He will be sure not to send converts to Churches which do not want them. He will not have His lambs snarled over as if they were so many young wolves, and kept out in the cold by months together to see whether they will howl or bleat. He loves to see His people watchful *for* new converts, and watchful *over* them. The Good Shepherd would have us feed His lambs, gather them in from the cold field of the world and carry them to some warm sheltered place—and nurture them for Him. When He sees a Church ready to do that, *then* will He send them His lambs, but not till then.

**II.** That brings me to the second point, which is this—ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH—UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS MAY WE EXPECT THEM ON A LARGE SCALE? Turn to the chapter, again, and we shall have our answer. We may expect additions to every Church of God on a large scale when she has, first of all, *a Holy Spirit ministry*. Peter was, no doubt, a man of considerable natural abilities. He was also a warm-hearted, fervent man, just such an one as would have power over his fellow men because of the enthusiasm which dwelt in himself. But for all this, Peter had never seen 3,000 persons converted until he had been baptized with the Holy Spirit! After the tongue of fire had sat upon Peter’s head, he was another man from what he had ever been before!

If, dear Brothers and Sisters, we are to see large multitudes converted, the power of the preacher must lie in his being filled with the Holy Spirit. I fear that many Churches would not be content with a ministry whose power would lie solely in the Holy Spirit. I mean this—that they judge a minister by his elaboration of *style*, or beauty of imagery, or degree of culture. And if he is a man of such refined speech that only a select few can understand him—he is a favorite with what is considered to be “a respectable Church.” Many despise a preacher whom the common people hear gladly—who uses great plainness of speech and discards the words which

man's wisdom teaches. They complain that he is only fit to address the ragtag of the people, and for this they turn their backs on him. They want not the fire of the *Spirit*, but the flash of oratory! Not the rushing wind of the Holy Spirit, but the perfumed zephyrs of "high culture!"

The jingle of rhetoric has more attraction for them than the certain sound of the trumpets of the sanctuary. May God have mercy upon the Church that has got into such a miserable state and is so lacking in true education—for where a Church is educated by the Lord she understands that salvation is *not* by might nor by power—but by the Spirit of God! Plainness of speech is the perfection of Gospel utterance, for the Master Himself so spoke. Men of studied elocution, who can pile up a climax and cap it with a dainty piece of poetry, are not the men whom God the Holy Spirit honors to be soul-winners! Have you not heard fine orations which have perfectly charmed you by their beauty, and yet after you have heard them you have felt that if the Lord did bless such sermons to the conversion of anybody it would be a novelty upon the face of the earth, for there was little of Christ in them and none of the unction of the Holy One?

Great sermons are often great sins—and "intellectual treats" are frequently a mess of savory pottage made of unclean meats. A Holy Spirit ministry, if Peter is the model, is one which is bold, clear, telling, persuasive—one which tells men that Jesus is the Christ and that they have crucified Him—and calls upon them to repent and turn unto the Lord! The truly sent preacher speaks out straight, plain and home to the conscience, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. The Holy Spirit minister chooses Jesus for His main theme, as Peter did. He did not speak to them about modern science and the ways of twisting Scripture into agreement with it. He cared nothing for the maundering of the Rabbis or the philosophies of the Greeks. He went right on setting forth Christ crucified and Christ risen from the dead!

When he had preached Christ, he made a pointed personal appeal to his hearers, and said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you." He was not afraid to give such an exhortation! He was not like some who say, "We must warn sinners and then leave them. We may preach Christ to them but may not bid them repent." Peter came boldly forth with the Gospel exhortation and left it to his Master to send it home by the power of the Holy Spirit! That was the sort of sermon which God blesses. The man was full of God and God shone through the man and worked with him! Remission of sins was sought for and was found through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ by a vast number of souls. May God send to all His Churches a Holy Spirit ministry!

But if there are to be many additions to the Church it must, next, be a *Holy Spirit Church*. Note that! What is a Holy Spirit *Church*? Well, it is a Church baptized into His power and this will be known, first, by its being *steadfast*. Read the 42<sup>nd</sup> verse—"And they continued steadfast." He will not bless a Church which is excited and then relapses, is carried away by every novelty and does not know what it believes. A Church which abides in Jesus and in His Truth will be blessed of God. They were steadfast in

four points. *In the Apostle's doctrine.* They were a doctrinal Church. They believed in being steadfast in fixed truth—they did not belong to the shifty generation of men who plead that their views are progressive and that they cannot hold themselves bound by a plain creed.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, never give up the grand old truths of the Gospel! Let no excitement, even though it is the whirlwind of a revival, ever sweep you off your feet concerning the great Doctrines of the Cross. If God does not save men by truth, He certainly will not save them by lies! And if the old Gospel is not competent to work a revival, then we will do without the revival. We will keep to the old Truths of God, anyhow, come what may! Our flag is nailed to the mast! Next they were steadfast *in fellowship.* They loved each other, and they continued doing so. They conversed with one another about the things of God and they did not give up the converse. They helped each other when they were in need and they continued in such liberality. They were true Brethren and their fellowship was not broken.

Next they continued *in the breaking of bread,* which is a delightful ordinance and never to be despised or under-estimated. As often as they could, they showed Christ's death till He should come. They delighted to enjoy the dear memorials of His sacred passion, both in the assembly and from house to house. They remained also steadfast *in prayer.* Mark that! God cannot bless a Church which does not pray—and Churches must increase in supplication if they would increase in strength. Sacred importunity must besiege the Throne of God and then the blessing will be yielded. Oh, children of the heavenly King! You hamper the Spirit and hinder the blessing if you restrain prayer! Here were four points, then, in which the Church was steadfast—and God blessed it.

Note next that it was a *united* Church. We read of them that they were so united that they had all things in common and they continued daily with one accord in the temple. There were no parties among them, no petty strifes and divisions. They loved the Lord too well for that. The Sacred Dove takes His flight when strife comes in. If you divide the Church within itself, you also divide it from the mighty operations of the Spirit of God. Be full of love to one another and then you may expect that God the Holy Spirit will fill you with blessing. They were a *generous* Church as well as a united Church. They were so generous that they threw their property into a common stock lest any should be in need. They were not communists, they were Christians—and the difference between a communist and a Christian is this—a communist says, "All yours is mine," while a Christian says, "All mine is yours." And that is a very different thing.

The one is for getting and the other for giving. These Believers acted in such a generous spirit, one to the other, that it seemed as if nobody accounted that what he had belonged to himself, but generously gave of it to the necessities of others. I do not believe the Lord will ever bless a stingy Church. There are Churches whose minister has to anxiously inquire how he shall provide food and raiment for his household, and yet these churches are not very poor. There are Churches where more is paid per

annum for cleaning the shoes of the worshippers than they spend upon the cause of Christ! And where this is the case, no great good will be done. The Lord will never bless a synagogue of misers—if they are churls they may keep their worship to themselves, for God is a generous God, and He loves to have a generous people.

Again, these people were in such a condition that *their meals and homes were holy places*. I want you to notice this, that they were breaking bread from house to house and did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. They did not think that religion was meant only for Sundays and for what men, nowadays, call the House of God. Their own houses were houses of God, and their own meals were so mixed and mingled with the Lord's Supper that to this day the most cautious student of the Bible cannot tell when they left off eating their common meals and when they began eating the Supper of the Lord. They elevated their meals into diets for worship—they so consecrated everything with prayer and praise that all around them was holiness unto the Lord! I wish our houses were thus dedicated to the Lord, so that we worshipped God all the day long, and made our dwellings temples for the living God.

A great dignitary, not long ago, informed us that there is great efficacy in daily prayer in the parish Church. He even asserted that however few might attend, it was more acceptable than any other worship. I suppose that prayer in the parish Church with nobody to join in it except the vicar and the beadle is far more effectual than the largest family gathering in the house at home! This was evidently his lordship's idea and I suppose the literature which his lordship was best acquainted with was of such an order as to have led him to draw that inference! Had he been acquainted with the Bible and such old-fashioned books, he would have learned rather differently. And if someone should make him a present of a New Testament, it might, perhaps, suggest a few new thoughts to him.

Does God need a house? He who made the heavens and the earth—does He dwell in temples made with hands? What crass ignorance is this! No house beneath the sky is more holy than the place where a Christian lives, eats, drinks, sleeps and praises the Lord in all that he does! And there is no worship more heavenly than that which is presented by holy families devoted to His fear. To sacrifice home worship for public worship is a most evil course of action! Morning and evening devotion in a cottage is infinitely more pleasing in the sight of God than all the cathedral pomp which delights the carnal eye and ear! Every truly Christian household is a Church—and as such it is competent for the discharge of any function of Divine worship, whatever it may be! Are we not all priests? Why do we need to call in others to make devotion a *performance*? Let every man be a priest in his own house! Are you not all kings if you love the Lord? Then make your houses palaces of joy and temples of holiness! One reason why the early Church had such a blessing was because her members had such homes. When we are like them we shall have “added to the Church daily of the saved.”

I have already mentioned that they were a *praying* Church and that accounted greatly for the increase. They were a *devout* Church, a Church which did not forget any part of the Lord's will. They were a baptized Church and they were a bread-breaking Church, so that they were obedient to Christ in both ordinances. They were also a *joyful* Church. We find that they ate their meat with gladness. Their religion was not of the somber hue which comes of doubting and fearing. They were Believers in a risen Redeemer and though they knew that they would soon be persecuted, they so rejoiced that everybody could read Heaven shining on their faces, and might have known that they believed in the blessed Gospel, for they were a blessed people. They were also a *praising* Church, for it is said they "praised God, and they had favor with all the people." Oh, may the Lord make this Church and all the Churches around us to be as holy and joyful as that Apostolic community.

**III.** I must conclude with a word upon that which I wanted most of all to say—WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES DO THESE ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH BRING TO US? To you who are to be added to the Church tonight, and I thank God you are so many, it involves this responsibility—Do not come in among us unless you are saved. Judge yourselves with honesty. Examine yourselves with care. And although you have gone as far as you have, yet tonight, before I give you the right hand of fellowship, if you are conscious that you are not what you profess to be, I do beseech you stand back! If you are the weakest of the weak, and the most feeble of the feeble, yet, if you are sincere, come and welcome! But if you are not sincere, do not add to your sin by taking upon you a profession which you cannot keep up, and by declaring a falsehood before the Lord—for if you do so, remember you will not have lied unto man, but unto God, Himself—in daring to declare yourselves Christians while you are unbelievers.

Come and welcome if you are Believers! And when you come, remember that the responsibility which you undertake in God's strength is that you live to prove that you have really given yourself up to the Church—that you mean to serve Christ with all your heart—that you will seek to promote the holiness and unity of the Church which you join and will strive to do nothing to dishonor her good name or to grieve the Spirit of God. In joining the Church, pray to be continued steadfast in doctrine and fellowship. Pray for more Divine Grace, that you may be filled with the Spirit of God. Do not come in to weaken us—we are weak enough, already. Do not come in to adulterate our purity—we have enough impurity even now. Pray that God may make you a real increase to our prayerfulness, to our holiness, to our earnestness, to our higher life—and then come and welcome, and the Lord be with you!

As for us who shall receive the converts, what is our responsibility? First, to welcome them heartily. Let us open wide the door of our hearts and say, "Come and welcome," for Jesus Christ's sake. After welcoming them we must watch over them. And when so many are added, double care is needed. Of course, no two pastors can possibly watch over this vast assembly of 4,500 professed Believers. Let the watching be done by

*all* the members—by the officers of the Church, first—and then by every individual. I am very thankful that out of the cheering number to be brought in tonight the larger proportion belong to the families of the Church. My Brothers and Sisters already in Christ, it is fortunate for these young people that they have you to watch over them! Never let it be said that any parent discourages his child, that any guardian discourages the young after they have come forward and acknowledged their faith!

If you notice faults, remember you have faults, yourselves. Do not tauntingly throw their failing in their teeth as some have unkindly done. Guide them and cheer them on. Help their weakness. Bear with their ignorance, impetuosity and correct their mistakes. I charge you, my beloved Sisters, be nursing mothers in the Church! And you, my Brothers, be fathers to these young people that they may be enabled by your help, through God's Spirit, to hold on their way. It is an evil thing to receive members and never care for them afterwards. Among so many some must escape our supervision, but if *all* the members of the Church were watchful this would not be. Each would have someone to care for him. Each one would have a friend to whom to tell his troubles and his cares. Watch over the Church, then, I pray you.

And you elder ones, myself chiefly among you, let our example be such as they can safely follow. Let them not come into the Church to find us cold. Let us try, as we see these young ones coming among us, to grow young again in heart and sympathy. In receiving these new members we ought to have, dear Brothers, an access of new strength and a more vigorous life. The Church ought to be giving out more light, for here are fresh lamps! She should be doing more for Christ—here are new workers! She should be herself stronger, more daring, more useful—for here are bold soldiers newly enlisted! I think, as I see new converts brought in, I see the Lord lighting up new stars to gladden this world's night! I see Him swearing in new soldiers to fight Christ's battles! I see Him sending out new sowers to sow the plains of the world for the ever-glorious harvest—and I bless and praise and magnify His name with gladness of soul!

Heavenly Father, keep them, yes, keep us all, lest any of us, though added to the Church on earth, should not be added to the Church in Heaven! Keep us so that when the muster-roll is read for the last time, we who have had our names inscribed among the saints on earth may find them written among the blessed in Heaven! May God grant it, and He shall have all the glory. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 2.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—96, 451, 972.**

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# THE PRINCE OF LIFE

## NO. 2139

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING  
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 20, 1890.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 6, 1890.

*“And killed the Prince of Life, whom God has raised from the dead,  
of which we are witnesses.”*  
*Acts 3:15.*

PETER does not conceal the death of Christ—he is not ashamed of the fact that his Lord was crucified. God forbid that any of us should be ashamed of the Cross—may we speak of it without a blush! Peter does not flatter his hearers but he declares that they “killed the Prince of Life.” This was literally true and it was necessary that they should know and feel it. There is no Gospel without the Cross and no useful preaching which does not appeal to the conscience—yes, there must be the Cross for doctrine and honest rebuke as the trumpet to awaken men’s hearts. You ministers take note of this! Mark well that in the same sentence in which he testified to the Lord’s death, Peter bears witness to His Resurrection. The verse is very short and yet contains the two greatest events of human history—“You killed the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead.”

The Crucifixion and the Resurrection come close together. There are no intervening words in Peter’s speech, as there was scarcely an interval as a matter of fact. Our Redeemer is laid in the grave Friday evening and He rises from it early Sunday morning. It is called “three days” by Oriental custom, but, as a matter of fact, the interval only consisted of parts of two days and one whole day. God has a way of handling time which makes a day as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day—and in this case He compressed into the smallest space the three days during which the Great Hostage remained in the grave.

Beloved, I wish you would learn a lesson here—never draw out sorrow and dread beyond the shortest necessary period. You that have been made to feel your death and are at this time, as it were, wrapped in your grave clothes, I pray that you may know no long interval between the time when you are slain by the Law and made alive again by Divine Grace! Why should we tarry longer than we should under the bondage of the Law? Dark is that night in which Jesus has not yet come and yet the storm is raging. When the soul has only life enough to mourn its death, it is a painful condition. Let that period be made as short as possible.

Is it not written, “After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight”? Why should we make months and years of that which need be scarcely three days? If God con-

tracts three days into one, may we not, by holy faith, make short work of our time of conviction and fear? When we *know* our death, we have, in measure, begun to live—and we should be eager that our life should quit the sepulcher of doubt and enjoy the light of joy!

I am about to speak of our Lord for that very purpose. I hope that the music of His charming name may bring rejoicing to sad hearts. Here is your power to quit your spiritual death! Here is your sole hope of spiritual life—Jesus who rose from the dead is “the Prince of Life.” We will begin with that. *Consider a title*—“Prince of Life.” When we have done with that, we will look further into our text and *unfold a roll of wonder*—“You killed the Prince of Life, whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.” There are many riddles in that paradoxical statement—“You killed the Prince of Life.” When we have done with these points, we will come to a speedy close as *we suggest an inquiry* which may be practically profitable to you.

**I.** First, then, let us CONSIDER A TITLE—“The Prince of Life.” This is not a literal translation, though it is a valuable interpretation. The word here is that which is translated, “Author,” in that place wherein our Lord is said to be “the Author and Finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2). And yet it is also rendered “Captain” (Heb. 2:10), where He is called “the Captain of our salvation” made perfect through suffering. The word “Prince” is not inaccurate, for the idea of princedom lies on the surface of the Greek word and therefore I shall keep to our own thrice precious version, which, take it for all in all, remains the Queen of all the versions. Still, you will not forget that it does include the sense of “*Author of life.*”

Here it may be well to say that we think that Christ is, indeed, the Creator of all things and especially of life—“All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life.” Our Lord Jesus is peculiarly the Creator in connection with life and I take pleasure in thinking of all life as proceeding from Him by whom all things consist. But this is assuredly true of all *spiritual* life which is a higher and a nobler thing than vegetable life, animal life or mental life. From Him, the Sun of Righteousness, every vital spark of heavenly flame has been sent forth—He is the quickening Spirit and by union with Him we live unto God, if, indeed, we so live.

There is no spiritual life of which He is not the Author and there never will be. When you and I come to deal with men for their salvation, we discover our inability for we perceive that the creation of life is out of our power since it remains the sole prerogative of the Son of God. To Him is given power over all flesh that He may give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him. “As the Father raises up the dead and quickens them; even so the Son quickens whom He will.”

All our preaching is in vain unless Jesus sends forth life. “He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life” (1 John 5:12) and what can we do among the dead? Come, Lord and Giver of life, for without You we are but as the dead burying the dead! But now we will handle our text as it stands in our version. It is a beautiful name this—

“the Prince of Life.” Though seldom preached upon, it is one of our Lord’s famous titles. He will be gloriously known by this name in the day of His appearing when He shall raise the dead! But it is a title which belonged to Him before He was nailed to the Cross for, they “killed the Prince of Life.”

The title belonged to Him even when He was dead, for when killed He was still, “the Prince of Life.” The title is His to the fullest now that He is risen and ever lives to make intercession for us. None can share it with Him, much less can any take it away from Him. He alone is “the Prince of Life.” Upon this famous title we would remark that it is justified by the fact that *He possesses life supremely*. In Him is life emphatically, to its deepest and highest degree. In Him is life superlatively and beyond all others. Of Him John well said, “The Life was manifested and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.”

He bears the name of “The Life” in that famous passage, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” He says of Himself, “I am He that lives.” As surely as we have a living God we have a living Savior. He is Life self-existent, sustained by nothing from without. He is Life essential, Life eternal. He is the Prince of Life because in Him life dwells in all its fullness, force and independence. “As the Father has life in Himself; so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself” (John 5:26). Jesus lives—He must live—He cannot cease to live. All things else may pass away and like the bubbles on the wave dissolve into their native nothingness—but the Christ of God must live and live in full energy—and therefore He is “the Prince of Life.”

*Life is His natural inheritance.* Life is His royal heritage. We hear of ladies who are peeresses in their own right—so is Christ the Prince of Life in His own right—not only by purchase, or attainment, or reward, but by His Nature and relationship to the Highest—for He is, in Himself, God that lives forever. Moreover, He has power over His own life in a way in which none of us can imitate Him. As the God-Man His life is absolutely at His own disposal. In the realm of life He is Prince and we are only subjects. He says of His own life, “I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again.” This is not our case. We pay the debt of Nature and die. But our Lord owed no debt to Nature, seeing He is the Maker of all.

He died voluntarily and of His own accord—you and I may not do this except under the compulsion of obedience to God. He resumed possession of life at His own will which you and I could not do. He had the right, the authority, the power thus to deal with His own life. If this had not been so, He could not have offered Himself to die in our place, but, having a power and principedom over His own life, such as we have not, He could lay down His life for us and He could take it again.

O Man, you have not life in your own right—it is lent to you by Him who is still owner of it! You can not lay down your life at will for it is not yours, but God’s! Live your appointed time, else will you commit a crime against the majesty of the Life-Giver! Our Lord Jesus assumed the life of man and when He chose, He could lay it down—for He was still the ever-living God. When He chose, He could raise His human body from among

the dead and walk again among the sons of men—this He *has* done and many witnesses have attested the fact! Let us rejoice that we worship the living God through a living Mediator!

How glad we are that we are comforted by the same assurance which sustained the heart of Job, “I know that my Redeemer lives”! In an hour of great depression of spirit Luther was seen to write on the table before him these two words—*Vivit! Vivit!*—and when he had so written he arose and went about his business calmly and quietly, as well he might, since his Almighty Helper lived. “The Lord is risen, indeed!” Is not this enough to make us all Luthers if we could but drink it in? If Jehovah Jesus lives, His cause can never die—and our acceptance before God can never fail! The great Redeemer lives emphatically and eternally—therefore let our faith in Him rise to full assurance and let that full assurance lift us to the summit of delight—

***“He lives, He lives and sits above,  
Forever interceding there!  
Who shall divide us from His love?  
Or what shall tempt us to despair?”***

In the next place, consider that our Lord is “the Prince of Life” because *He won it for us right gloriously*. We had forfeited life and had come under the sentence, “You shall surely die.” We fell under bondage to the power of death and became dead to God, righteousness and hope. Our Lord Jesus entered into the battle against our great adversary who had the power of death, that is, the devil. He had skirmishes with him in the wilderness and He struggled with him in the garden, even to a bloody sweat. Our enemy was strong through our sin and the curse of the Law which follows it—but our Lord was strong in love to bear our sin in His own body and to endure the chastisement of our peace upon the Cross.

He fought the foes of our souls and returned with dyed garments from Edom, having trampled under His feet all the powers of darkness, as the grapes are trod in the winepress. He Himself bowed His head to death and by death He overcame the Prince of Darkness! By His patient suffering and painful death He won for us the right to live forever! His endurance of the death penalty blotted out the writ of judgment which had been issued against us—He Himself putting it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross—

***“Bruised is the serpent’s head,  
Hell is vanquished, Death is dead  
And to Christ gone up on high,  
Captive is captivity.”***

By dying, the Just for the unjust, our Lord, who was both Victim and Victor, became our “Prince of Life,” handing us the pardon and justification by which our eternal life is secured. As by the first Adam came death, so by the second Adam life has been bestowed. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,” for the condemnation has been placed upon Him—and by this grand transference, while death has passed upon Him—life has come to us. Our life is the glorious spoil which “the Prince of Life” has snatched from the Destroyer and granted

freely to us! Well may we crown Him Prince of Life “who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel”!

Thirdly, our Lord may well be called “the Prince of Life” because *He gives it so plentifully*. With both hands He scatters it where all had been death. As He has life most abundantly and has won for us the right to it, so He actually imparts it to His chosen by the Spirit of Life. Where the Tartar’s horse trod, the grass never grew—but where Christ’s feet tread, life springs up in the midst of the arid wilderness! He cannot live without scattering life all around Him, even as the sun cannot exist without giving out his light on all sides. None but He can give life to men—but He can give it without measure.

To those furthest sunk in death, even to the corrupt in heart who stink in the nostrils of their fellow men, He can give life! His voice can be heard in the innermost prison of spiritual death. As He called Lazarus and made him live by His own supreme power, so can He quicken the corrupt sinner to sweetness and heavenliness of life. None have yet been met who were so far gone in corruption as to be beyond His quickening energy! None have ever trusted Him without receiving life though their case seemed desperate. Yes, the feeblest trust in Him is life! They live that believe—

**“There is life in a look at the Crucified One.”**

On all sides He dispenses that everlasting life which He compares to water springing up within a well. They that come under His benign influence live forever because of their contact with Him—for this is life eternal—to know the Lord Jesus, as sent of God.

Beloved, the day will come when our Lord will prove His life-giving power on a grand scale by causing the resurrection of the dead! When He shall come in the glory of the Father, they that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live! What an Exodus it will be! The slaves of death shall quit the Egypt of the sepulcher and march forth from the house of bondage. Land and sea shall teem with the uncountable multitude and He that called them forth shall be seen to be “the Prince of Life.” Who but He could have released this vast multitude from their long prison?

The Roman Emperor, Theodosius, in a fit of great good humor, set at liberty all persons in prison or in captivity—and then he sighed and wished that he could release the dead from their graves. Theodosius could not reach the keys of the grave—these hang at the belt of “the Prince of Life.” He shall open the iron gate and bid the myriads pour forth as bees from the hive! They sleep together in the dust, but when He calls they shall answer Him. Hear this, O Mourner—“Your brother shall rise again!” Every man’s brother shall rise again! An exceedingly great army shall be seen where now we mourn a valley of dry bones.

Until that glorious morning, nothing pleases our Lord better than to be working *spiritual* resurrections. He says, “He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” Do you know anything about being quickened from the death wherein you lay dead in trespasses and sins? Re-

member that marvelous sentence—"I am the Resurrection and the Life." Your Lord Himself is the Resurrection—do you know this? Those who have Him have life eternal. Have you proved this Truth of God? God grant that we may have many examples of that fact in this house at this moment! May many of you look to Jesus and begin the life which never ends!

Next, I think we may fitly style our Lord, "Prince of Life," because *He so wondrously sustains it*. If you have life you still need food. You know where to find food for your body—the fields and the floods yield it to you—but where will you find food for your *soul*? There is but one place to which you can resort. Apart from Christ Jesus not even Heaven itself can yield it to you, though it drop with manna, "for your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead." Heaven itself can only give us the nutriment of spiritual life in that one form, namely, Christ Jesus. He says, "I am the living Bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever: and the Bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the Life of the world."

He says again, "Whoever eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed. As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats Me, even he shall live by Me." Brothers and Sisters, do you know this Bread from Heaven by handling and tasting it? If so, renew your acquaintance with it by receiving it anew. O Soul, there is supreme virtue in this food which Jesus gives you! Are you faint this morning? Resort again to Him who first gave you Life. Do you hunger? Come to Him who is that Word of God by whom men live. He shall satisfy your mouth with good things and renew your youth like the eagle's.

He does not bid you take Life from Him and then go elsewhere for bread which to nourish it—no, He causes you to live by your constant and never-ending union with Him, even as the branch lives in the vine. Pray, "Lord, evermore give us this Bread." If you feed upon Him whom God has set forth to be the Bread that never perishes, you also shall never perish, but live forever! Oh, for a banquet upon this heavenly Bread this morning! "Eat you that which is good and let your soul delight yourself in fatness." Then, rising from the table well satisfied, you shall each one say, "Truly He is the Prince of Life, for we live by Him."

Brethren, this name may be illustrated yet further by the fact that *He rules life most lovingly*. "The Prince of Life" is not a mere title. I suppose the Prince of Wales does not govern Wales, as a matter of fact—and other princes who derive their names from different places do not necessarily rule over those places—they merely wear a title which means little or nothing. Our Lord Jesus wears no empty title! He is really Prince and Lord wherever He is Quickener. There is no *spiritual* life in the world which does not yield obedience to Jesus Christ! Other life may be rebellious, struggling against His sway, for, "the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together, saying, Let us break His bands asunder and cast away His cords from us." But the spiritually living,

quicken by faith in Him, cry each one to Him at the very first moment of their life, “Lord, what would You have me to do?”

The spirit of life in Christ Jesus is the spirit of obedience. The life that Jesus gives does not go off at a tangent from Him—it remains circulating about Him as the planet around the sun. The life that Jesus gives is like the life of a body which is obedient to the head. My head says, “Lift your hand.” Up goes the hand. “Close the fingers”—they close. “Open the hand”—it opens at once—without so much as a wish to rebel. The rule is where the life is, namely, in the *head*. Such is Christ to all truly living men and women—their life, their *rule*—is in Christ Jesus. Where Jesus lives He reigns.

I know there is in us another law working against the law of our mind and sometimes bringing us into captivity to the law of sin and death—but this appertains not to our new-born life—it is a relic of our death. Sin comes of that “body of this death” over which we groan so deeply, crying, “Who shall deliver me?” As for the life which comes to us through our Lord Jesus, it is pure and heavenly. That which is born of God sins not—it follows after righteousness and keeps the way of holiness—and must do so eternally. The Prince of Life is a *real* ruler and the life He has created is subservient to His sway. He is Head over all things in His Church as well as *to His Church*. Ruling with a mysterious, Omnipotent and effective power, He works in the spiritual so that they gladly pay their heart’s homage to Him.

I must give you the sixth observation, otherwise I cannot bring out all my thoughts on this marvelous name, “the Prince of Life.” Our Lord is *He who is the Crown and Glory of our life*. The prince, as the representative of the country, stands for it in the place of dignity and honor. At great ceremonies a country is represented and honored by the presence of its crown prince. Among men it is but nominally that the prince is the glory of the nation—but in the Divine life Christ is, indeed, the flower, Crown and Glory of the people who are in Him—even all the living in Zion.

If you want to see the spiritual life, you may see it in any one of the members of the mystical body—but not to perfection. There is life in the hand. There is life in the foot. There is life, even, in our uncomely parts—but if you want to see the life of a man, you naturally look in his *face*. If you would see eternal life, behold it in the face of Jesus! In Him dwells eternal life to the fullest! He is the embodied, Incarnate Life of God for men and in Him is that life made perfect. Beloved, the Glory of our manhood, as it is spiritually renewed and quickened, is Christ! He it is that has raised our nature to the right hand of God.

It is something to be a man, now that the Son of God is also Man! It is much to be alive unto God, now that our life is hid with Christ in God! What a noble second Adam we have! How glorious He makes our nature! He is the flower of our manhood! All else is the branch, leaf, and bud—but the supreme beauty, the Image of God in man, finds full expression in the Firstborn from the dead, the altogether-lovely One. He is the glory of our life and hence He is well called “the Prince of Life.”

And, seventhly, which must bring this discussion of the title to a close—it is *He who Himself is glorified by spiritual life*. Princes and kings reckon that the prosperity of their country reflects honor upon them. That monarch is great because he rules a great country—this king is famous because his armies have made him so. The *people* make the king. In our Lord's case, His living ones are His joy and crown. From Him and through Him, and therefore *to Him*, are all things in the realm of spiritual life! All spiritual life glorifies the living Christ! There is not a beat of the spiritual heart—there is not a breath of the spiritual lung—but what means love and loyalty to the Christ of God! That we should repent. That we should believe. That we should do good works—all this is to make Jesus a glorious Prince, glorified by such holy and heavenly life.

Your highest ambition, you quickened ones, is that you may crown Him Lord of All! If you had a wish and could now obtain your highest desire, your wish would be that He might be extolled and be very high. I am sure it is so with you! You would forego at once 10,000 desires that lurk within your spirit and that might, in themselves, be lawful enough! You would, I say, forego them all without regret if *He* might have a glorious high throne and be great unto the ends of the earth! I am sure it is so among the glorified in the New Jerusalem. In Heaven they rejoice, but they joy before their Lord! In Heaven they worship, but they worship the Lamb! In Heaven they sing, but the song is, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

As in the aloe, all those long years of green leafage are tending to the production of one glorious flower in the end, as, at last, a flower stalk shoots upward like a tree! And then it is hung about with abundant flowers so that the whole plant spends itself upon its blossoms—living only till they are displayed. And so is it with the life of the saints of God! The aloe has no other reason for its growing than to bear that towering glory in the end—and so is it with the entire mass of spiritual life which God has made—it is growing and gathering up all its strength throughout these ages that Christ may be glorified!

In the ages to come Christ is to be manifested to principalities and powers in the heavenlies, in and through His Church. We who live spiritually make up His body—and as all the body ministers to the head—so do we all strive to bring honor and dominion to our Lord Jesus. It pleases the Holy Spirit in us to reveal Christ and magnify His name. Are we not, all of us, children of God—all of us so many younger sons increasing the honor of the "Firstborn among many brethren?" All spiritual life is for Him who is our Life. "He shall live, and daily shall He be praised." We live for this. Bring forth your trophies to Him, you conquerors of sin! Pour out your treasures at His feet, you who are rich toward God! Crown Him King of kings and Lord of lords. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! All spiritual life that was and is and ever shall be, is to the glory of Him who says, "I am He that lives, and was dead, and am alive forever more; and have the keys of Hell and of Death." It is clear that He is well named "the Prince of Life."

I have been doing my work very badly because it is beyond me. My subject masters me. I am reminded of a story about Mr. Moody. Mr. Moody finished his sermon and as he walked away dissatisfied with himself, he said to a good Scotchman with whom he was staying, "I cannot get to the end of it." "Man," said the other, "did you think you ever could?" Who can compass the Infinite? I did not imagine that I could reach the height of this great argument, but still I hoped to do better than this. The Lord forgive my feebleness and yet use it to His Glory! I am not astonished at my failure, but I am weary of the ignorance which makes me fail. I wish I could glorify my Lord more. Help to make up for my deficiencies. Let this precious name lie like a sweet wafer on your tongue. Go to sleep tonight with it in your mouth and may it flavor your very dreams—and may you wake up in the morning and find yourselves still with Him who is "the Prince of Life"!

**II.** Now, secondly, I have to UNFOLD A ROLL OF WONDERS which I see in my text: "You killed the Prince of Life." See here, Beloved, in the murder of Christ, *the height and infamy of human sin*. They chose a murderer, but they killed "the Prince of Life." He lived for their sakes, but they slew Him—He would die that men might live—and they killed Him. You blame the Jews? No! Rather blame yourselves! Those who did this deed were *representatives* of the whole race. We, also, put the Lord to death. Our hands were crimsoned in His blood—

***"'Twas you my sins, my cruel sins,  
His chief tormentors were.  
Each of my crimes became a nail,  
And unbelief the spear."***

Sin is *Christicide*. I have in my reading, in old books, found holy men speaking of sins as "accursed kill-Christ." The name was well deserved. When sin was full-blown it brought forth Christ-murder as its chief product. Hear how the wicked husbandmen cry—"This is the heir; come, let us kill him and the inheritance shall be ours." He had nothing to do with our death but to bear the penalty of it and He came here only to make us live—but we, with wicked hands, have crucified Him! What an evil and a bitter thing is sin! What a malicious and bloodthirsty monster! Oh, for Grace to escape from it!

A sevenfold depth of cursing lies within the heart of man—for he would kill his God, his Savior. You, my Hearer, will either be guilty of the death of Christ or you will live by it. Which shall it be? You either *kill* Him or you live by Him. Another wonder is *our Lord's condescension*. How could He stoop to *die*? To die by the hands of wicked men? Behold the condescension of Christ, that being the Prince of Life He should deign to die! A look of His would have made His murderers melt away—as it shall one day make Heaven and earth flee from His face. One word from Him and where would Caiaphas, Annas, Pilate and the Roman soldiers have been? They would have become as the fat of rams which is speedily consumed in smoke had He but willed it—for by His will the old creation shall be dissolved.

When He hung on the Cross the nails could not have kept Him there of themselves. He could have stepped from the tree among His adversaries and made them scatter like sheep when a wolf leaps into the flock. He died, but that loud cry of, "It is finished!" proved that His strength was in Him and that He died not of necessity. He could have lived—but for our sakes He submitted to *death*. How was it that there was a possibility for the Prince of Life to die? I cannot enter into that mystery, but it was so. Though He was Lord of Life, He could *die*—and He could yet continue to have such power that soon His Spirit would return to His Body which remained dead in the tomb but could not see corruption.

As I unroll my text I see another wonder and that is *the folly of rebellion against Christ*. They killed the Prince of Life! What was the effect of this vain malice? Could they really kill the Prince of Life? Go and extinguish the sun! Go stop the heart of this great earth so that there shall be no more pulse in her tides—but you can never, in very deed, destroy "Him who only has immortality." Yet they *thought* they had killed the Prince of Life, and, in a sense, they had done so. And this is the idle dream of men to this day—they hope to quench the Gospel, to silence the Doctrines of Grace—to exterminate the ancient orthodoxy and to put modern heresies in its place.

Vanity of vanities! Even as the Resurrection mocked the guards, the watch, the stone, so shall the revival of true godliness and the restoration of true doctrine baffle the devices of men! They that count the towers, to pull them down and go about Zion in the hope of destroying her bulwarks, shall yet know that the virgin daughter of Zion has shaken her head at them and laughed them to scorn! As the Lord Jesus lives, "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" shall remain eternally the same! You fools! When will you be wise and quit your vain rebellions?

The text also exhibits *the triumph of His life*. "The Prince of Life, whom God has raised from the dead." His Godhead raised Him. His Father raised Him. His Spirit raised Him. He resumed His life and thus was declared to be the Son of God with power! This glorious Resurrection of Christ should cause the universe to sing! Rejoice, for Jesus has left the dead, no more to die! A dead Christ? Then there would have been a dead Gospel! What had we to preach to you if Jesus had not risen? Now that He has risen again we have justification to proclaim! Go, tell it all the world over—"The Lord has risen, indeed! The Lord has risen, indeed!"

His Resurrection is the cornerstone of the good news which the Lord has sent to believing men. Therefore, with such a Truth to publish, we faint not! This moved the Apostles to preach with such boldness because they knew that He whom they preached lived again. Notice here in the text *the assurance of that fact*—"Of which we are witnesses." There stood Peter and John, two evidently honest men. Everything about them was straightforward—they had nothing to conceal and nothing to gain by their testimony. They could have called upon all the 12 and even upon above 400 brethren who at once had seen the risen Lord!

The witness is perfect and unquestionable. Jesus assuredly overcame the pains of death. His Soul was not left among the dead. His victory is proven. "Oh," you say, "those witnesses died nearly 1,900 years ago." Yes, yes. But testimony does not lose certainty by the lapse of years. If what they witnessed was true when they witnessed it, it is true now. They saw the Lord Jesus alive after His Resurrection and that settles the question. If hundreds of persons saw the Lord Jesus after He was risen, then He did certainly rise! Hallelujah! Here is a stone to build upon which the Goths and Vandals of modern doubt cannot tear from its place. The Resurrection is as certain as any fact recorded in history! Jesus of Nazareth, though He was killed, did rise from the dead and we rejoice therein!

*Let us put the Resurrection of Christ to its proper uses.* Let us believe in Him as "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." Let us feel that our justification is certified by His Resurrection and *our own* resurrection is guaranteed by the same fact! We are safe in the hands of His living wisdom, His living power, His living love. Above all, let us look for our Lord's second coming, for He lives and cannot forever stay away from His people. He that brought again from the dead that great Shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant will also cause Him to appear as the chief Shepherd in the latter days. The heavens have received Him for a while, but He must come to gather in His people and cause them to reign with Him. "Therefore comfort one another with these words."

**III.** I have done when I have taken time to SUGGEST AN ENQUIRY. Let each hearer say, "What has the Prince of Life to do with *me*?" Beloved, do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? Is He alive to you and do you live by Him—or are you dead in sin? Which is it? A man must be either dead or alive! There is no space between death and life. You are either dead in sin or alive unto righteousness—which are you? Everyone may know—if he will make a searching enquiry into his own state.

A Brother said to me this morning, "When you preach I generally find I have enough to do to mind my own business." May you all find it so! Mind your own business and enquire, "Have I received Divine Life from Christ?" I will suppose the answer comes from one, "No, I am afraid I have not received it." Well, then, do you wish for it? Is there in your heart a desire to possess this new Life? "The Prince of Life" is to be found if you seek Him! Scripture gives us this as one of the rules of the kingdom, "He that seeks finds." But mind that you make a thorough and sincere search.

A farmer, by some means, lost a five-pound note in his barn. It was of great importance to him that he should find it, for it was the most of what he possessed. So he said to himself, "I am certain that I lost this note in the barn. And as I must find it, I will turn over every straw in the barn rather than lose it. I will never leave off looking for it till I find it." After some days' search, as "for a needle in a haystack," he spied out his precious bank-note among the straw and came home greatly rejoicing.

Sometime afterward, it pleased God to visit him with a deep sense of sin and he said to his wife, "I wish I could believe in the Savior, but alas, I

cannot find Him!” She wisely replied, “If you will look for Him as you looked for that bank-note in the barn, you will find Him.” “Well,” said he, “that is what I will do.” And by Divine Grace his seeking of Jesus led to finding and he was saved and knew it! O Brothers, turn over those trusses of memories of the Word which you heard long ago and among them you may find the Savior! O Sisters, stir up the dust of what you learned in Sunday school and you shall come upon your Lord before long! It is written, “You shall seek Me and find Me when you shall search for Me with all your heart.”

If Christ were dead and motionless He would be hard to discover. But Life cannot long be hidden! On the hillside yonder soldiers are waiting to come down upon our army and our watchers cannot see them because the men lie quiet behind rocks and trees. The moment the soldiers begin to move we shall discern them—a living and moving object our glasses will soon detect. O Souls, the Lord Jesus is living and moving! He is visible to the naked eye of faith! Look *for* Him and then look *to* Him! Because He is Life He cannot be hid! Oh, that you may behold Him soon! “Oh,” says one, “I do long to find eternal life!” Then seek it in the right way! Follow only one track—Jesus is the one and only way to Life.

In the old times of slavery in the States, when men escaped from their masters, they did so by knowing that the north star would lead them to freedom. They had to travel by night for fear of being captured and taken back—therefore they learned little of the geography of the country—they cared for nothing but the star. As they hastened through the woods they did not study botany! As they flitted through towns and villages along the road, they learned nothing of poetics or social reform! They knew *one* thing and minded that one thing only—they kept on following the pole-star.

Brothers and Sisters, there are hosts of things that you do not know at present and many things that you will *never* know. But see to it that you know Jesus who is the pole-star of salvation! Keep Christ in your eyes! Follow the Crucified and Risen One! Trust Him! Rely upon Him! Follow Him! Receive the Life of which He is the Prince and it shall be well with your soul! May you live in Christ Jesus and glorify Him as “the Prince of Life” forever and ever! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 3; 4:1-14.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—306, 430, 313.**

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# THE POWER OF CHRIST'S NAME

## NO. 2592

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 16, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 7, 1883.**

***“And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which is by Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.”  
Acts 3:16.***

You see, dear Friends, that this notable miracle was worked by means of the name of Jesus. Twice it is mentioned. “His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong.” It will be well for us to look back to see what name it was which Peter had used in working this miracle of healing. Turn to the 6<sup>th</sup> verse. “Then Peter said. . . In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.” He did not omit either of our Lord’s names, nor did he flinch from telling the Jews that it was the same Jesus whom they had despised and called the Nazarene, or the Man of Nazareth. It is always well to adapt our speech to those who are about us. You remember how Cobbett said that he used the English language. “I speak,” he said, “not only so that men can understand me if they will, but so that they cannot misunderstand me if they try to do so.” And I believe that it is a very wise way of speaking when you wish to convince men concerning an important Truth of God which you desire to convey to their very heart. Peter here seems to say, “They shall not think that I am speaking of another Jesus, or of another Christ—it shall be, ‘Jesus Christ.’ Neither shall they imagine that there may be another anointed Jesus, but it shall be, ‘Jesus Christ of Nazareth.’” And, afterwards, when he had used that name and the miracle had been worked, he went on still further to secure his purpose by making the most definite charges against his hearers, repeating them in detail, that they might know for sure that the Christ who had healed the lame man was the same Christ whom they had, with wicked hands, crucified and slain. It was important to convince them of this fact, that they might be brought to repentance concerning it, and then might be led to believe in that same Savior and find life and peace through Him!

I desire to speak just as plainly now and always, that God the Holy Spirit, who would have all His servants use great plainness of speech, may be pleased to bless what is said. My first remarks upon the text will be concerning *a name of power* and you will know the run of my thought when I tell you that I shall next speak upon *a case in proof of the power of that name*. And, thirdly—and a very important point this will be—I

shall mention *a necessity in reference to the use of that name if we desire to see the power of it.*

**I.** First, then, here is A NAME OF POWER. We will meditate for a while upon that name and consider each particular part of it. It was by that name, whatever it was, that this lame man was made strong. It was by faith in that name that he received, "perfect soundness."

The first name mentioned by Peter is, "Jesus." Of all the names of our blessed Lord, this is the most charming to our ears. Well might the Duke of Argyll say, when Rutherford began to speak upon the name, Jesus, "Ring that bell again." It has been so dear to Christians that they have tried to make something out of each syllable and even every letter of it—fancifully so, perhaps, but, still, thus clearly proving that the name was, indeed, as honey in their mouths, and as sweetest music in their ears.

Jesus signifies, Savior, and, for certain, He that was to save us had need of power. And we have cause to rejoice that our Jesus has all power in Heaven and in earth! If Joshua had power to bring the Israelites into the Promised Land and to drive out the Canaanites, much more power has our Lord Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, who will surely bring into the Heavenly Canaan all the chosen seed, driving before Him every enemy! He that is our Redeemer was also the Creator of everything that exists. "All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made." And He is also the Sustainer of all things. "By Him all things consist." He is a Savior, and a great one! Long before His birth, Isaiah wrote, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." In that name, Jesus, slumbers Omnipotence! The same power that made all worlds lies hidden in that name! The power that will raise the dead and make new heavens and a new earth, is in that name, saving this poor fallen world from all its degradation, cleansing the planet of all the mists that now surround it, and bidding it shine forth like all its sister stars, to the glory of God who made it! There is none like Jesus among all the sons of men—who among the mighty is like unto him, a Standard-Bearer among ten thousand and Himself the Altogether Lovely? That name of Jesus has infinite power in it, but we must not dwell on that name, alone, for Peter made use of others.

Next, consider the name which follows—"Christ." "The Messiah" was probably the term which Peter used in speaking to these people and it was the title which they would most readily recognize. "The Christ" is our name for Jesus. *The Sent One*, the believing Hebrews called Him—the *Anointed One*, we delight to call Him now. We see at once what wonderful power dwells in Jesus when we connect Him with His mission from God. He was no amateur Savior, but He was commissioned of the Father and He received of the Father all that was necessary for the accomplishment of the work He was sent to perform. In the waters of Baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, like a dove, and abode upon Him. And afterwards, the Father said once and yet again, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Jesus, being both sent and anointed of God, when we believe His Word, we know that He speaks as the Ambassador and Representative of God in Heaven. Yes, He is even more than that, for He is, Himself, "very

God of very God.” When we trust His work, we know that we are trusting to a work which the Father covenanted of old to accept and which is part of the eternal purpose of the Ever-Blessed. We are not resting our souls in the hand of one who promises to save, but has no Divine credentials—He is Christ, the Anointed, according to that verse of the Psalmist—“You love righteousness, and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows.” That subject of the anointing of Christ is a very large one and a very blessed one. Think it over prayerfully and gratefully. But, just now, it is enough for my purpose to merely mention that a part of the power of our Savior’s name lies, first, in His personal title and office—Jesus, the Savior—and next, in the Character which has been bestowed upon Him as God’s Anointed Representative. He does all that He does with the authority of the Eternal Jehovah and speaks to men as the fully-qualified Messenger of the Most High—Jesus, the Christ—the Anointed Savior!

But, oh, that other title, “Jesus Christ of *Nazareth*”—Peter did well to put it there, for though it doubtless provoked opposition, yet what would we have done? Where would the sweetness of the name of Jesus lie—if we could not connect it with all that is included in the mention of Nazareth? This term seems to bring the Savior—the Anointed One—into the most intimate connection with our poor fallen humanity! “Jesus Christ of Nazareth.” Many thought that He was born there and though that was a mistake, yet it was there that He was brought up. And it was there that He spent those many years of His preparation. It was with that despised city and with a despised people, that the name, “Nazarene,” still further connected Him. He was truly Man, “bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.” He was not called “Jesus Christ of Heaven,” but, “Jesus Christ of Nazareth.” His name is not associated with the grandest city on the earth—He is not called, “Jesus Christ of Jerusalem,” though there He went, early in life, that He might be about His Father’s business. And since it was the city of the great King, it was His city and, one day, “the Lord GOD shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.” But for the present, we know Him as, “Jesus Christ of Nazareth”—Jesus Christ of a rustic people—Jesus Christ of those whom they called boors—Jesus Christ of the poor and needy—Jesus Christ of the artisan class and the carpenter’s shop!

You know that at Nazareth, He was called the Carpenter’s Son, so this name reminds us of Jesus Christ in His humiliation—Jesus Christ taking upon Himself the form of a Servant, and being made in the likeness of men, toiling and suffering. This is the name which, from its very weakness, is more full of strength than any other, for, inasmuch as Jesus descended into the depths of our humanity, now has He ascended to the highest place in Glory! Though He came down and was lower than the angels for the suffering of death, yet, because of that very descent God has highly exalted Him and crowned Him with glory and honor! Blessed be the love that has raised so high Him who was known, here, as, “Jesus Christ of Nazareth.”

Now this name, as Peter pronounced it, gave strength to the feet and ankle bones of the poor man who was lame from birth—“and he, leaping

up, stood and walked, and entered with them into the Temple, walking and leaping, and praising God.” Before I speak to you specially about this miracle, I want, for a few minutes, to show you *what power there is in the name of Jesus*. The name of Jesus made the devils tremble! When they heard His name, they began to cry out, saying, “Let us alone! What have we to do with You, You Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are, the Holy One of God.” At the very mention of His name they began to quiver. That strong one, armed, who often keeps his house and keeps his goods in a horrible and deadly peace, yet knows well that there is One stronger than he is and the very footfall of Jesus makes him turn pale with dread! These two met in the wilderness—three times they closed in single combat and the devil remembers to this day the grip of those strong hands which afterwards destroyed his empire on the tree of Calvary! And, therefore, he does not want to come into collision with Him again—and he trembles at the very sound of His almighty name!

Remember also, dear Friends, that the name of “Jesus Christ of Nazareth” not only made devils tremble and cry out, but it cast them out of those whom they had tormented. Christ’s disciples cast out devils in His name—the devils would not have gone because Peter, and James, and John, in their own names commanded them to depart. No, the devils would have laughed at them! And if the Apostles had argued or reasoned with them, they would not have stirred! But one hot shot, fired in the name of Jesus, made them quit the fortress instantly! They were great cowards whenever the name of Jesus was mentioned—they away fled down to the deeps, as they did when He allowed them to enter into the swine at Gadara.

A curious thing about that name of power is that it was able to cast out devils even when it was used by some who did not follow Christ. You remember that there was one who was a sort of freelance, who was not with our Lord’s disciples—and that very orthodox Christian, the Apostle John, said, “Master, we saw one casting out devils in Your name and we forbid him because he follows not with us.” Have not you and I also sometimes felt as if people had better not try to help in evangelizing the world because they do not work exactly in our way—our way, of course, being the most proper way possible? There are many people in the world who are very active in forbidding, but, “Jesus Christ of Nazareth” said to John, concerning this man who was casting out devils, “Forbid him not: for there is no man who shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me.” What a power there must have been in the name of Jesus that even when it was mentioned by these irregular followers—these “unordained hedge-priests,” as some would have called them. These people that had taken to preaching without having a bishop’s hands laid on their heads in proper style—even when *they* mentioned the name of Jesus, away went the devils!

And, what is still more marvelous, even when *ungodly men* mentioned that name, the devils had to depart because the force does not lie in the person using the name, but in the *name itself*. “Unto the wicked, God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My Covenant in your mouth?” Yet, again and again, Christ has hon-

ored His name even when ungodly men have used it! In due time, He will let the ungodly know how evilly they dealt with His holy name, but for the honor of His name He has proved what it could accomplish even by them. You know how our Lord told His disciples that there will be many who, at the last, will say to Him, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works?" But Christ's answer to them will be, "I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity." They were even working iniquity while they were mentioning Christ's name, for with *them* it was an iniquity that they should have presumed to do so! Yet the name, itself, was not robbed of its power. Albeit it was out of its element and, probably, might not exert all its force under such circumstances, yet if it came into contact with a devil, sooner than the devil should conquer Christ's name, God would acknowledge that name even when a worker of iniquity used it! So it was in Christ's day and so has it been since. What power there is, then, in that name!

We know, besides, dear Friends, from Scripture, that as the name of Jesus had power with devils, so it also had power with men. All forms of sickness yielded to that name. There was great force in the argument implied in the Centurion's words when he sent to Christ, saying, "Lord, trouble not Yourself: for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto You: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it." He recognized that Christ was commissioned of God and that, therefore, He had Divine authority at the back of Him. Jesus had but to speak and His Word was potent with leprosies, with fevers—yes, and with death, itself—and His servants also proved the power of His name in healing the sick. In the case of this lame man, "His name through faith in His name" had made the cripple strong and given Him "perfect soundness" in the presence of all the people.

Once more, the name of Jesus is, indeed, mighty, for it has power with God Himself! Hence it is that we never pray without using that blessed name, that is to say, if we are wise. We love to feel all through our prayer and to say when it is ended, "In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." The keys of Heaven are in the hands of that man who knows how to use aright the name of Jesus! In your deepest sorrow, this name, like a life-belt, shall keep you afloat on the very crest of the billows if you can but plead it before God! When you appear to have no arguments in prayer and Heaven seems like brass above your head, use but the name of Jesus and your prayer shall enter into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth—and infinite blessing shall come streaming down to you! The name of Jesus is a mighty power in Heaven, in earth and in the deep places under the earth! There is no part of the universe where the King's name is without influence! The warrant from His Throne may be executed among angels, among devils and certainly shall not be powerless among the sons of men! "Where the word of a king is, there is power." And where the name of the King of Kings is on the proclamation, who shall be able to resist it? The name of "Jesus Christ of Nazareth" is full of

power! Oh, that those who are Believers would more and more prove its power! And that those who are not Believers may soon feel its gracious influence! May this double result follow from our gathering here—and unto His name shall be praise and glory, world without end!

**II.** But now, secondly, I have to call your attention to A CASE IN PROOF OF THE POWER OF CHRIST'S NAME.

The case in proof is this. There was a man who, being born lame, was, all of a sudden, perfectly restored! Not by the use of any medicine or surgery, but simply by the Apostle Peter's utterance of these words, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." *The man had never walked*, so you must remember that when the power came into his feet and ankle bones, he did not know how to walk! You know that you have to teach your children to walk. As they gather strength, they acquire the art, for there is an art in it—and I should suppose that if a man had been lame from his birth and a surgeon could suddenly make his ankle bones strong, he would not be able to walk. He would not know what to do with his legs, having never used them. Certainly, he would be exceedingly awkward in his first movements.

But this man went through his gymnastic lessons very rapidly when the miracle was worked on him, for he walked, he ran, he leaped to the glory of God—and that all of a sudden! "But," says one, "he was a beggar and, perhaps, he had shammed lameness." No, he had not, for he had been carried and laid daily at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. And, as Dean Afford very properly remarks, this was a clear proof that he was really lame because no beggar would pay a man to carry him, and so have to divide the alms which he received. No, a man who was shamming lameness would get there as much unseen as possible, but he would not pay his bearers. And I suppose that they would not have carried him unless they had been paid. If we had to carry a heavy fellow every morning—and we had any suspicion that he could walk if he chose—we should drop him and, in a very short time, he would have to find out that he could not be carried about if he could walk! And I daresay that he would soon take to his legs. This is part of the proof that this was a real case of lifelong lameness.

This man, in his sad state through congenital lameness, *sat there begging*. I do not say that all forms of beggary have the same influence upon all men, but, as far as my observation goes, begging is a very degrading business. I would suppose that persons have risen out of almost all ranks of society and have attained to eminence—and that out of every trade men of genius have come. But beggary, somehow, represses and quenches anything like a spark of genius within the spirit. Many of the mendicants whom one has seen give this impression—and in foreign travel one has sometimes been beset by scores and even hundreds of them! In some lands the police strike them and drive them away, as if they were so many dogs. And certainly the Neapolitan *lazzaroni* are by no means desirable companions. As I have looked into the faces of these people, they have seemed to me as if hardly anything could raise them from their degradation. It was probably much the same with this man who was not only lame in his feet, but had gradually become very lame in his soul. Yet, notwithstanding all that, the name of Jesus kindled his

very heart—it entered his inmost soul and penetrated the very marrow of his being, so that he became capable of the same faith that was in the soul of Peter—and he was able to trust in Jesus, if not at once to the same degree, yet with the same truthfulness as John, who stood there and looked upon him! Our Lord Jesus gazes upon all of us, wherever we may be, with an eye of pity. And if there are any who are degraded, not merely by poverty, but also by sin—if any have sunk as low as human beings can sink—He is still able, by that mighty name of His, to bring them again from Bashan, yes, to bring up His people from the depths of the sea! Oh, the glory of that matchless name!

The way that Peter and John went to work was very wise. *The man could not walk, but he could look*, so they first of all called his attention to themselves by saying, “Look at us,” in order that he might be ready to listen to their message and might know what they said, partly by seeing what they did, for, in hearing, though we cannot hear with our eyes, yet, somehow, the eye mightily helps when the preacher has any kind of action whatever. And Peter needed to have action in his sermon on this occasion.

Having attracted the man's full attention, *Peter commanded him to rise and walk*. He not merely told him what he was to do, but he said to him, in tones of authority, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” Having given the command and perceiving that the man was ready to obey it, *Peter helped him to obey it*. And, as he raised him up, the strength came into his ankle bones so fast that the man sprang up! And he was so thoroughly cured that he began at once to walk and to leap!

What this man really did was to yield to the gentle pressure that Peter put upon him. After the word of command was given, he expected that power would come with that command and, yielding and expecting, he was incited to make the attempt to rise. He did make the attempt and up he stood, exerting the power as God was pleased to grant it to him! He stood! He walked! He leaped! And in it all he was “praising God.” Surely there never came from any lips a song that was more true than his! I think I see him leap up and say, “Hallelujah!” And then leap up, again, and then again, showing to everybody how perfect was the cure, letting everyone see what perfect soundness he had received—and all the while saying, “Bless the Lord! Bless the Lord!” There never was before their eyes a finer specimen of what the name of Christ could do! I am not going to dwell upon that point because it is clear enough, and every converted man is just as plainly a proof of Christ's power. He, too, hears the word of command. He, too, obeys and, when he obeys, the strength goes with the command! And, obeying, he, also, is made perfectly whole!

**III.** I shall need you to think of that case in proof while I close my discourse with this point—A NECESSITY IN REFERENCE TO THE USE OF THAT NAME OF POWER if we would see blessed results following.

Let me read the text to you again, that you may see how very remarkably the name of Christ and faith are mixed up. They both occur twice in the verse. What was it that worked the miracle? Was it the name of Christ, or was it faith in that name? Listen—“His name through faith in His name has made this man strong, whom you see and know.” And then it is added, “Yes, the faith which is by Him has given him this per-

fect soundness in the presence of you all,” as if to put the crown on the head of faith rather than on the name of Christ, for faith is sure never to steal that crown. Faith always crowns Christ and, therefore, Christ crowns faith. “Your faith has saved you,” said Christ to the woman that was a sinner. “No,” says someone, “it was Christ who saved her.” That is also true, but Christ said that it was her faith that saved her, and He knew. So here, it was the name of Christ that worked the miracle, but it was worked through faith in that name.

Whose faith was it? It would puzzle any of us to tell for certain except we say that it was the faith of all three. I believe that, first, it *was the faith of Peter and John*. It was their faith that brought healing to this man, just as when, on another occasion, when the man was let down by his friends into Christ's Presence, He saw *their* faith and said to the sick of the palsy, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.” In this case, it was beyond doubt the faith of Peter and John that made them use the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. It was their faith that made them give the command, “Rise up and walk.” It was their faith that made Peter stretch out his hand, expecting that by helping the man, he would be restored.

Now, dear Friends, you and I go forth—the most of us—to preach and to teach. I am happy to be able to say the most of us, for there are very many here who, in one way or another, are busy in the Lord's service. When we go to speak to men, let us always go in the name of Christ. If we go in our own name—well, they may receive us or reject us as they please, without any sin, but if we go in the name of Christ, we can plead His own Words, “he that despises you, despises Me.” We may speak very boldly and very positively when we speak in His name. If you have any doubt about what you are going to preach, do not preach till you have gotten rid of your doubts. If you have smoke in your room, do not ask your friend in—enjoy it yourself if you like it, but, until the chimney has been swept and the air has been purified—do not invite visitors. Doubts about this doctrine and that had better not be brought forward by us—we certainly cannot expect to do any good by what we, ourselves, do not believe! We must preach that which we are sure is true because we dare set the hand and seal of Christ to it as the very Truth of God which He has made us to know by the effectual working of His *Holy* Spirit.

Then, next, we must command men to believe. I do not think that there is enough of this done by any of us. We ought to say to them, not merely as an entreaty, “Please, believe in Christ,” but as a *command*, “Believe in Christ!” Oh, that we had faith enough, sometimes, to address people in that fashion! There are some who do not appear to have any faith at all, for they say, “It is no use telling dead sinners to believe.” Probably it would be no use for *them* to do it. I heard one of them say, “You might as well shake a handkerchief over the dead in their graves, as bid sinners believe.” So they might, because they have not faith. But preaching is an exercise of faith and when we address sinners, it ought to be as if we were about to work a miracle! We should never go to talk to a single sinner, or to a Sunday school class, or to a congregation as if we had any power whatever in ourselves to influence them. We must go in the name of Christ to be miracle-workers and say to the sinner, “Believe in Jesus. We command you, in Christ's name, to believe on Him.” My

dear Friends, here, who are unconverted, it is not a thing that you *may* do, or *may not* do, just as you like. It is God's command that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent—a command which He has sanctioned by a most solemn threat—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." Nothing could be more solemn than that!

Remember how Paul spoke to the Athenians on Mars' Hill? "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to repent." The Gospel is in the nature of a command of Christ! And what if they say, "There is no power in the creature"? That is quite true! Was there any power in Lazarus when Jesus said to him, "Lazarus, come forth"? No, but Lazarus came forth as Christ commanded him. And He still bids His servants say, "You deaf, hear the Word of the Lord. You dead, awake and arise." This is even as Ezekiel spoke in the Valley of Vision. "Thus says the Lord, you dry bones live." If we can speak like that, it will be by our faith that the man with no strength receives strength.

After giving the command, we are still to believe and to put out our hand to help the man who is going to rise. That is the work of those who look after people when the sermon is done. Two or three Friends here (I wish there were more of them) always expect to see converts after every service. You will see them on the lookout in the aisles or at the doorways as soon as I have finished. And some of them, I daresay, have been on the watch at the back of the galleries even while I have been preaching. Perhaps they have brought you here, or else somebody else has brought you here and that somebody else has let them know, that they may be after you. They want to give you a hand, to help you up out of your lameness, that you may leap up and begin to praise the name of the Lord!

Still, lest I should send you away with any mistake upon your mind, let me say that *this man would not have been healed if it had not been for his own faith*. There must be the personal faith of the saved one. And that this man had faith, I firmly believe, because he went into the Temple praising God. He did not receive the blessing and then have a dead, cold heart about it. He began at once to praise the Lord. What did this man do? When he was told to look at the Apostles, he did so. He attended to their words and when they told him to rise, he yielded to them. He did not say, "I cannot," but he made an attempt to rise and yielding, he believed that what they said could not be said in mockery—that if he was commanded to rise, he would be enabled to rise. I would that some poor sinner here would think after the same fashion—"I was not brought to the Tabernacle tonight for Mr. Spurgeon to tell me to believe in Jesus—and for me to wish to believe in Him, to desire to believe in Him, to attempt to believe in Him and yet for me not to find the strength to do it." The Gospel is never sent to mock any of you, depend upon that! God has set before you an open door—not a closed one. Or if it seems to be closed, He bids you knock and He will open it to you.

Some will not knock, they will not believe. They get into a sullen state of desperate despair and they will not rise. But the poor soul whom God blesses, no sooner hears the command than he is on the alert to obey! And he no sooner feels the cheering touch of the friend who has come to help him up, than he responds to it. And though he has no strength of

his own, the needed strength comes pouring in and he stands! Oh, how surprised he is to find that he can stand! What a treat it is to stand! I know what a pleasure it is to be able to walk across the room and downstairs, with the aid of a cane, after I have been unable to put my feet to the ground for weeks. But I cannot know a thousandth part of the pleasure of this man, who had never walked a step, when he followed the two Apostles who had spoken to him in the name of "Jesus Christ of Nazareth!" He not only walked, but he felt strength enough to leap! And then he cried, with all his might, "Hallelujah! Bless the Lord!" till all the people around took up the strain. Well, that may happen to you, also, dear Friend. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved"—saved at this very moment! God grant it, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
ACTS 3:1-21**

**Verse 1.** *Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.* Peter and John seem to have been linked in closest friendship. Peter had been brought back by John when he was almost despairing after having denied his Master. John lovingly found him and made him his associate. And now they "went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer." Observe, here, how very sweetly the Old Testament dispensation melts into the new. The Temple was no longer what it had been before. The type was of no further use, now that the great Antitype of the Temple had come. Yet these Apostles still went up to it at the hour of prayer. There are some men who are great at destroying. It will be time to destroy the old when the new is quite ready, and even then it may be very possible to let the darkness gradually melt away into a twilight, and so the day shall come with no great gap, no marked surprise. So Peter and John went up to the Temple at the same hour as others went. It is folly to be singular, except when to be singular is to be something more right than others.

**2, 3.** *And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked for an alms.* This seems to have been the custom about the Temple gates, as it is about the doors of many churches on the Continent. For instance, you could not approach the door of a certain church in Rome without being solicited, perhaps, by a score of beggars. I do not suppose that it was so in Judea in its prosperous days, but when religion does not prosper, beggars are sure to be multiplied. And now that the very spirit of godliness had gone, almsgiving was done in public, and hence the beggars appeared in public.

**4-7.** *And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, I give to you: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.* The man had never stood upon his

feet in all his life and was so unable to move that he had to be carried to the Temple gates to beg. And yet, at the mention of the great and glorious name of Jesus, his feet and ankle bones immediately received strength!

**8-11.** *And he, leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God: and they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. And as the lame man which was healed, held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.* You are not at all surprised that he held Peter and John—it was but natural that he should follow them wherever they went, for he owed so much to them and they were the best friends that he had ever had! He was filled with reverence for them because of what they had worked upon him and now, lest they should go away, he held them. And “all the people ran together unto them, greatly wondering.” He who was healed by Christ's wonderful name was wondering, and the people who saw him healed were all wondering. I suppose that wonder mingles with all true worship. All wonder is not worship, but where there is adoration of God and a sense of His great goodness and of our unworthiness, there seems always to be a large amount of wonder. We shall even—

**“Sing with wonder and surprise,  
His loving kindness in the skies.”**

**12.** *And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, You men of Israel, why marvel you at this? Or why look you so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? Peter could well see that the people attributed to himself and John more than was right, so he thus had an opportunity of preaching the Gospel to them—and you may be certain that he did not miss it!*

**13.** *The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Son Jesus.* Or, rather, as you have it in the Revised Version with more correctness, “has glorified His Servant Jesus,” for His Son may be said to be already glorified. But Jesus had taken upon Himself the form of a Servant, and God had “glorified His Servant Jesus.”

**13-15.** *Whom you delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of Life, whom God has raised from the dead; of which we are witnesses.* I want you to note, here, how Peter will have it that the God of the Gospel is the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. I do not hesitate to say that the god of a large number of professors, now, is not the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. And the reason I say so is this—they often treat the Old Testament as if it were an altogether secondary volume and speak about the imperfect ideas of God which the Hebrews had, and the imperfect Revelation of God in the Old Testament. I believe that Jehovah—that very Jehovah who divided the Red Sea and drowned the Egyptians—the terrible God of the Old Testament—is the same God who is the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And we are to take the Godhead as it is revealed, not only in the New Testament,

but also in the Old Testament. There are some who would pick and choose that part of Scripture which they like best and construct a god for themselves out of those chosen texts. These are they who have other gods before Jehovah. And these are they who make unto themselves an image which, if it is not engraved upon stone, is yet made out of their own imaginations which they set up and worship in the place of the one living and true God. "The God of our fathers has glorified His Son Jesus; whom you delivered up and denied." See how plainspoken Peter is—how boldly he presses home upon the crowd around him the murder of Christ—the rejection of the Messiah? It took no small amount of courage and faith to speak like that and to speak so to persons who were full of admiration of him, before, and who would be pretty sure to be filled with indignation against him directly! A man can speak boldly against those who are his enemies, but, when people begin to flatter you and admire you, a softness steals over the bravest heart and he is inclined to be very gentle. I admire Peter that he puts it thus so plainly—"You denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of Life, whom God has raised from the dead; of which we are witnesses."

**16.** *And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know.* "You see him, now, and you know what he used to be. There is no question about the identity of the man."

**16, 17.** *Yes, the faith which is by Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it.* How like his Master does Peter now speak! Instead of drawing his sword, as he did when he cut off the ear of Malchus, he puts the Truth of God thus mildly. "I know that through ignorance you did it."

**17-21.** *As did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all His Prophets, that Christ should suffer, He has so fulfilled. Repent you, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the Heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy Prophets since the world began.*

### **HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—423, 331, 679, 680.**

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# **APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION**

## **NO. 804**

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 5, 1868,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,  
when the times of refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord.”  
Acts 3:19.***

After the notable miracle of healing the lame man, when the wondering people clustered round about Peter and John, they were not at all at a loss for a subject upon which to address them. Those holy men were full to the brim with the Gospel, and therefore they had but to run over spontaneously, speaking of that topic which laid nearest to their hearts. To the Christian minister it should never be difficult to speak of Christ—and in whatever position he may be placed, he should never have to ask himself, “What is an appropriate subject for this people?”—for the Gospel is always in season, always appropriate, and if it is but spoken from the heart, it will be sure to work its way. Turning to the assembled multitude, Peter began at once to preach to them the Gospel without a single second’s hesitation. Oh, blessed readiness of a soul on fire with the Spirit! Lord, grant it to us evermore!

Observe how earnestly Peter turns aside their attention from himself and his brother, John, to the Lord Jesus Christ. “Why look you so earnestly on *us*, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?” The object of the Christian minister should always be to withdraw attention from himself to his subject, so that it should not be said, “How well he spoke!” but, “Upon what weighty matters he treated!” They are priests of Baal, who, with their gaudy dresses and their pretensions to a mysterious power, would have you look to themselves as the channels of Divine Grace—as though by their priestcraft, if not by their holiness—they could work miracles. But they are true messengers of God who continually say, “Look not on us as though we could do anything—the whole power to bless you lies in Jesus Christ, and in the Gospel of His salvation.”

It is noteworthy that Peter, in addressing this crowd, came at once to the very essence and heart of his message. He did not beat around the bush. He did not shoot his arrow far afield, but he hit the very center of the target. He preached not merely the Gospel of good news, but Christ, the Person of Christ—Christ Crucified—crucified by them, Christ risen, Christ glorified of His Father. Depend upon it, this is the very strength of the Christian ministry when it is saturated with the name and Person and

glory of the Lord Jesus Christ! Take Christ away, and you ungospelize the Gospel—you but pour out husks such as swine eat while the precious kernel is removed—seeing you have taken away the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If there was ever an occasion when a preacher of the Gospel might have forgotten to speak of Christ, it was surely the occasion on which Peter spoke so boldly of Him. For, might it not have been said, “Talk not of Jesus, they have just now nailed Him to death—the people are mad against Him—preach the *truth*, but do not mention His name. Deliver His doctrine, but withhold the mention of His Person, for you will excite them to madness—you will put your own life in jeopardy—you will scarcely do good while they are so prejudiced and you may do much mischief”? But, instead of this, let them rage as they would, Peter would tell them about Jesus Christ, and about nothing else but Jesus Christ!

He knew this to be the power of God unto salvation, and he would not flinch from it! So to them, even to them, he delivered the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ with a pungency as well as a simplicity scarcely to be rivaled. Notice how he puts it: “You” have slain Him. “You” have crucified Him. “You” have preferred a murderer. He is not afraid of being personal! He does not shirk the touching of men’s consciences—he rather thrusts his hand into their hearts and makes them feel their sin! He labors to open a window into the darkness of their spirits, to let the light of the Holy Spirit shine into their souls.

Even thus, my Brothers, when we preach the Gospel, we must do! Affectionately but graciously we must deal with men. Far from us be all trimming and mincing of matters. Accursed let him be that takes away from the Gospel of Jesus Christ that he may win popular applause, or who bates his breath and smoothes his tongue that he may please the unholy throng! Such a man may have, for a moment, the approbation of fools, but, as the Lord his God lives, he shall be set as a target for the arrows of vengeance in the day when the Lord comes to judge the nations!

Peter, then, boldly and earnestly preached the Gospel—preached the Christ of the Gospel—preached it personally and directly at the crowd who were gathered around him. Nor did Peter fail, when he had enunciated the Gospel, to make the personal application by prescribing its peculiar commands. Grown up among us is a school of men who say that they rightly preach the Gospel to sinners when they merely deliver statements of what the Gospel is and of the result of dying unsaved—but they grow furious and talk of unsoundness if any venture to say to the sinner, “Believe,” or “Repent.”

To this school Peter did not belong—into their secret he had never come, and with their assembly, were he alive now—he would not be joined! For, having first told his hearers of Christ—of His life and death and resurrection—he then proceeds to plunge the sword, as it were, up to

the very hilt in their consciences by saying, "Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." There, I say—in that promiscuous crowd, gathered together by curiosity—attracted by the miracle which he had worked, Peter felt no hesitation and asked no question! He *preached* the same Gospel as he would have preached to us today if he were here, and preached it in the most fervent and earnest style. He preached the angles and the corners of it, and then preached the practical part of it, addressing himself with heart, and soul and energy to everyone in that crowd, and saying, "Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

Now there are four remarks which will make up the discourse of this morning, when they are enlarged.

**I.** And the first is this, that THE APOSTLE BADE MEN REPENT AND BE CONVERTED. Of this our text is proof enough without our going afield for other instances. Repent signifies, in its literal meaning, to change one's mind. It has been translated, "after-wit," or, "after-wisdom." It is the man's finding out that he was wrong and rectifying his judgment. But although that is the meaning of the root, the word has come in Scriptural use to mean a great deal more. Perhaps there is no better definition of repentance than that which is given in our little children's hymnbook—

**"Repentance is to leave  
The sins we loved before,  
And show that we in earnest grieve,  
By doing so no more."**

Repentance is a discovery of the evil of sin, a mourning that we have committed it, a resolution to forsake it. It is, in fact, a change of mind of a very deep and practical character which makes the man love what once he hated, and hate what once he loved. Conversion, if translated, means a turning round, a turning from, and a turning to—a turning *from* sin, a turning to *holiness*—a turning from carelessness to thought, from the world to Heaven, from self to Jesus—a complete turning. The word here used, though translated in the English, "Repent and be converted," is not so in the Greek—it is really, "Repent and convert," or, rather, "Repent and turn." It is an active verb, just as the other was. "Repent and turn." When the demoniac had the devils cast out of him—I may compare that to repentance. But when he put on his garments and was no longer naked and filthy, and was said to be clothed and in his right mind, I may compare *that* to conversion.

When the prodigal was feeding his swine, and all of a sudden began to consider and to come to himself, that was *repentance*. When he set out and left the far country, and went to his father's house, that was *conversion*. Repentance is a part of conversion. It is, perhaps, I may say, the gate or door of it. It is that Jordan through which we pass when we turn from the desert of sin to seek the Canaan of conversion. *Regeneration* is the implanting of a new nature, and one of the earliest signs of that is a faith

in Christ, and a repentance of sin, and a consequent conversion from that which is evil to that which is good.

The Apostle Peter, addressing the crowd, said to them, “Change your minds. Be sorry for what you have done. Forsake your old ways. Be turned. Become new men.” That was his message as I have now put it into other words. Now, Brothers and Sisters, it has been said, and said most truly, that repentance and conversion are the work of the Holy Spirit of God. You do not need that I should stop to prove that doctrine. We have preached it to you a thousand times, and we are prepared to prove that if anything is taught in Scripture, that is. There never was any genuine repentance in this world which was not the work of the Holy Spirit. For this purpose our Lord Jesus has gone on high: “He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins.”

All true conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit. You may rightly pray in the words of the Prophet, “Turn us, and we shall be turned,” for until *God* turns us, turn we never shall! And unless He converts us, our conversion is but a mistake. Hear it as a Gospel summons—

**“True belief and true repentance,  
Every Grace which brings us near;  
Without money  
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”**

“And yet,” you say, “and yet the Apostle Peter actually says to us, ‘Repent, and be converted!’ That is, you tell us with one breath that these things are the gift of the Holy Spirit, and then with the next breath you read the text, ‘Repent, and be converted.’” Yes, I do, I do, and thank God I have learned to do so! But you will say, “How do you reconcile these two things?”

I answer, it is no part of my commission to reconcile my Master’s words—my commission is to preach the Truth of God as I find it—to deliver it to you fresh from His hand. I not only believe these things to be agreeable to one another, but I think I see in which they do agree. And I utterly desire of making the most of what is written in Scripture, and to accept it *all*, whether I can see the agreement of the two sets of Truths or not—to accept them *both* because they are both revealed. With this hand I hold as firmly as any man living—that repentance and conversion are the work of the Holy Spirit—but I would sooner lose this hand, and both, than I would give up preaching that it is the duty of men to repent and to believe, and the duty of Christian ministers to say to them, “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”

If men will not receive the Truth of God till they understand it, there are many things which they will never receive. Yes, there are many facts, common facts in Nature, which nobody would deny but a fool—which yet must be denied if we will not believe them till we *understand* them! There is a fish fresh taken from the sea—you take it to the cook to serve it on the table. You eat salt with it, do you? What for? You will have it dried and

salted, but what for? Did not it always live in the salt sea? Why then is *it* not salt? It is as fresh as though it had lived in the purling brooks of the upland country—not a particle of salt about it—yet it has lived wholly in the salt sea! Do you understand that? No, you cannot. But there it is, a fresh fish in a salt sea!

And yonder are an ox and a sheep, and they are eating in the same meadow, feeding precisely on the same food. But the grass in one case turns to beef, in the other case to mutton—and on one animal there is hair and on the other wool. How is that? Do you understand it? So there may be two great Truths in Scripture, which are both Truths of God and yet all the wise men in the world might be confused to bring those two Truths together. I do not understand, I must confess, why Moses was told to cut down a tree and put it in the bitter waters of Marah. I cannot see any connection between a tree and the water, so that the tree should make it sweet, but yet I do believe that when Moses put the tree into the water the bitterness of Marah departed and the stream was sweet.

I do not know why it is that Elisha, when he went to Jericho, and found the water nauseous, said, “Bring me a cruse of salt.” I do not know why his putting the salt into the stream should make it sweet—it looks to me as if it would operate the other way—but I believe the miracle, namely, that the salt was put in and that it was sweetened. So I do not understand how it is that my bidding impenitent sinners to repent should in any way be likely to make them do so, but I know it does—I see it every day. I do not know why a poor weak creature saying to his fellow men, “Believe,” should lead them to believe, but it does so—and the Holy Spirit blesses it—and they do believe and are saved! And if we cannot see how, if we see the fact, we will be content and bless God for it!

Perhaps you may be aware that an attempt has been made by ingenious expositors to get rid of the force of this text. Some of our Hyper-Calvinist friends, who are so earnest against anything like exhortations and invitations, have tried by some means to disembowel this text if they could. They have tried to take something out and put something else in—they have said that the repentance to which men are here exhorted is but an *outward* repentance. But how is it so, when it is added, “Repent and be converted, that your sins may *be blotted out*”? Does a merely *outward* repentance bring with it the blotting out of sin? Assuredly not!

The repentance to which men are here exhorted is a repentance which brings with it complete pardon—“that your sins may be blotted out.” And, moreover, it seems to me to be a shocking thing to suppose that Peter and John went about preaching up a hollow, *outward* repentance which would not save men. My Brothers who make that remark would themselves be ashamed to preach up outward repentance! I am sure they would think they were not ministers of God at all if they preached up any merely outward virtue! It shows to what shifts they must be driven when they twist

the Scriptures so horribly with so little reason. Brothers and Sisters, it was a soul-saving repentance, and nothing less than that, which Peter commanded of these men.

Now, let us come to the point. We tell men to repent and believe, not because we rely on any power in *them* to do so, for we know them to be *dead* in trespasses and sins. We tell men to repent and believe, not because we depend upon any power in *our* earnestness or in our speech to make them do so, for we understand that our preaching is less than nothing apart from God. We tell men to repent and believe because the Gospel is the mysterious engine by which God converts the hearts of men, and we find that, if we speak in faith, God the Holy Spirit operates with us, and while we bid the dry bones live, the Spirit makes them live!

While we tell the lame man to stand on his feet, the mysterious energy makes his ankle bones to receive strength—while we tell the impotent man to stretch out his hand, a Divine power goes with the command, and the hand is stretched out and the man is restored. The power lies not in the *sinner*, not in the *preacher*, but in the Holy Spirit which works effectually with the Gospel by Divine decree, so that where the Truth of God is preached the elect of God are quickened by it, souls are saved, and God is glorified! Go on, my dear Brothers, preaching the Gospel boldly, and be not afraid of the result, for, however little may be *your* strength, and though your eloquence may be as nothing, yet God has promised to make His Gospel the power to save, and so it shall be down to the world's end.

See then, you that are unsaved, before I leave this point, see what it is we are bound to require of *you* this morning. It is that you *repent and be converted*. We are not satisfied with having your ear, nor your eyes. We are not content with having you gathered in the house of worship—it is all in vain that you have come here unless you *repent and be converted*. We have not come to tell you that you must reform a little and mend your ways in some degree—unless you put your trust in Christ, forsake your old way of life, and become new creatures in Christ Jesus—you must perish! This—nothing short of this—is the Gospel requirement! No church-going, no chapel-going will save you. No bowing of the knee, no outward form of worship, no pretensions and professions to godliness—you **MUST** repent of your sins and forsake them, and if you don't do this, neither shall your sins be blotted out!

Thus much, then, on the first point—the Apostle commanded men to repent and be converted.

**II.** In the second place, THERE WAS GOOD REASON FOR THIS COMMAND. The text says, “Repent you therefore.” The Apostle was *logical*—he had a reason for his exhortation. It was not mere declamation but sound reasoning. “Repent you therefore.” What, then, was the argument? Why, first, because you, like the Jews, have put Jesus Christ to death! This was

literally true of the people to whom he spoke—they had had a share in Christ's execution.

And this is *spiritually* true of you to whom I speak this morning. Every sin in the essence of it is a killing of God. Do you understand me? Every time you do what God would not have you do, you do in effect, so far as you can, put God out of His throne, and disown the authority which belongs to His Godhead! You do in intent, so far as you can, kill God! That is the drift of sin—sin is a God-killing thing. Every violation of law is treason in its essence—it is rebellion against the lawgiver. When our Lord Jesus Christ was nailed to the tree by sinners, sin only did, then, literally and openly, what all sin really does in a *spiritual* sense. Do you understand me? Those offenses of yours which you have thought so little of, have been really a stabbing at the Deity! Will you not repent if it is so?

While you thought your sins to be mere trifles—light things to be laughed at—you would not repent. But now I have shown you (and I think your conscience will bear me out) that every sin is really an attempt to thrust God out of the world and that every sin is saying, "Let there be no God." Oh, then, there is cause enough to repent of it! Come here and reason with me, you who have broken God's Law! Suppose the principle of your disobedience were carried out to the fullest—would not all laws be disregarded and moral government subverted? And why not, since what one may do another has clearly the same right to do. What, then, if the authority of God should be no more acknowledged in the universe—where should we all be?

What a Hell above ground would this world become! What a moral chaos and den of beasts! Do you not see what a mischievous thing, then, your iniquity has been? Repent and turn from it! If you can really believe this morning that though you did not nail Christ to the Cross, nor plait the crown of thorns and put it on His head, nor stand and mock Him there, yet that every sin is a real crucifixion of Christ, and a mockery of Christ and a slaughter of Christ—then, truly, there is abundant reason why you should repent and turn from it.

The Apostle also used another argument, namely, that He whom they had slain was a most blessed Person—One so blessed that God the Father had exalted Him. Jesus Christ came not into this world with any selfish motive, but entirely out of philanthropy, full of love to men. And yet men put Him to death! Every sin is an insult against the good and kind God. God does not deserve that we should rebel against Him. If He were a great tyrant domineering over us, putting us to misery—there might be some excuse for our sin. But when He acts like a tender father to us, supplying our needs day by day, and forgiving our offenses, it is a shame, a cruel shame, that we should live in daily revolt against Him. You who have not believed in Christ have mighty cause for repenting that you have not believed in Him, seeing He is so good and kind.

What hurt has He ever done you that you should curse at Him? What injury has Jesus done to any one of you that you should despise Him? You deny His Deity, perhaps. Or, at any rate, you despise the great salvation which He came into this world to work out. Does He deserve this of you? Prince of life and glory, King of angels, the adored of seraphs, are You despised of men for whom Your blood was shed? Oh, what an accursed thing, then, sin must be, since it treats so badly so kind and blessed a Person! This ought to make us melt! This should make us shed drops of pity and of grief! We ought, indeed, to turn from our idle and evil ways when against Jesus we have so offended.

Moreover, Peter used another plea, that while they had rejected the blessed Christ they had chosen a murderer. Sinner, you have despised Christ and what is it you have chosen? Has it been the drunkard's cup? Oh, what a bestial thing to prefer to Christ! Or has it been your lust? What a devilish thing to set in the place of Christ! Man, what have your sins done to you that you should prefer *them* to Jesus Christ? Have you lived in them for years? Then what wages have you had? What profit have you had? Tell me now, you that have gone the farthest in sin, tell me now—are you satisfied with the service? Would you wish to go over again the days you have lived and to reap in your own bodies the fruit of your misdeeds?

No, and you serve a hard master—a murderer from the beginning is that devil to whom you surrendered your lives. Oh, then, this is a thing to be repented of—that you have cast Christ away and have chosen a murderer! “Not this man,” you say, “but Barabbas.” You will take this murderous world, this killing sin—but the blessed Savior—you let Him go! Is not there good argument here for repentance and conversion? Surely there is! Peter clenches his reasoning with another argument, bringing down, if I may so say, the big hammer this time upon the head of the nail. It is this, that the Lord Christ, whom you have up to now despised, is able to do great things for you. “His name through faith in His name has made this man strong, whom you see and know.” Christ then, by faith in Him, is able to do for you all that you need!

If you will trust Jesus today, all your iniquities shall be blotted out! The past shall not be remembered! The present shall be rendered safe, and the future blessed. If you trust in Christ, there is no sin which He will not forgive you, no evil habit the power of which He will not break, no foul propensity the weight of which He cannot remove. Believing in Him, He can make you blessed beyond a dream. And is not this cause for repentance, that you should have slighted One who can do you so much good? With hands loaded with love He stands outside the door of your heart! Is not this good reason for opening the door and letting the heavenly Stranger in, when He can bless you to such a vast extent of benediction?

What, will you reject your own mercies? Will you despise the Heaven which shall be yours if you will have my Master? Will you choose the doom from which none but He can rescue you, and let go the Glory to which none but He can admit you? When I think of the usefulness of Christ to perishing sinners, there is, indeed, abundant cause for repentance that you should not have closed with Him long ago, and accepted Him to be your All in All! Thus you see the Apostle argued with them by that word, "Therefore."

There was one other plea which he used, which I would employ this morning. He said, "Brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it." As if he would say, "Now that you have more light, repent of what you did in the dark." So might I say to some here present. You had not heard the Gospel. You did not know that sin was so bad a thing. You did not understand that Jesus Christ was able to save to the uttermost them that came unto God by Him. Well, now you do understand it! The times of your ignorance God winks at, but now, "commands all men everywhere to repent." Greater light brings greater responsibility. Do not go back to your sin, lest it become tenfold sin to you. If you do in the light what once you did in the darkness, He who winked at you when you knew no better may lift His hand and swear that you shall never enter into His rest because you sinned presumptuously and did despite to the Spirit of His Divine Grace.

I charge every unconverted man here to mind what he does in the future. If he did not know that Jesus was able to save him before, he knows it now! If he was in the dark till this morning, he is not in the dark any longer! "Now you have no cloak for your sin." Therefore, because the cloak is pulled away, and you sin against the light, I say as Peter did, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

**III.** But now, our third remark shall be given with brevity, and it is this, THAT WITHOUT REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION, SIN CANNOT BE PARDONED. The expression used in the text, "blotted out," in the original may be better explained in this way. Many Oriental merchants kept their accounts on little tablets of wax. On these tablets of wax they indented marks which recorded the debts, and when these debts were paid, they took the blunt end of the stylus or pencil and just flattened down the wax and the account entirely disappeared. That was the form of "blotting out" in those days.

Now, he that repents and is pardoned, is, through the precious blood of Christ, so entirely forgiven that there is no record of his sin left. It is as though the stylus had leveled the marks in the wax and there was no record left. What a beautiful picture of the forgiveness of sin! It is all gone, not a trace left! If we blot out an account from our books, there is the blot—the *record* is gone—but there is the blot. But on the wax tablet there was no blot—it was all gone and the wax was smooth. So is it with the sin of God's people when removed by Jesus' blood—it is all gone and gone for-

ever! But rest assured it cannot be removed except there is repentance and conversion as the result of faith in Jesus. This must be so, for this is most seemly. Would you expect a great king to forgive an erring courtier unless the offender first confessed his fault? Where is the honor and dignity of the Throne of God if men are to be pardoned while as yet they will not confess their sin?

In the next place, it would not be moral—it would be pulling up the very sluices of immorality to tell men that they could be pardoned while they went on in their sins and loved them! What? A thief pardoned and continue to steal! A harlot forgiven and remain unchaste! The drunkard forgiven and yet delight in his tankards! Truly, then, the Gospel would be the servant of unrighteousness and against us who preach it morality should make a law. But it is not so—*impenitent* sinners shall be *damned*—let them boast what they will about Grace! My Hearer, you must hate your sin or God will hate you! You must turn or burn! You cannot have your sins and go to Heaven. Which shall it be? Will you leave your sins and go to Heaven, or hold your sins and go to Hell? Which shall it be, for it must be one or the other—there must be a divorce between us and sin, or there cannot be a marriage between us and Christ.

Does not conscience tell us this? There is not a conscience here that will say to a man, “You can hope to be saved and yet live as you like.” Some have said this—I query if any have *believed* it. No, no, no! Blind as conscience is, and though its voice is often very feeble, yet there is enough of sight about conscience to see that continuance in sin and pardon cannot coexist—that there must be a forsaking of iniquity if there is to be a forgiving of it. But, my Hearer, whether your conscience shall say so or not, God says it; “He that confesses and forsakes his sin shall find mercy.” But there is no promise for the unrepentant. God declares that he that repents shall be forgiven. “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word.”

But for haughty Pharaoh, who says, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?” there is nothing but eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord. He who goes on in his iniquity and hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy. Ah, I have no pardons to preach to you who settle your minds to continue in sin! I have no gentle notes of love at all, nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. But ah, if you loathe your sins—if God’s Holy Spirit has made you hate your past lives. If you are anxious to be made new men in Christ Jesus, I have nothing but notes of love for you!

Believe in Jesus, cast yourself on Him, for He has said, “Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” The door is shut and fast bolted to every man who will

keep his sin, but it is wide open, even to the biggest sinner out of Hell, if he will leave his sin and lay hold of Jesus and put his trust in Him.

**IV.** The last remark is this—**REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION WILL BE REGARDED AS PECULIARLY PRECIOUS IN THE FUTURE**, for my text says, “That your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord.” A very difficult passage, indeed. Its meaning is scarcely known. Three or four meanings have been attached to it.

In the first place, I think it means this—he that repents and is converted shall enjoy the blotting out of sin in that season of sweet peace which always follows pardon. After a man has been thoroughly broken down on account of sin, God deals with him very tenderly. Among the very happiest parts of human life are the hours immediately after conversion. You know how we sing—

***“Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord?”***

When the broken bone begins to heal, David puts it, “You make the bones which You have broken to rejoice.” When the prisoner first gets out of prison. When the fetters for the first time clank music as they fall broken to the ground! When the sick man leaves the sick chamber of his convictions to breathe the air of liberty and to feel the health of a pardoned sinner! Oh, if you did but know what a bliss it is to be forgiven, you would never stay away from Christ!

But you do not know and cannot tell how sweet it is to be washed in the precious blood, and wrapped about with the fair white linen, and to have the kiss of the heavenly Father on your cheek! O “repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord.” Perhaps these “times of refreshing” may also relate to times of revival in the Christian Church. The only way in which you, dear Friends, can share in the refreshment of a revival is by your own repenting and being converted! A revival is a great refreshment to the Church. I pray that a mighty wave may sweep over Great Britain, for much we need it.

But of what use is a revival to an unpardoned sinner? It is like the soft south wind blowing upon a *corpse*—it can bring no genial warmth. If you repent and are converted, then, amidst the general joy of the revival, you shall have this joy—that your sins have been blotted out. What a mournful cry is that, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!” I think I hear that cry from some in the Tabernacle this morning. Oh, that blessed month of February and the beginning of March! It was to us like a harvest and a summer! What prayers, what tears, what cries! How full this house was to pray! How all day long from before the daystar shone until long after sunset we continued in prayer!

But you are still not saved, some of you. The harvest and the summer is ended, and you are not saved! Ah, I have been praying to God that you may yet be saved now. I am unable to achieve a purpose which has been hot upon my heart—to go and preach to a greater congregation in the Agricultural Hall during the next month. I find myself restrained by the Master's hand. Ill health has returned to me, and most probably there are months of weariness and pain awaiting me. But I have prayed that if I may not cast the net in the greater place, I may have the more of you *here*. We cannot have a larger congregation, but I would gladly have more conversions! It is hard preaching, it is dull working, unless there are results! We must have conversions! As that woman of old said, "Give me children or I die," so is it with the preacher—he must have sinners saved, or he prays to die.

Dear Hearer, if these times of refreshing may come, our prayer is that you may repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, and so may partake to the full in the priceless blessings of the season. Once more, the text means, according to the context, the second advent. Jesus is yet to come a second time, and like a mighty shower flooding a desert shall His coming be. His Church shall revive and be refreshed. She shall once again lift up her head from her lethargy, and her body from her sepulcher. But woe unto you who are not saved when Christ comes, for the day of the Lord will be darkness and not light to you!

When Christ comes to the unconverted, "the day shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble." "But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi." Oh, if you repent and are converted, you shall stand fully absolved in the day of His coming, when Heaven and earth do reel, when the solid rock begins to melt, and the stars, like withered fig leaves, fall from the tree—when the trumpet sounds exceedingly loud and long!

"Awake, you dead and come to judgment," when the grand assize is sitting, and the Judge shall be there—the Judge of the quick and the dead, to separate the righteous from the wicked. The Lord have mercy upon you in that day, and so He shall if His Grace shall make you obedient to the words of our text, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when times of refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord."

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# THE WAY OF SALVATION

## NO. 209

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 15, 1858,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”  
Acts 4:12 .***

IT is a very happy circumstance when the servants of God are able to turn everything to account in their ministry. Now the Apostle Peter was summoned before the priests and Sadducees—the chiefs of his nation—to answer for having restored a man who was lame from his mother’s womb. While accounting for this case of healing, or, if I may use the expression, for this case of temporal salvation, the Apostle Peter had this thought suggested to him, “While I am accounting for the salvation of this man from lameness, I have now a fine opportunity of showing to these people who otherwise will not listen to us, the way of the salvation of the soul.”

So he proceeds from the less to the greater, from the healing of a man’s *limb* to the healing of a man’s *soul*. And having informed them once that it was through the name of Jesus Christ that the impotent man had been made whole, he now announces that salvation—the great salvation, must be wrought by the selfsame means—“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

What a great word that word “salvation” is! It includes the cleansing of our conscience from all past guilt and the delivery of our soul from all those propensities to evil which now so strongly predominate in us. It takes in, in fact, the undoing of all that Adam did. Salvation is the total restoration of man from his fallen estate. And yet it is something more than that—for God’s salvation fixes our standing more secure than it was before we fell. It finds us broken in pieces by the sin of our first parent—defiled, stained, accursed. It first heals our wounds, it removes our diseases, it takes away our curse, it puts our feet upon the rock Christ Jesus and having thus done, at last it lifts our heads far above all principalities and powers, to be crowned forever with Jesus Christ, the King of Heaven.

Some people, when they use the word “salvation,” understand nothing more by it than deliverance from Hell and admittance into Heaven. Now that is not salvation—those two things are the *effects* of salvation. We are redeemed from Hell because we are saved and we enter Heaven because

we have been saved beforehand. Our everlasting state is the *effect* of salvation in this life. Salvation, it is true, includes all that because salvation is the mother of it and carries it within its heart. But still it were wrong for us to imagine that that is all the meaning of the word.

Salvation begins with us as wandering sheep. It follows us through all our mazy wanderings. It puts us on the shoulders of the Shepherd. It carries us into the fold. It calls together the friends and the neighbors. It rejoices over us. It preserves us in that fold through life. And then at last it brings us to the green pastures of Heaven—beside the still waters of bliss—where we lie down forever in the presence of the Chief Shepherd, never more to be disturbed.

Now our text tells us there is only one way of salvation. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” I shall take first of all a *negative Truth of God taught* here, namely, that there is no salvation out of Christ. And then, secondly, a *positive Truth of God inferred*, namely, that there is salvation in Jesus Christ whereby we must be saved.

**I.** First, then, A NEGATIVE FACT. “Neither is there salvation in any other.” Did you ever notice the intolerance of God’s religion? In olden times the heathen, who had different gods, respected the gods of their neighbors. For instance the king of Egypt would confess that the gods of Nineveh were true and real gods and the prince of Babylon would acknowledge that the gods of the Philistines were true and real gods. But Jehovah, the God of Israel, put this as one of His first Commandments, “You shall have none other gods besides Me.”

And He would not allow them to pay the slightest possible respect to the gods of any other nation—“You shall hew them in pieces, you shall break down their temples and cut down their groves.” All other nations were tolerant, the one to the other, but the Jew could not be so. One part of his religion was, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one God.” And as the consequence of his belief that there was but one God and that one God was Jehovah, he felt it his duty to call all pretended gods by nicknames, to spit upon them, to treat them with contumely and contempt. Now the Christian religion, you observe, is just as intolerant as this. If you apply to a Brahmin to know the way of salvation he will very likely tell you at once that all persons who follow out their sincere religious convictions will undoubtedly be saved. “There,” says he, “are the Mohammedans. If they obey Mohammed and sincerely believe what he has taught without doubt Allah will glorify them at last.”

And the Brahmin turns round upon the Christian missionary and says, “What is the use of your bringing your Christianity here to disturb us? I tell you our religion is quite capable of carrying us to Heaven if we are

faithful to it.” Now just hear the text—how intolerant is the Christian religion! “Neither is there salvation in any other.” The Brahmin may admit that there is salvation in fifty religions besides his own. But we admit no such thing. There is no true salvation out of Jesus Christ. The gods of the heathens may approach us with their mock charity and tell us that every man may follow out his own conscientious conviction and be saved. We reply—No such thing—there is no salvation in any other—“for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Now, what do you suppose is the reason for this intolerance—if I may use the word again? I believe it is just because there is the Truth of God both with the Jew and with the Christian. A thousand errors may live in peace with one another, but the Truth of God is the hammer that breaks them all in pieces. A hundred lying religions may sleep peaceably in one bed—but wherever the Christian religion goes as the Truth of God—it is like a firebrand and it abides nothing that is not more substantial than the wood, the hay and the stubble of carnal error.

All the gods of the heathen and all other religions are born of Hell and therefore, being children of the same father, it would seem amiss that they should fall out and chide and fight. But the religion of Christ is a thing of God’s—its pedigree is from on high and, therefore, when once it is thrust into the midst of an ungodly and gainsaying generation it has neither peace, nor parley, nor treaty with them. For it is the Truth of God and cannot afford to be yoked with error. It stands upon its own rights and gives to error its due—declaring that it has no salvation—but that in the Truth of God and in the Truth of God alone, is salvation to be found.

Again—it is because we have here the sanction of God. It would be improper in any man who had invented a creed of his own to state that all others must be damned who do not believe it. That would be an overwhelming censoriousness and bigotry, at which we might afford to smile. But since this religion of Christ is revealed from Heaven itself—God, who is the Author of all truth—has a right to append to this truth the dreadful condition that who so rejects it shall perish without mercy. And He may proclaim that apart from Christ no man can be saved. We are not really intolerant for we are but echoing the Words of Him that speaks from Heaven and who declares that cursed is the man who rejects this religion of Christ, seeing that there is no salvation out of Him. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Now, I hear one or two persons saying, “Do you imagine then, Sir, that none are saved apart from Christ?” I reply, I don’t imagine it, but I have it here in my text plainly taught. “Well but,” says one, “how is it concerning

the death of infants? Do not infants die without actual sin? Are they saved? And if so, how?" I answer, saved they are beyond a doubt—all children dying in infancy are caught away to dwell in the third Heaven of bliss forever. But mark this—no infant was ever saved apart from the death of Christ.

Christ Jesus has with His blood bought all those who die in infancy. They are all regenerated, not in sprinkling, but probably in the instant of their death a marvelous change passes over them by the breathing of the Holy Spirit. The blood of Jesus is applied to them and they are washed from all original corruption which they had inherited from their parents. And thus washed and cleansed they enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Otherwise, Beloved, infants would be unable to join in the everlasting song, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood." If infants were not washed in the blood of Christ, they could not join in that universal song which perpetually surrounds the Throne of God.

We believe that they are all saved—every one of them without exception—but not apart from the one great sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Another says, "But how about the heathen? They know not Christ—are any of the heathen saved?" Mark, Holy Scripture says but very little concerning the salvation of the heathen. There are many texts in Scripture which would lead us to infer that all the heathen perish. But there are some texts which, on the other hand, lead us to believe that there are some out of the heathen race who, led by God's secret Spirit, are seeking after Him in the dark. By His Spirit they are endeavoring to find out something they cannot discover in nature. And it may be that the God of infinite mercy who loves His creatures is pleased to make to them these revelations in their own heart. Dark and mysterious revelations concerning the things of Heaven—so that even they may be made partakers of the blood of Jesus Christ, without having such an open vision as we have received without beholding the Cross visibly elevated and Christ set forth crucified among them.

It has been observed in many heathen lands that before the missionaries have gone there, there has been a strong desire after the religion of Christ. In the Sandwich Islands, before our missionaries went there, there was a strange commotion in the minds of those poor barbarians. They did not know what it was, but they were all on a sudden discontented with their idolatries and had a longing desire after something higher, better and purer than anything they had up to then discovered. And no sooner was Jesus Christ preached than they willingly renounced all their idolatries and laid hold upon Him to be their strength and their salvation.

Now we believe this was the Work of God's Spirit secretly inclining these poor creatures to seek after Him. And we cannot tell but that in

some sequestered spots where we had thought the Gospel never has been preached there may be some lone tract, some chapter of the Bible, some solitary verse of Holy Writ remembered which may be sufficient to open blind eyes and to guide poor benighted hearts to the foot of the Cross of Christ. But this much is certain—no heathen, however moral—whether in the days of their old philosophy, or in the present time of their barbarism—ever did or ever could enter the kingdom of Heaven apart from the name of Jesus Christ. “Neither is their salvation in any other.” A man may seek after it and labor after it in his own way, but there he cannot possibly find it, “for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

But after all, my dear Friends, it is a great deal better—when we are dealing with these subjects—not to talk upon speculative matters but to come home personally to ourselves. And let me now ask you this question, have you ever proved by experience the truth of this great negative fact, that there is no salvation in any other? I can speak what I do know and testify what I have seen when I solemnly declare in the presence of this congregation that it is even so. Once I thought there was salvation in good works and I labored hard and strove diligently to preserve a character for integrity and uprightness. But when the Spirit of God came into my heart, “sin revived and I died.” That which I thought had been good proved to be evil. Wherein I thought I had been holy I found myself to be unholy.

I discovered that my very best actions were sinful, that my tears needed to be wept over and that my very prayers needed God’s forgiveness. I discovered that I was seeking after salvation by the works of the Law—that I was doing all my good works from a selfish motive—namely to *save myself* and therefore they could not be acceptable to God. I found out that I could not be saved by good works for two very good reasons—first, I had not any, and secondly, if I had any, they could not save me. After that I thought salvation might be obtained partly by reformation and partly by trusting in Christ. So I labored hard again and thought if I added a few prayers here and there, a few tears of penitence and a few vows of improvement, all would be well.

But after forging on for many a weary day like a poor blind horse toiling round the mill, I found I had got no farther, for there was still the curse of God hanging over me—“Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them.” And there was still an aching void in my heart the world could never fill—a void of distress and care—for I was sorely troubled because I could not attain unto the rest which my soul desired.

Have *you* tried those two ways of getting to Heaven? If you have, I trust the Lord, the Holy Spirit, has made you heartily sick of them, for you shall

never enter the kingdom of Heaven by the right door until you have first of all been led to confess that all the other doors are barred in your teeth. No man ever will come to God through the straight and narrow way until he has tried all the other ways and when we find ourselves beaten and foiled and defeated, then it is that pressed by sore necessity we betake ourselves to the one open Fountain and there wash ourselves and are made clean.

Perhaps I have in my presence this morning some who are trying to gain salvation by ceremonies. You have been baptized in your infancy. You regularly take the Lord's Supper. You attend your Church or Chapel. And if you knew any other ceremonies you would attend to them. Ah, my dear Friends, all these things are as the chaff before the wind in the matter of salvation. They cannot help you one step towards acceptance in the Person of Christ. As well might you labor to build your house with water as to build salvation with such poor things as these. These are good enough for you when you are saved, but if you seek salvation *in* them, they shall be to your soul as wells without water, clouds without rain and withered trees, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.

Whatever is your way of salvation—for there are a thousand different inventions of men whereby they seek to save themselves—whatever it may be, hear its death knell tolled from this verse—“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

**II.** Now, this brings me to the POSITIVE FACT which is inferred in the text, namely, that there *is* salvation in Jesus Christ. Surely, when I make that simple statement I might burst forth with the song of the angels and say—“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will towards men.” Here are a thousand mercies all bound up in one bundle in this sweet, sweet fact—that there is salvation in Jesus Christ! I shall endeavor now merely to deal with any soul here present who entertains a doubt as to his own salvation in Jesus Christ. I shall single him out and address him affectionately and earnestly and endeavor to show him that he may yet be saved and that in Christ there is salvation for him.

I know you, Sinner! You have long been trying to find the road to Heaven and you have missed it. You have had a thousand dazzling gimmicks to deceive you and never yet one solid ground of comfort for your poor weary foot. And now, encompassed about by your sins, you are not able to look up. Guilt, like a heavy burden, is on your back and your finger is on your lip for you dare not cry for pardon. You are afraid to speak, lest out of your own mouth you should be condemned. Satan whispers in your ear, “It is all over with you. There is no mercy for such as you are—

you are condemned and condemned you must be. Christ is able to save many, but not to save you.”

Poor Soul! What shall I say unto you but this—Come with me to the Cross of Christ and you shall there see something which shall remove your unbelief. Do you see that Man nailed to yonder tree? Do you know His character? He is without spot or blemish, or any such thing. He was no thief, that He should die a felon’s death—He was no murderer and no assassin, that He should be crucified between two malefactors. No—His original was pure, without a sin. And His life was holy, without a flaw. Out of His mouth there proceeded only blessing. His hands were full of good deeds and His feet were swift for acts of mercy. His heart was white with holiness.

There was nothing in Him that man could blame. Even His enemies, when they sought to accuse Him, found false witnesses but even they “agreed not together.” Do you see Him dying? Sinner, there must be merit in the death of such a man as that! Without sin Himself, when He is put to grief—it must be for other men’s sins. God would not afflict and grieve Him when He deserved it not. God is no tyrant that He should crush the innocent. He is not unholy that He should punish the righteous. He suffered, then, for the sins of others—

***“For sins, not His own, He died to atone.”***

Think of the purity of Christ and then see whether there is not salvation in Him. Come now with your blackness about you and look at His whiteness. Come with your defilement and look at His purity. And as you look at that purity like the lily, and you see the crimson of His blood overflowing it, let this whisper be heard in your ear—He is able to save you, Sinner, inasmuch as He was “tempted in all points like as we are,” yet He was “without sin.” Therefore, the merit of His blood must be great. Oh, may God help you to believe on Him!

But this is not the grand thing which should recommend Him to you. Remember, He who died upon the Cross was no less than the everlasting Son of God! Do you see Him there? Come, turn your eye once more to Him. Do you see His hands and feet trickling with streamlets of gore? That Man is Almighty God! Those hands that are nailed to the tree are hands that could shake the world. Those feet that are there pierced have in them, if He willed to put it forth, a potency of strength that might make the mountains melt beneath their tread.

That head, now bowed in anguish and in weakness, has in it the wisdom of the Godhead and with its nod it could make the universe tremble. He who hangs upon the Cross is He without whom was not anything made that was made—by Him all things consist—Maker, Creator, Preserver, God of Providence and God of Grace—He who died for you is God

over all, blessed forever. And now, Sinner, is there any power to save in such a Savior as this? If He were a mere man, a Socinian's Christ, or an Arian's Christ, I would not bid you trust Him. But since He is none other than God Himself incarnate in human flesh, I beseech you, cast yourself upon Him—

***“He is able,  
He is willing, doubt no more.”***

“He is able to save unto the uttermost, them that come unto God by Him.”

Will you remember again, as a further consolation for your faith, that you may believe that God the Father has accepted the sacrifice of Christ? It is the Father's anger that you have the most cause to dread. The Father is angry with you, for you have sinned and He has sworn with an oath that He will punish you for your offenses. Now Jesus Christ was punished in the place of every sinner who has repented, or ever shall repent. Jesus Christ stood as his Substitute and Scapegoat. God the Father has accepted Christ in the place of sinners. Oh, ought not this to lead you to accept Him? If the Judge has accepted the sacrifice, surely you may accept it, too! And if He is satisfied—surely you may be content also.

If the Creditor has written a full and free discharge—you, the poor debtor, may rejoice and believe that that discharge is satisfactory to you because it is satisfactory to God. But do you ask me how I know that God has accepted Christ's atonement? I remind you that Christ rose again from the dead. Christ was put into the prison of the tomb after He died and there He waited until God should have accepted the atonement—

***“If Jesus never had paid the debt,  
He never had been at freedom set.”***

Christ would have been in the tomb this very day if God had not accepted His atonement for our justification. But the Lord looked down from Heaven and He surveyed the work of Christ and said within Himself, “It is very good. It is enough.” And turning to an angel, He said, “Angel, My Son is confined in prison, a hostage for My elect. He has paid the price. I know He will not break the prison down Himself—go, angel, go and roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher and set Him free.” Down flew the angel and rolled away the massive stone. And rising from the shades of death the Savior lived. “He died and rose again for our justification.” Now, poor Soul, you see *God* has accepted Christ—surely then, *you* may accept Him and believe on Him.

Another argument which may perhaps come nearer to your own soul is this—many have been saved who were as vile as you are and therefore there is salvation. “No,” you say, “none are so vile as I am.” It is a mercy that you think so, but nevertheless it is quite certain that others have been saved who have been as filthy as yourself. Have you been a persecu-

tor? “Yes,” you say. Yes, but you have not been more blood-thirsty than Saul! And yet that chief of sinners became the chief of saints.

Have you been a swearer? Have you cursed the Almighty to His face? Yes. And such were some of us who now lift up our voices in prayer and approach His Throne with acceptance. Have you been a drunkard? Yes and so have many of God’s people been for many a day and many a year. But they have forsaken their filthiness and they have turned unto the Lord with full purpose of heart. However great your sin, I tell you, Man, there have been some saved as deep in sin as you are. And if none have been saved who are such great sinners as you are, so much the more reason why God should save you—that He may go beyond all that He ever has done.

The Lord always delights to be doing wonders. And if you stand the chief of sinners, a little ahead of all the rest, I believe He will delight to save you—that the wonders of His love and His grace may be the more manifestly known. Do you still say that you are the chief of sinners? I tell you I do not think it. The chief of sinners was saved years ago—that was the Apostle Paul—but even if you should exceed him—still that word “utmost” goes a little beyond you. “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.”

Remember, Sinner, if you do not find salvation in Christ it will be because you do not look for it, for it certainly is there. If you shall perish without being saved through the blood of Christ, it will not be through a want of power in that blood to save you, but entirely through a want of will on your part—that you will not believe on Him but do wantonly and willfully reject His blood to your own destruction. Take heed to yourself, for as surely as there is salvation in none other, so surely there is salvation in Him.

I could turn to you myself and tell you that surely there must be salvation in Christ for you, since I have found salvation in Christ for myself. Often have I said I will never doubt the salvation of anyone, so long as I can but know that Christ has accepted *me*. Oh, how dark was my despair when I first sought His mercy seat! I thought then that if He had mercy on all the world, yet He would never have mercy on me. The sins of my childhood and my youth haunted me. I sought to get rid of them one by one, but I was caught as in an iron net of evil habits and I could not overthrow them. And even when I could renounce my sin, yet the guilt still did cling to my garments. I could not wash myself clean. I prayed for three long years—I bent my knees in vain and sought, but found no mercy. But, at last, blessed be His name, when I had given up all hope and thought that His swift anger would destroy me and that the pit would open its mouth and swallow me up—*then* in the hour of my extremity did He manifest

Himself to me and teach me to cast myself simply and wholly upon Him. So shall it be with you, only trust Him, for there is salvation in Him—rest assured of that.

To quicken your diligence, however, I will conclude by noting that if you do not find salvation in Christ, remember you will never find it elsewhere. What a dreadful thing it will be for you if you should lose the salvation provided by Christ! For “how shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation?” Today very probably I am not speaking to very many of the grossest of sinners, yet I know I am speaking to some even of that class. But whether we are gross sinners or not—how fearful a thing it will be for us to die without first having found an interest in the Savior!

Oh Sinner! This should quicken you in going to the mercy seat. Remember that if you find no mercy at the feet of Jesus you can never find it anywhere else. If the gates of Heaven shall never open to you, remember there is no other gate that ever can be opened for your salvation. If Christ refuses you, you are refused. If His blood is not sprinkled on you, you are lost, indeed. Oh, if He keeps you waiting a little while, still continue in prayer. It is worth waiting for—especially when you have this thought to keep you waiting, namely—that there is none other, no other way, no other hope, no other ground of trust, no other refuge. There I see the gate of Heaven and if I must enter it, I must creep on my hands and knees, for it is a low gate. There I see it, it is a strait and narrow one—I must leave my sins behind me and my proud righteousness and I must creep in through that wicket.

Come Sinner, what do you say? Will you go beyond this strait and narrow gate, or will you despise eternal life and risk eternal bliss? Or will you go through it humbly hoping that He who gave Himself for you will accept you in Himself and save you now and save you everlastingly?

May these few words have power to draw some to Christ and I am content. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “For there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Amen. Amen!

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# CHRIST'S PEOPLE—IMITATORS OF HIM

## NO. 21

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 29, 1855,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT EXETER HALL STRAND.

*“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”*  
Acts 4:13.

BEHOLD! What a change Divine Grace will work in a man and in how short a time! That same Peter, who so lately followed his Master *afar off* and with oaths and curses denied that he knew His name, is now to be found side by side with the loving John, boldly declaring that there is salvation in none other name save that of Jesus Christ! They are preaching the resurrection of the dead through the Sacrifice of his dying Lord. The Scribes and Pharisees soon discover the reason of his boldness. Rightly did they guess that it rested not in his learning or his talents, for neither Peter nor John had been educated. They had been trained as fishermen, their education was a knowledge of the sea—of the fisherman's craft—none other had they. Their boldness could not, therefore, spring from the self-sufficiency of knowledge, but from the Spirit of the living God! Nor did they acquire their courage from their station. For rank will confer a sort of dignity upon a man and make him speak with a feigned authority even when he has no talent or genius. But these men were, as it says in the original text, *“idiotai, private men who stood in no official capacity”*—men without rank or station. When they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were unlearned and private individuals, they marveled and they came to a right conclusion as to the source of their power—they had been dwelling with Jesus! Their conversation with the Prince of Light and Glory, backed up, as they might also have known, by the influence of the Holy Spirit—without which even that eminently holy example would have been in vain—had made them bold for their Master's cause. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, it were well if this commendation, so forced from the lips of enemies, could also be compelled by our own example! If we could live like Peter and John. If our lives were “living Epistles of God, known and read of all men.” If, whenever we were seen, men would take knowledge of us, that we had been with Jesus, it would be a happy thing for this world and a blessed thing for us. It is concerning this I am to speak to you this morning. And as God gives me Divine Grace, I will endeavor to stir up your minds by way of remembrance and urge you so to imitate Jesus Christ, our heavenly

Pattern, that men may perceive that you are disciples of the holy Son of God!

First then, this morning, I will tell you *what a Christian should be*. Secondly, I will tell you *when he should be so*. Thirdly, why he should be so and then, fourthly, *how he can be so*.

**I.** As God may help us then, first of all, we will speak of WHAT A BELIEVER SHOULD BE. A Christian should be a striking likeness of Jesus Christ. You have read lives of Christ beautifully and eloquently written—and you have admired the talent of the persons who could write so well. But the best life of Christ is His living biography, written out in the words and actions of His people. If we, my Brothers and Sisters, were what we profess to be—if the Spirit of the Lord were in the heart of all His children, as we could desire—and if, instead of having abundance of formal *professors*, we were all *possessors* of that vital Grace, I will tell you not only what we ought to be but what we would be. We would be pictures of Christ. Yes, such striking likenesses of Him, that the world would not have to hold us up and say, “Well, it seems somewhat of a likeness.” Instead they would, when they once beheld us, exclaim, “He has been with Jesus! He has been taught of Him! He is like He is. He has caught the very idea of the holy Man of Nazareth and he expands it out into his very life and every day actions.”

In enlarging upon this point, it will be necessary to premise that when we here affirm that men should be such-and-such a thing, we refer to the people of God. We do not wish to speak to them in any legal way. We are not under the Law, but under Grace. Christians hold themselves bound to keep all God's precepts—but the reason why they do so is not because the *Law* is binding upon them, but because the *Gospel* compels them. They believe that having been redeemed by Divine blood—having been purchased by Jesus Christ—they are more bound to keep His commands than they would have been if they were under the Law! They hold themselves to be ten thousand-fold more debtors to God than they could have been under the Mosaic dispensation. Not of force. Not of compulsion. Not through fear of the whip. Not through legal bondage. But through pure, disinterested love and gratitude to God, they lay themselves out for His service seeking to be Israelites, indeed, in whom there is no guile! This much I have declared lest any man should think that I am preaching works as the way to salvation—I will yield to none in this! I will always maintain that by Grace we are saved—and not by ourselves or our works! But equally must I testify that where the Grace of God is, it will *produce* fitting works. To these I am always bound to exhort you—you are ever expected to have good works for necessary purposes. Again—I do not, when I say that a Believer should be a striking likeness of Jesus, suppose that any one Christian will perfectly exhibit all the features of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Yet, my Brothers and Sisters, the fact that perfection is beyond our reach should not diminish the ardor of our de-

sire after it. The artist, when he paints, knows right well that he shall not be able to excel Apelles. But that does not discourage him. He uses his brush with all the greater pains, that he may at least, in some humble measure, resemble the great master. So, too, the sculptor—though persuaded that he will not rival Praxiteles—he will still hew out the marble and seek to be as near the model as possible. Just so the Christian—though he feels he never can mount to the height of complete excellence and perceives that he never can on earth become the exact image of Christ—he still holds it up before him and measures his own deficiencies by the distance between himself and Jesus. This he will do, forgetting all he has attained and he will press forward, crying, *Excelsior!* going still upwards, desiring to be conformed more and more to the image of Christ Jesus!

First then, a Christian should be like Christ in His *boldness*. This is a virtue nowadays, called *impudence* but the Grace is equally valuable by whatever name it may be called. I suppose if the Scribes had given a definition of Peter and John, they would have called them impudent fellows.

Jesus Christ and His disciples were noted for their courage. “When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.” Jesus Christ never fawned upon the rich. He stooped not to the great and noble, He stood erect, a Man before men—the Prophet of the people, speaking out boldly and freely what He thought. Have you ever admired that mighty deed of His, when going to the city where He had lived and been brought up—knowing that a Prophet had no honor in His own country—the opportunity was put into His hands. He had but then commenced His ministry. Yet without tremor He unrolled the Sacred Volume and what did He take for His text? Most men, coming to their own neighborhood would have chosen a subject adapted to the taste in order to earn fame. But what Doctrine did Jesus preach that morning? One which in our age is scorned and hated—the Doctrine of *Election*. He opened the Scriptures and began to read thus—“Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the Heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land, but unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Sarepta a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the Prophet. And none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.” Then He began to tell how God saves whom He pleases and rescues whom He chooses. Ah, how they gnashed their teeth upon Him, dragged Him out and would have cast Him from the brow of the hill! Do you not admire His intrepidity? He saw their teeth gnashing. He knew their hearts were hot with enmity while their mouths foamed with revenge and malice—still He stood like the angel who shut the lion's mouths. He feared them not. Faithfully He proclaimed what He knew to be the Truth of God and still read on despite them all. So in His

discourses. If He saw a Scribe or a Pharisee in the congregation, He did not keep back part of the price, but pointing His finger, He said, "Woe Unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." And when a lawyer came, saying, "Master, in speaking thus, you condemn us, also," He turned round and said, "Woe unto you, lawyers, for you bind heavy burdens upon men, while you, yourselves, will not touch them with so much as one of your fingers." He dealt out honest truth—He never knew the fear of man. He trembled at none. He stood out as God's chosen whom He had anointed above His fellows, careless of man's esteem. My Friends, be like Christ in this. Have none of the time-serving religion of the present day, which is merely exhibited in evangelical drawing rooms—a religion which only flourishes in a hotbed atmosphere, a religion which is only to be perceived in good company. No, if you are the servants of God, be like Jesus Christ, bold for your Master! Never blush to acknowledge your religion. Your profession will never disgrace you. Take care you never disgrace *that*. Your love to Christ will never dishonor you—it may bring some temporary slight from your friends, or slanders from your enemies—but live on and you shall live down their slanders. Live on and you shall stand among the glorified, honored even by those who hissed you when *He* shall come to be glorified by His angels and admired by them that love Him! Be like Jesus, very valiant for your God—so that when they shall see your boldness, they may say, "He has been with Jesus."

But no one feature will give a portrait of a man—so the one virtue of boldness will never make you like Christ. There have been some who have been noble men but have carried their courage to excess. They have thus been caricatures of Christ and not portraits of Him. We must amalgamate with our boldness the *loveliness* of Jesus' disposition. Let courage be the brass. Let love be the gold. Let us mix the two together that we might produce a rich Corinthian metal fit to be manufactured into the beautiful gate of the Temple. Let your love and courage be mingled together! The man who is bold may indeed accomplish wonders. John Knox did much, but he might, perhaps, have done more if he had had a little love. Luther was a conqueror—peace to his ashes and honor to his name! Still, we who look upon him at a distance think that if he had sometimes mixed a little mildness with it—if while he had been *fortiter in re* he had been also *suaviter in modo* and spoken somewhat more gently, he might have done even more good than he did! So, Brothers and Sisters, while we, too, are bold, let us ever imitate the loving Jesus. The child comes to Him—He takes it on His knee, saying, "Suffer little children to come unto Me and forbid them not." A widow has just lost her only son—He weeps at the bier and with a word restores life to the dead man. He sees a paralytic, a leper, or a man long confined to his bed. He speaks, they rise and are healed. He lived for others, not for Himself. His constant labors were without any motive except the good of those who lived in the world. And to crown all, you know the mighty Sacrifice He made when He condes-

cended to lay down His life for man—when on the tree, quivering with agony and hanging in the utmost extremity of suffering, He submitted to die for our sakes—that we might be saved. Behold in Christ, Love consolidated! He was one mighty pillar of benevolence. As God is Love, so Christ is Love. Oh, Christians, be loving also! Let your love and your beneficence beam out on all men. Say not, “Be you warmed and be you filled,” but, “give a portion to seven and also to eight.” If you cannot imitate Him and unlock the prison doors—if you cannot visit the sad house of misery—yet each in your proper sphere speak kind words, do kind actions, live out Christ, again, in the kindness of your life! If there is one virtue which most commends Christians, it is that of kindness. It is to love the people of God, to love the Church, to love the Word, to love all. But how many have we in our Churches, crab-tree Christians, who have mixed such a vast amount of vinegar and such a tremendous quantity of gall in their constitutions, that they can scarcely speak one good word to you? They imagine it impossible to defend religion except by passionate, boiling emotions. They cannot speak for their dishonored Master without being angry with their opponent. They are mad if anything is awry, whether it is in the house, the Church, or anywhere else. They conceive it to be their duty to set their faces like a flint and to defy everybody! They are like isolated icebergs—no one cares to go near them. They float about on the Sea of Forgetfulness until at last they are melted and gone. And though good souls—we shall be happy enough to meet them in Heaven—we are heartily glad to get rid of them from the earth. They were always so unamiable in disposition that we would rather live an eternity with them in Heaven, than five minutes on earth. Be you not thus, my Brothers and Sisters. Imitate Christ in your loving spirits. Speak kindly, act kindly and do kindly—that men may say of you, “He has been with Jesus.”

Another great feature in the life of Christ, was His deep and *sincere humility*, in which let us, by God's Grace, imitate Him. While we will not cringe or bow—far from it—we are the free men whom the Truth makes free. We walk through this world equal to all, inferior to none—yet we would endeavor to be like Christ—continually humble! Oh, you proud Christian—for though it is a paradox, there must be some—I would not be so uncharitable as to say that there are not some such persons—if you are a Christian, I bid you look at your Master talking to the children! Look at Him bending from the majesty of His Divinity to speak to mankind on earth, tabernacling with the peasants of Galilee and then—yes, depth of condescension unparalleled—washing His disciples' feet and wiping them with a towel after supper. This is your Master whom you profess to worship! This is your Lord whom you adore! And you, some of you who count yourselves Christians, cannot speak to a person who is not dressed in the same kind of clothing as yourselves, who has not exactly as much money per year as you have! In England it is true that a

sovereign will not speak to a shilling and a shilling will not notice a sixpence and a sixpence will sneer at a penny. But it should not be so with Christians. We ought to forget caste, degree and rank when we come into Christ's Church. Remember, Christian, who your Master was—a Man of the poor! He lived with them. He ate with them. And will you walk with lofty heads and stiff necks, looking with insufferable contempt upon your meaner fellow worms? What are you? The meanest of all—because your trickeries and adornments make you proud. Pitiful, despicable souls you are! How small you look in God's sight! Christ was humble. He stooped to do anything which might serve others. He had no pride. He was a humble Man, a friend of publicans and sinners, living and walking with them. So, Christian, be like your Master—one who can stoop. Yes, be one who thinks it not stooping, but rather esteems others better than himself, counts it his honor to sit with the poorest of Christ's people and says, "If my name may be but written in the obscurest part of the Book of Life, it is enough for me, so unworthy am I of His notice!" Be like Christ in His humility.

So might I continue, dear Brothers and Sisters, speaking of the various characteristics of Christ Jesus. But as you can think of them as well as I can, I shall not do so. It is easy for you to sit down and paint Jesus Christ, for you have Him drawn out here in His Word. I find that time would fail me if I were to give you an entire likeness of Jesus. But let me say, imitate Him in His *holiness*. Was He zealous for His Father? So be you. Ever go about doing good. Let not time be wasted. It is too precious. Was He self-denying, never looking to His own interest? So be you! Was He devout? So be you fervent in your prayers. Had He deference to His Father's will? So submit yourselves to Him. Was He patient? So learn to endure. And best of all, as the highest portraiture of Jesus, try to forgive your enemies, as He did. And let those sublime words of your Master, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," always ring in your ears. When you are prompted to revenge, when hot anger starts, bridle the steed at once and let it not dash forward with you headlong. Remember, anger is temporary insanity. Forgive as you hope to be forgiven. Heap coals of fire on the head of your foe by your kindness to him. Good for evil, remember, is Godlike. Be Godlike then. And in all ways and by all means, so live that your enemies may say, "He has been with Jesus."

**II.** Now, WHEN SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE THUS? There is an idea in the world that persons ought to be very religious on Sunday, but it does not matter what they are on Monday. How many pious preachers are there on the Sunday who are very impious preachers during the rest of the week? How many are there who come up to the House of God with a solemn countenance, who join in the song and profess to pray, yet have neither part nor lot in the matter, but are "in that gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity"? This is true of some of you who are here

present. When should a Christian, then, be like Jesus Christ? Is there a time when he may strip off his regimentals—when the warrior may unbuckle his armor and become like other men? Oh, no! At all times and in every place let the Christian be what he professes to be. I remember talking, some time ago, with a person who said, “I do not like visitors who come to my house and introduce religion. I think we ought to have religion on Sundays, when we go to the House of God, but not in the drawing room.” I suggested to the individual, that there would be a great deal of work for the upholsterers if there were no religion except in the House of God. “How is that?” was the question. “Why,” I replied, “we would need to have beds fitted up in all our places of worship, for surely we need religion to die with and, consequently, everyone would want to die there.” Yes, we all need the consolations of God at the last! But how can we expect to enjoy them unless we obey the precepts of religion during life? My Brethren, let me say, be like Christ at all times, imitate Him in *public*. Most of us live in some sort of publicity. Many of us are called to work before our fellow men every day. We are watched. Our words are caught. Our lives are examined—taken to pieces. The eagle-eyed world observes everything we do. And sharp critics are upon us. Let us live the life of Christ in public. Let us take care that we exhibit our Master and not ourselves—so that we can say, “It is no longer I that lives, but Christ that lives in me.” Take heed that you carry this into the *Church* too, you who are Church members. Be like Christ in the Church. How many there are of you like Diotrefes, seeking pre-eminence. How many are trying to have some dignity and power over their fellow Christians, instead of remembering that it is the fundamental rule of all our Churches, that all men are equal, alike to be received as such. Carry out the spirit of Christ, then, in your Churches, wherever you are. Let your fellow members say of you, “He has been with Jesus.”

But, most of all, take care to have religion in your *houses*. A religious house is the best proof of true piety. It is not my Chapel, it is my house—it is not my minister—it is my home companion who can best judge me. It is the servant, the child, the wife, the friend who can discern most of my real character. A good man will improve his household. Rowland Hill once said he would not believe a man to be a true Christian if his wife, his children, his servants and even the dog and cat, were not the better for it. That is being religious! If your household is not the better for your Christianity—if men cannot say, “This is a better house than others,” then be not deceived—you have nothing of the Grace of God. Let not your servant, on leaving your employ, say, “Well, this is a strange sort of a religious family. There was no prayer in the morning. I began the day with my drudgery. There was no prayer at night. I was kept at home all Sunday. Once a fortnight, perhaps, I was allowed to go out in the afternoon when there was nowhere to go to where I could hear a Gospel sermon. My master and mistress went to a place where, of course, they heard the

blessed Gospel of God—that was all for them. As for me, I might have the dregs and leavings of some over-worked curate in the afternoon.” Surely Christians will not act in that way. No! Carry out your godliness in your family. Let everyone say that you have practical religion. Let it be known and read in the house, as well as in the world. Take care of your character there. For what we are there, we really are! Our life abroad is often but a borrowed part—actors part of a great scene—but at home the mask is removed and men are what they seem. Take care of your home duties.

Yet again, my Brothers and Sisters, before I leave the point imitate Jesus in *secret*. When no eye sees you except the eyes of God, when darkness covers you, when you are shut up from the observation of mortals, even *then* be like Jesus Christ. Remember His ardent piety, His secret devotion—how, after laboriously preaching the whole day, He stole away in the midnight shades to cry for help from His God. Remember how His entire life was constantly sustained by fresh Inspirations of the Holy Spirit, derived by prayer. Take care of your secret life—let it be such that you will not be ashamed to read at the last great day. Your inner life is written in the Book of God and it shall one day be opened before you. If the entire life of some of you were known, it would be no life at all—it would be a death. Yes, even of some true Christian, we may say, it is scarcely a *life*. It is a dragging on of an existence—one hasty prayer a day—one breathing, just enough to save our soul alive, but no more. O my Brothers and Sisters, strive to be more like Jesus Christ! These are times when we need more secret prayer. I have had much fear all this week. I know not whether it is true. But when I feel such a thing, I like to tell it to those of you who belong to my own Church and congregation. I have trembled, lest by being away from our own place, you have ceased to pray as earnestly as you once did! I remember your earnest groans and petitions—how you would assemble together in the House of Prayer in multitudes and cry out to God to help His servant. We cannot meet in such style at present. But do you still pray in private? Have you forgotten me? Have you ceased to cry out to God? Oh, my Friends, with all the entreaties that a man can use, let me appeal to you—remember who I am and what I am—a child, having little education, little learning, ability, or talent—and here I am, called upon week after week to preach to this crowd of people! Will you not, my Beloved, still plead for me? Has not God been pleased to hear your prayers ten thousand times? And will you now cease, when a mighty revival is taking place in many Churches? Will you now stop your petitions? Oh, no! Go to your houses, fall upon your knees, cry aloud to God to enable you still to hold up your hands like Moses on the hill, that Joshua below may fight and overcome the Amalekites. Now is the time for victory—shall we lose it? This is the high tide that will float us over the bar. Now let us put out the oars. Let us pull by earnest prayer, crying for God the Spirit to fill the sails! You who love God, of every place and every denomination, wrestle for your ministers,

pray for them! For why should not God even now pour out His Spirit? What is the reason why we are to be denied Pentecostal seasons? Why not this hour, as one mighty band, fall down before Him and entreat Him, for His Son's sake, to revive His drooping Church? Then would all men discern that we are, verily, the disciples of Christ!

**III.** But now, thirdly, WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS IMITATE CHRIST? The answer comes very naturally and easily. Christians should be like Christ, first, *for their own sakes*. For their honesty's sake and for their credit's sake, let them not be found liars before God or men! For their own healthful state, if they wish to be kept from sin and preserved from going astray, let them imitate Jesus. For their own happiness' sake, if they would drink wine on the lees well refined. If they would enjoy holy and happy communion with Jesus, if they would be lifted up above the cares and troubles of this world—let them imitate Jesus Christ! Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, there is nothing that can so advantage you. Nothing that can so prosper you, so assist you, so make you rapidly walk towards Heaven, so keep your head upwards towards the sky and your eyes radiant with glory, like the imitation of Jesus Christ! It is when by the power of the Holy Spirit you are enabled to walk with Jesus in His very footsteps and tread in His ways, you are most happy. And you are most known to be the children of God. For your own sakes, my Brothers and Sisters, I say, be like Christ!

Next, for *religion's sake*, strive to imitate Jesus. Ah, poor Religion, you have been sorely shot at by cruel foes but you have not been wounded one half as much by them as by your friends. None have hurt you, O Christianity, so much as those who profess to be your followers. Who have made these wounds in this fair hand of Godliness? I say the *professor* has done this—the *professor* who has not lived up to his profession. The man, who with pretences, enters the fold, being nothing but a wolf in sheep's clothing. Such men, Sirs, injure the Gospel more than others—more than the laughing infidel, more than the sneering critic. No one hurts our cause more than does the man or woman who professes to love it, but in their actions lie. Is the name of the dear Redeemer precious to you? Would you see the kingdoms of the world become the Kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ? Do you wish to see the proud man humbled and the mighty abased? Do you long for the souls of perishing sinners and are you desirous to win them and save their souls from everlasting burning? Would you prevent their fall into the regions of the damned? Is it your desire that Christ should see the travail of His soul and be abundantly satisfied? Does your heart yearn over your fellow immortals? Do you long to see them forgiven? Then be consistent with your religion. Walk *before God* in the land of the living. Behave as an elect man or woman should do! Remember what manner of people we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness. This is the best way to convert the world. Yes, such conduct would do more than even the efforts of missio-

nary societies, excellent as they are. Let but men see that our conduct is superior to others, then they will believe there is something in our religion. But if they see us quite the contrary to what we avow, what will they say? "These religious people are no better than others! Why should we go among them?" And they say quite rightly. It is but common sense judgment. Ah, my Friends, if you love religion, for her own sake be consistent and walk in the love of God. Follow Christ Jesus!

Then, to put it into the strongest form I can, let me say, for *Christ's sake*, endeavor to be like He. Oh, could I fetch the dying Jesus here and let Him speak to you! My own tongue is tied this morning, but I would make His blood, His tears and His wounds speak. Poor dumb mouths, I bid each of them plead in His behalf. How would Jesus, standing here, show you His hands this morning! "My Friends," He would say, "behold Me! These hands were pierced for you. And look here at this, My side. It was opened as the fountain of your salvation. See My feet. There entered the cruel nails. Each of these bones were dislocated for your sake. These eyes gushed with torrents of tears. This head was crowned with thorns. These cheeks were smitten. This hair was plucked. My body become the center and focus of agony. I hung quivering in the burning sun. And all for you, My people—will you not love Me now? I bid you be like I am. Is there any fault in Me? Oh, no. You believe that I am fairer than ten thousand fairs and lovelier than ten thousand loves. Have I injured you? Have I not rather done all for your salvation? And do I not sit at My Father's Throne, even now, interceding on your behalf? If you love Me"—Christian, hear that word, let the sweet syllables ring forever in your ears, like the prolonged sounding of silver-toned bells—"if you love Me, if you love Me, keep My Commandments." Oh, Christian, let that, "if," be put to you this morning. "If you love Me." Glorious Redeemer! Is it an, "if," at all? You precious, bleeding Lamb, can there be an, "if"? What? When I see Your blood gushing from You, is it an, "if"? Yes, I weep to say it is an, "if." Often my thoughts make it, "if," and often my words make it, "if." But yet I think my soul feels it is not, "if," either—

***"Not to my eyes is light so dear,  
Nor friendship half so sweet."***

"Yes, I love You, I know that I love You! Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You," the Christian can say. "Well then" says Jesus, looking down with a glance of affectionate approbation, "*since you love Me, keep My Commandments.*" O Beloved, what mightier reason can I give than this? It is the argument of love and affection. Be like Christ, since gratitude demands *obedience*—and so shall the world know that you have been with Jesus!

**IV.** Ah, then you wept and I perceive you felt the force of pity and some of you are inquiring, "HOW CAN I IMITATE HIM? It is my business, then, before you depart, to tell you how you can become transformed into the image of Christ.

In the first place, then, my beloved Friends, in answer to your inquiry, let me say, you must *know* Christ as your Redeemer before you can follow Him as your Exemplar. Much is said about the example of Jesus and we scarcely find a man now who does not believe that our Lord was an excellent and holy Man, much to be admired. But excellent as His example, it would be impossible to imitate it had He not also been our Sacrifice! Do you, this morning, know that His blood was shed for you? Can you join with me in this verse—

***“O the sweet wonders of that Cross  
Where God, the Savior, loved and died!  
Her noblest life my spirit draws,  
From His dear wounds and bleeding side.”***

If so, you are on a fair way to imitate Christ. But do not seek to copy Him until you are bathed in the fountain filled with blood drawn from His veins. You cannot mold your life to His pattern until you have had His Spirit, till you have been clothed in His righteousness! “Well,” say some, “we have proceeded so far, what shall we do next? We know we have an interest in Him but we are still sensible of manifold deficiencies.” Next then, let me entreat you to study Christ’s Character. This poor Bible is become an almost obsolete book, even with some Christians. There are so many magazines, periodicals and such like ephemeral productions that we are in danger of neglecting to search the Scriptures. Christian, would you know your Master? Look at Him! There is a wondrous power about the Character of Christ, for the more you regard it, the more you will be conformed to it. I view myself in the mirror—I go away and forget what I was! I behold Christ and I become like Christ. Look at Him, then. Study Him in the Evangelists, studiously examine His character. “But,” you say, “we have done that and we have proceeded but little farther.” Then, in the next place, correct your poor copy every day. At night, try and recount all the actions of the previous 24 hours, scrupulously putting them under review. When I have proof sheets sent to me of any of my writings, I have to make the corrections in the margin. I might read them over 50 times and the printers would still put in the errors if I did not mark them. So must you do if you find anything faulty. At night make a mark in the margin that you may know where the fault is and tomorrow you may amend it. Do this, day after day, continually, noting your faults one by one so that you may better avoid them. It was a maxim of the old philosophers that three times in the day we should go over our actions. So let us do. Let us not be forgetful. Let us rather examine ourselves each night and see wherein we have done amiss, that we may reform our lives.

Lastly, as the best advice I can give, seek more of the Spirit of God, for this is the way to become Christ-like. Vain are all your attempts to be like He till you have sought His Spirit. Take the cold iron and attempt to weld it, if you can, into a certain shape. How fruitless the effort! Lay it on

the anvil, seize the blacksmith's hammer with all your might. Let blow after blow fall upon it and you shall have done nothing. Twist it, turn it, use all your implements, but you shall not be able to fashion it as you would. But put it in the fire, let it be softened and made malleable—then lay it on the anvil—and each stroke shall have a mighty effect, so that you may fashion it into any form you may desire. So take your heart, not cold as it is, not stony as it is by nature, but put it into the furnace. There let it be molten and after that it can be turned like wax to the seal and fashioned into the image of Jesus Christ!

Oh my Brothers and Sisters, what can I now say to enforce my text but that if you are like Christ on earth, you shall be like He is in Heaven! If by the power of the Spirit you become followers of Jesus, you shall enter Glory. For at Heaven's gate there sits an angel who admits no one who has not the same features as our adorable Lord. There comes a man with a crown upon his head. "Yes," he says, "you have a crown, it is true, but crowns are not the medium of access here." Another approaches dressed in robes of state and the gown of learning. "Yes," says the angel, "it may be good, but gowns and learning are not the marks that shall admit you here." Another advances, fair, beautiful and comely. "Yes," says the angel "that might please on earth, but beauty is not needed here." There comes up another who is heralded by fame and prefaced by the blast of the clamor of mankind. But the angel says, "It is well with man, but you have no right to enter here." Then there appears another—poor he may have been, illiterate he may have been—but the angel, as he looks at him, smiles and says, "It is Christ, again, a second edition of Jesus Christ is there. Come in, come in. Eternal glory you shall win. You are like Christ in Heaven. You shall sit because you are like He is." Oh, to be like Christ is to enter Heaven! But to be unlike Christ is to descend to Hell. Likes shall be gathered together at last, tares with tares, wheat with wheat. If you have sinned with Adam and have died, you shall lie with the spiritually dead forever, unless you rise in Christ to newness of life! Then shall we live with Him throughout eternity. Wheat with wheat, tares with tares. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked—whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." Go away with this one thought, then, my Brothers and Sisters, that you can test yourselves by Christ. If you are like Christ, you are of Christ and shall be with Christ! If you are unlike He is, you have no portion in the great inheritance. May my poor discourse help to fan the floor and reveal the chaff. Yes, may it lead many of you to seek to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, to the praise of His Grace. And to Him be all honor given! Amen.

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

# THE HOLY CHILD, JESUS

## NO. 545

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 20, 1863,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“That signs and wonders may be done by the name of  
Your holy Child, Jesus.”  
Acts 4:30.*

THE opposition of the world is often a very great blessing to the Church. If it is met by holy boldness, it is sure to yield a glorious triumph for the servants of God. Sanctified by the Holy Spirit, out of the eater comes forth honey, for it becomes an incentive to greater zeal. Now that the enemy is determined to conquer, the Church will be resolved to hold its own. Pressure from without drives the members of the Church together and so promotes holy love. And when love and zeal come together, then there is such a blessed unity of action and such a power in every effort that great success must follow. Woe unto the world when it persecutes the Church, for it kicks with its naked foot against the pricks! It stirs up a nest of hornets about its own ears! Yes, it provokes the Lion of the tribe of Judah to spring upon His enemies.

Our text is a portion of an Apostolic song which celebrated the release of Peter and John and the confusion of the priests and scribes. Every persecution shall yield songs of victory for the people of God. There is one sweet result which always flows from the opposition of the world, namely, that it draws true disciples nearer to their Master. You will perceive that they sing concerning the birth and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—the Lord is the theme of their grateful song. The title by which they salute Him, “Your holy Child, Jesus,” is most appropriate to their case. The history of the Church is Christ’s life written out in length.

Our Lord enters upon the world a holy Child—when the Church begins her history, she is as a holy child, too, and therefore rejoices in the childhood of her gracious Lord. How precious is it to see Jesus as made in all points like His people, and how rapturous for His people to see their Redeemer’s features drawn by the pencil of fellowship in themselves. Trial is often sanctified to this noble end. Let the world oppress the Church. Let the members of that Church be thoroughly weaned from any other ground of comfort. Let the Lord Jesus be their only rock and refuge and they will soon perceive analogies in the history of Christ beautifully explaining their own—analogies which they never would have discovered except in the glare of the furnace.

In the chapter before us, the Apostles are thrown back upon the Person of Jesus for comfort, and they revel in the thought of His being a child, because they discover in this His likeness to the Church, which, in its infancy, the enemy sought to destroy, even as Herod sought to slay the newborn King of the Jews.

Brethren, whenever we endure adversities, or tribulations, or distresses, it is ours to turn to Christ and consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. For we may rest assured that the black finger of our distresses will often point out beauties in the Person of Immanuel up to now unseen. There is a certain spot from which alone each glorious trait in the Savior's Character can be seen—and many of our most painful positions are ordained for us in order that we may, from their vantage ground, behold the Lamb of God.

Our subject this morning may, perhaps, be suitable to the experience of some. May the Lord make it useful to all. Taking the text as we find it, we shall, first of all, meditate upon *the humanity of Christ as here declared*. Secondly, we shall *view it as here described*—"A holy Child." And thirdly, we shall then *behold it in the glory which surrounds it*—signs and wonders are worked by the name of the holy Child, Jesus.

**I.** First, then, dear Friends, may our hearts be enlightened to see, as the Apostles did, the beauty and excellence of THE REAL HUMANITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST.

While we always contend that Christ is God, very God of very God, let us never lose the firm conviction He is most certainly and truly a Man. He is not a God humanized, nor yet a human being deified. But as to His Godhead, pure Godhead, equal and co-eternal with the Father. As to His Manhood, perfect Manhood—made in all respects like unto the rest of mankind, sin alone excepted. His humanity was real, *for He was born*. He lay hidden in the virgin's womb, and in due time was born into a world of suffering. The gate by which we enter upon the first life, He also passed through.

He was not created, nor transformed, but His humanity was begotten and born. As He was born, *so in the circumstances of His birth*, He is completely Human. He is as weak and feeble as any other babe. He is not even royal, but Human. Those who were born in marble halls of old were wrapped in purple garments and were thought by the vulgar to be a superior race. But this Babe is wrapped in swaddling cloths and has a manger for His cradle—that the true Humanity of His Being may come out.

More than a Man—He is a Prince of the House of David. He knows the woes of a peasant's child. As He grows up, the very *growth* shows how completely Human He is. He does not spring into full manhood at once, but He grows in stature and in favor both with God and man. When He reaches man's estate, He gets the common stamp of manhood upon His brow. "In the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread" is the common heritage of us all and He receives no better. The carpenter's shop must witness to the toils of a Savior, and when He becomes the Preacher and the Prophet, still we read such significant words as these—"Jesus, being weary, sat thus on the well."

We find Him needing to betake Himself to rest in *sleep*. He slumbers at the stern of the vessel when it is tossed in the midst of the tempest. Brethren, if *sorrow* is the mark of real manhood, and, "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward," certainly Jesus Christ has the true evidence of being a Man. If to hunger and to thirst are signs that He was no shadow, and His manhood no fiction, you have these. If to associate with

His fellow men and eat and drink as they did will be proof to your mind that He was none other than a Man—see Him sitting at a feast one day—at another time He graces a marriage supper.

And on another occasion He is hungry and “has not where to lay His head.” Since the day when the prince of the power of the air obtained dominion in this world, men are *tempted* and He, though He is born pure and holy, must not be delivered from temptation—

***“The desert His temptation knew  
His conflict and His victory, too.”***

The garden marked the bloody sweat as it started from every pore while He endured the agony of conflict with the prince of this world.

If, since we have fallen and must endure temptation, we have need to *pray*, so had He—

***“Cold mountains and the midnight air  
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer.”***

Strong crying and tears go up to Heaven mingled with His pleas and entreaties! What clearer proof could we have of His being Man of the substance of His mother, and man like ourselves, than this, that He was heard in that He feared? There appeared unto Him an angel strengthening Him. To whom but *men* are angels ministering spirits?

Brethren, we have never discovered the weakness of our manhood more than when God has deserted us. When the spiritual consolations which comforted us have been withdrawn and the light of God’s face has been hidden from us, then we have said, “I am a worm and no man.” And out of the dust and ashes of human weakness have we cried unto the most high God. Let, “Eloi! Eloi! lama sabachthani” assure you that Christ has felt the same. Follow man wherever you will, and you find the footprints of the Son of Mary. Go after man where you will, into scenes of sorrow of every hue, and you shall find traces of Jesus’ pilgrimage there. You shall find in whatever struggle and conflict of which man is capable, the Captain of our salvation has had a share.

Leave out sin and Christ is the perfect picture of humanity. Simple as the truth is and lying as it does at the very basis of our Christianity, yet let us not despise it, but try to get a personal grip of it if we can. Jesus, my Mediator, is a Man—“Immanuel, God with us.” He is a Child born. He is better than that, for “unto *us* a Child is born, unto *us* a Son is given.” He is to us a Brother. He is bone of our bone today. As a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves unto his wife and they, two, become one flesh, so has He left the Glory of His Father’s house and become one flesh with His people. Flesh and bone, and blood and heart, that may ache and suffer, and be broken and be bruised, yes, and may die—such is Jesus.

For herein He completes the picture. As the whole human race must yield its neck to the great iron-crowned monarch, so must Christ Himself say, “Into Your hands I commend My spirit, Father.” He, too, must yield up the ghost. Oh, Christian, see your nearness to Him and be glad this morning! Oh, Sinner, see His nearness to you! Come to Him with confidence, for in body and soul He is completely Human. Having thus insisted upon the Humanity of Christ, let us gather a few reflections from it. There

are a thousand things which it indicates, but as the garden is too full of flowers for us to bring them all, we have gathered but a handful.

As the first meditation, let us marvel at His *condescension*. It is the greatest miracle that was ever heard or read of, that, “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” Cyprian well said, “I do not wonder at any miracle, but I do marvel at this, which is a miracle among miracles, that God should become Man.” That God should make a creature out of nothing is certainly a marvelous manifestation of power, but that God should enter into that creature and should take it into intimate union with His own Nature—this is the strangest of all acts of condescending love!

Indeed, so marvelous is it, that in all the heathen mythologies—though imagination has there played strange freaks—in their theology we do find instances of the gods appearing in the likeness of men—yet never do we find anything like the hypostatical union of the two natures in the Person of Christ. Human wisdom in its most happy moments has never risen to anything like the thought of Deity espousing manhood, that man might be redeemed. To you and to me the marvel lies in the motive which prompted the Incarnation. What could it have been that brought Immanuel to such a stoop as this? What unrivalled, indescribable, unutterable love was this that made Him leave His Father’s Glory, the adoration of angels, and all the hallowed joy of Heaven, that He might be made a Man like ourselves, to suffer, to bleed, to die?

“He was seen of angels,” says the Apostle, and this was a great wonder, for the angels had worshipped at His Throne! But their created eyes could not bear to look upon the brightness of His Person—they veiled their faces with their wings when they cried “Holy! Holy! Holy!” And yet, angels saw the Son of God lying in a manger! They saw the Lord of All wrestling with a fallen spirit in the wilderness! They saw the Prince of Peace hanging upon the tree on Calvary! “Seen of angels” was one of the wonders concerning the Incarnation of Christ.

But that He should be seen of *men*? No, that He should be the Associate of the worst of men. That He should be called the Friend of publicans and sinners, so perfectly incarnating Himself and condescending so low that He comes to the very lowest state of humanity—all this, my Brothers and Sisters, is condescension concerning which words fail me. A prince who puts aside his crown and clothes himself with beggar’s rags to investigate the miseries of his country is but a worm condescending to his fellow worm. An angel that should lay aside his beauty and become decrepit and lame and walk the streets in pain and poverty to bless the race of man were nothing, for this were but a creature humbling himself to creatures a little lower than himself.

But here is the *Creator* taking the creature into union with Himself! The Immortal becoming *mortal*, the Infinite an *infant*, the Omnipotent taking weakness, even human weakness into union with His own Person! We may truly say of Jesus that He was weak as the dust and yet as mighty as the Eternal God. He was subject to suffering and yet God over all, blessed forever. O the depth of the love of Jesus!

Let us reflect upon another theme. *See the fitness of Christ for His work!* He is perfect Man—He could not be a Priest if He were not. But now, “He

can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, seeing He was tempted in all points like as we are." Being not ashamed to call us Brothers and Sisters, He can compassionate the ignorant and those who are out of the way. O Brothers and Sisters, if He were not Man, He could not have been our Substitute. Man sinned and man must pay the penalty—He must be *perfect* Man to make Atonement. If He were not Man, His righteousness would not have availed us, for while we want a Divine righteousness to cover the infiniteness of God's demands, we want a righteousness which is *human*, for it is that which the Law requires. O Soul, if you are in sadness and sickness today, let your arms embrace the Man Christ Jesus. Feel in the fact that He is your Brother how suitable is such a Savior to your poverty, your weakness and your sin.

Let us think, too, of another thought. Inasmuch as Christ is Man, think of *His near relationship and union to His people*. He is no stranger of whom we speak—He is our Brother—no, more than that, He has become our Head. Not a Head of gold and feet of clay, or limbs of baser metal. But as we are, so was He, that as He is, so might we be. It is Manhood which is at the Head of the Church, as it is manhood which constitutes the members. Union to Jesus is, methinks, the sweetest doctrine in Revelation. There are other doctrines which possess a more transcendent grandeur, but the doctrine of union is the quintessence of all delights. What is Heaven but union to Christ realized? And what shall be the foretaste of Heaven but union to Christ believed? As you see Him *then* completely—such as you are—know, Christian, how near, how dear, how intimately one with Him you are and be glad this day!

Let me give you another flower. *See the glory of manhood now, restored!* Man was but a little lower than the angels and had dominion over the fowl of the air and over the fish of the sea. That royalty he lost. The crown was taken from his head by the hand of sin and the beauty of the image of God was dashed by his rebellion. But all this is given back to us. We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor. And at this day all things are put under Him, waiting, as He does, and expecting the time when all His enemies shall be beneath His feet and the last enemy, Death, shall be destroyed by man—by the very Man whom he boasted that he had destroyed.

It is our nature, Brothers and Sisters, Jesus in our manhood, who is now Lord of Providence. It is our nature which has hanging at its girdle the sovereign keys of Heaven and earth and Hell. It is our nature which sits upon the Throne of God at this very day. No angel ever sat upon God's Throne, but a Man has done it and is doing it now! Of no angel was it ever said, "You shall be King of kings and Lord of lords, they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before You, and Your enemies shall lick the dust." But this *is* said of a Man. It is the *Man* who shall judge the world in righteousness. The Man who shall distribute crowns of reward—the Man who shall denounce, "Depart, you cursed."

The Man, the thunder of whose words shall make Hell shrink with fright. Oh, how glorious is renovated manhood! What an honor it is, my Brothers and Sisters, to be man, not of the fallen first Adam, but man

made in the image in the second Adam! Let us, with all our weaknesses and infirmities and imperfections yet bless and praise God, who made us what we are by His Divine Grace, for Man, in the Person of Christ, is second only to God—no, is in such union with God, that he cannot be nearer to Him.

When we think of the true and proper Manhood of Christ, ought we not to rejoice that *a blessed channel is opened by which God's mercy can come to us?* “How can God reach man?” was once the question. But now, Brothers and Sisters, there is another question—“How can God refuse to bless those men who are in Christ? “The everlasting Father must bless His Only-Begotten Son and in blessing Him He has blessed a *Man*, and that Man, having all the elect in His loins, they are necessarily all blessed in Him. Look upon the Person of Christ as that of a representative individual. Whatever Christ is, all His elect are, just as whatever Adam was all men who were in him became.

If Adam fell, all manhood fell. If Christ stands and is honored and glorified, then all who are in Christ—that is the goodly fellowship of His elect—are all blessed in Him. Now it is utterly impossible but that God should bless Jesus Christ, for Jesus Christ is forever One with God and His Manhood is also One with Godhead. As an old writer observes, “The nearest union that we know of is the union between the Humanity and the Divinity in the Person of Christ. That of the three Persons in the Trinity may rather be called a unity than a *union*—but this is the closest union we know of—the union between Humanity and Deity in Christ.”

So complete is it that you cannot think of Christ aright as a Man apart from God, nor as God apart from Man. The very idea of Christ has in it the two Natures and it is a clear impossibility that the Godhead should not impart of its blessedness to the Manhood. And that Manhood being thus blessed, every elect soul is necessarily blessed, also. O see what a channel is thus opened! A channel through which the stream cannot but flow! A golden pipe through which Divine Grace cannot but come! The laws of nature might be reversed, but not the Laws of God's Nature and it is a Law of God's Nature that in the Person of Christ the Deity must bless the Manhood.

And that Manhood being blessed, it is another Law that elect manhood must be blessed, since that elect manhood is forever indissolubly bound up with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. See what a deep and broad river is here opened for us, and what a fullness there is in that river—for all the fullness of the Deity dwells in Christ and the fullness of that Deity thus flows to man.

See again, Beloved, *what a door of access is thus opened between us and God!* I am a man. Christ is a Man. I come to the Man Christ Jesus—no I have not even to do that—I am *in* the Man Christ. If I am a Believer, I am a portion of Him. Well, being a portion of the Man Christ and God being united with Him, I am very near unto God. I have such nearness of access, then, to God, that whatever may be my desires and my prayers, I have no need to climb to Heaven nor to descend into the depth in order to obtain them. For God's ear must be near to me inasmuch as God is in Christ, and my soul being in Christ I am very, very near to God.

Christ's Body is the veil that hangs before the majesty of God. That veil was rent. And whoever by a living faith knows how to come through the rent Body of the Man, Christ, comes at once into the Presence of God. Such communion, such sacred commerce—such blessed interchanges between mankind and God could never have taken place in any other plan. That ladder which Jacob saw was but a faint and dreamy picture of this. This is no ladder, but the access is such as though God, who was at the top of Jacob's ladder, had come down to Jacob as he lay sleeping there. There is no ladder wanted now—the Person of Christ brings God to man—brings man to God in closer contact than the ladder can ever picture. Brethren, let us come boldly unto the Throne of the heavenly Grace, to obtain Grace to help in every time of need.

Another thing I cannot leave out is this—Beloved, do see it, do see it—*how safe we are!* Our soul's estate was once put in the hands of Adam—he was a fallible man—how unsafe our salvation was then! The salvation of every Believer now is in the hand of a Man. It is the Man Christ Jesus! And what a Man! Can He fail? Can He sin? Can He fall? O no, Beloved, for the Deity is in intimate union with the manhood and the Man Christ Jesus, since He can never sin, can never fall and is therefore a sure foundation for the perpetual salvation of all the elect. When the angels were all in Heaven, before the fall of Satan, methinks they could never be perfectly happy because they knew that if they sinned they would perish. And this surely would mar their bliss—because there was a fear of their losing all their glory.

But, Beloved, our salvation does not rest with ourselves. We may have all the joy of perfect security because it rests in the hands of One who cannot by any possibility sin. One who cannot err, cannot fail, but who stands fast forever, from everlasting to everlasting God. See then, the comfort and security of God's people! But, indeed, there are so many sheaves in this field of Incarnation that I cannot possibly unbind them all for you. You must come and pluck an ear or two for yourselves and rub them in your hands on this Sunday, that your hunger may be relieved.

Beloved, do you not see that *here is your adoption?* You become sons of God because Christ becomes a son of man. Do you not perceive that *here is your acceptance?* The Man, Christ, is accepted and you, since He stands for you, are accepted in Him. No, there is not a mercy in the Covenant, there is not a single stream of blessing which flows to the Believer that does not spring from the fact that Christ is to be called the "holy Child Jesus," being most certainly and properly a Man. Thus much, then, upon the first point.

**II.** Now let us VIEW THE HUMANITY AS IT IS HERE DESCRIBED. The words teach it to us—*holy Child*. Christ's Humanity was *perfectly holy*. Upon this doctrine you are well established—but you may well wonder that Jesus was always holy. He is *conceived* of a woman and yet no sort of sin comes from His birth. "That holy Thing which is born of you shall be called the Son of God." He is *educated* in the midst of sinful persons. It could not be otherwise, for there were none on earth that could be called good—all having become unprofitable—and although residing in the midst of sinners, in Him is no taint or trace of sin.

He *goes into the world*, and as a physician must mingle with the sick, so He is found in the very worst of society. The harlot may speak to Him and from the publican He turns not away. Yet from none of these did He receive any corrupt influence. He is *tempted* and it is usually supposed that a man can scarcely be tempted, even should he overcome the temptation, without receiving some injury to his innocence. But the prince of this world came and had nothing in Christ—his fiery darts fell upon the Nature of Christ as upon water and were quenched at once. Satan was but as one who should whip the sea. He left no mark upon the perfect holiness of Christ.

*Imputation of sin* would be the nearest approach to making our Lord a sinner. But let it ever be remembered that though Jehovah made Him to be sin *for us*, yet He knew no sin. The world's sin was put upon the shoulders of Christ and yet He had no sin for all that. The imputation was accomplished in such a manner that it did not in any sense or in any degree derogate from His title to perfect holiness. I have read sermons upon the imputation of sin to Christ which have left painful impressions upon my mind, because I remember to have met with the expression that Christ was the greatest sinner that ever lived, because He stood in the place of millions of sinners.

Now it is true that Jesus took the sinner's place, but yet He never was a sinner, nor ever can in any sense be thought of as unholy. The great Redeemer stood perfect, pure, spotless. Even in the conflict, when all the powers of Hell were let loose against Him and when *God Himself had withdrawn*—that withdrawal of God from us would have hardened our hearts—but it did not harden His heart. The taking away of God's Grace from us is the ruin of our graces. But He had a wellspring of Divine Grace within Himself and His purity lived on when God had withdrawn from Him. From the first dawn of His humanity in the womb to the time when He is laid in the new tomb, He is "holy."

The next word is one that requires most attention. Why is Christ called a "holy Child"? We can understand His being called a Child while He was so, but why a "holy Child" now that He is ascended up on High? Why, dear Friends, because the Character of Christ is more aptly pictured by that of a child than that of a man! If you conceive of a perfectly holy Child, you have, then, before you a representation of Christ. There is that in childhood, in holy childhood, which you cannot find even in holy manhood. You note in childhood its *simplicity*—the absence of all cunning.

We dare not in manhood usually wear our heart upon our sleeve as children do. We have lost the trustfulness of our youth and are upon our guard in society. We have learned by very painful experience to suspect others and we walk among our fellow men often with our heart locked up with many locks, thinking that when thieves are abroad, good housekeepers must not leave the door open. We have to practice the wisdom of serpents, as well as the harmlessness of doves.

But a child is perfectly guileless. It prattles out its little heart. It has no caution or reserve. It cannot scheme, for it cannot go round about with the skillful words of the politician. It knows not how to spin the web of sophistry. It is plain, transparent, and you see through it. Now such was

Christ. Not foolish, for there is much difference between simplicity and folly. He was never foolish. They who mistook Him for such and sought to entrap Him soon discovered that the Child was a wise Child. Still He is ever a Child—He tells His heart out everywhere. He eats, He drinks like other men. They call Him a drunken man and a wine-bibber. Does He, then, from prudential motives, cease to eat and drink as other men? O no! He is quite a Child! In everything that He does there is an artless simplicity. You see through Him and you can trust Him, because there is a trustfulness about His whole Nature. He knows what is in man, yet He does not act with suspicion towards men, but ever with simplicity.

In a child we expect to see much *humbleness*. There is a humbleness of association. There is a little child yonder—it is a king's daughter and here is another little child belonging to a gypsy woman. Leave the two in a room and see if they will not be at play together in five minutes. If it had been the queen and the gypsy woman, they would have sat as far apart as possible. O no! They do not associate together at all! Distinctions of rank and all that kind of thing they studiously maintain and, therefore, remain isolated. But the two children will be down on the floor together and if there happens to be some little heap of dust or a few pieces of broken crock, the princess will find in them almost as much mirth as the beggar woman's child. Here is humbleness of mind.

So with Christ—He is King of kings and Prince of the house of David—yet He is always with the poor and needy, and sympathizes with them just as heartily as though He were altogether such as they were. You do not find little children sitting down and planning how they shall win crowns—in what way they shall obtain popularity or applause. O no! They are quite satisfied to do their father's will and live on his smile. It is so with Christ. What a childlike act that was—when they would have made Him a king, He went and hid Himself! And how childlike does He seem when He rides upon the colt, the foal of an ass, through the streets of Jerusalem and must have the mother ass there, too, lest either of the two creatures should be distressed. He is the Friend of the brute creation as well as of man in general—so thoughtful and so kind, so simple, so humble in all that He does.

We picture a holy Child as being all *obedient*. You have but to say to it, "Do this," and it does it. It asks no questions. Was it not so with Jesus His whole life long? "My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me." "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" So, again, we look in holy children for a *forgiving temper*. We know that sometimes the blood comes up in the little face and a little angry quarrel ensues, but it is soon over and with their arms about each other's neck, and many a loving kiss, it is soon made up again by the little ones. Well, with Jesus this characteristic of childhood is carried out to the fullest extent, for His latest words are, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Ah, holy Child! No fire from Heaven do You call, like John. No denunciations come from Your lips against sinners. "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more," says He to the woman taken in adultery. He is the child all through. Scripture calls Him the Man-Child and what if we call

Him the great Child-Man? He was a Child when He had become a Man. He never had childish things to put away in the sense in which the Apostle speaks of it, for as to all the folly and the littleness and giddiness of youth, Christ knew not these. He knew everything that is beautiful, and lovely and just, in the virgin innocence of a pure and holy Child—such as children would have been, if their parents had not fallen. All this you see in the Person of Christ Jesus.

Beloved, I think there is something very sweet in this picture of Christ's Humanity, because we are none of us afraid to approach a child. Men that are childlike men—we are never afraid of. You know certain people in the world—you could not tell your trouble to them. They have a haughty manner. They look down upon you. You feel that you can never reach their hearts. There are certain others with an open and honest face and you instinctively feel, "There, I can tell that man anything. I know I can. If I were in any kind of distress, or trouble, I would go to him—I know he would help me if he could." Well, that is because such a man has a degree of childlikeness about him.

Now in the Person of Christ there is all this carried out to the fullest degree. Come, then, and tell Jesus everything. Whatever your trouble or difficulty may be, stand not back through shame or fear. Will you fear Immanuel, or dread the Lamb of God? Will you be afraid of a holy Child? No, rather come, and like Simeon, take Him in your arms and own Him as your consolation and your trust. I would I could get a hold this morning on those timid ones who always say, "I am afraid of Jesus." Why, dear Friends, how can you talk so? You do Him wrong. You know Him not, or you would not thus speak. This is the unkindest cut of all, to think that He is unwilling to forgive. Dying for you, living as a holy Child for you—O can it be, can it be possible that He should be hard to forgive and receive you?

Thinking of a holy child while I looked through this verse, I turned to Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe's story of Eva and little Topsy. She gives a graphic picture there of a holy child, indeed. There is the Law in the person of Miss Ophelia—she whips the child, but the more she whips her, the worse she is, she gets no further than, "I's so wicked, I can't help it. I's so wicked." That is all the Law can do. It can only make a man feel he is "so wicked," that he cannot help it, and he goes on sinning. But what a picture is that when St. Clair draws the curtain and sees the two little children sitting with their cheeks together.

Eva says, "What does make you so bad, Topsy? Why won't you try and be good? Don't you love *anybody*, Topsy?" "Don't no nothing 'bout love. I loves candy and sich, that's all," said Topsy. "But you love your father and mother?" "Never had none, you know. I telled you that, Miss Eva." "Oh, I know," said Eva sadly, "but hadn't you any brother, or sister, or aunt, or—" "No, none of 'em—never had nothing nor nobody." "But, Topsy, if you'd only try to be good, you might." "Couldn't never be nothin' but a Nigger, if I was ever so good," said Topsy.

"O Topsy, poor child, *I love you!*" said Eva, with a sudden burst of feeling. And laying her little thin white hand on Topsy's shoulder, she said, "I love you because you haven't had any father, or mother, or friends—

because you've been a poor, abused child! I love you and I want you to be good. I am very unwell, Topsy, and I think I shan't live a great while. And it really grieves me to have you be so naughty. I wish you would try to be good for my sake. It's only a little while I shall be with you." The round, keen eyes of the black child were overcast with tears—large, bright drops rolled heavily down, one by one, and fell on the little white hand.

Yes, in that moment, a ray of real belief, a ray of heavenly love had penetrated the darkness of her heathen soul! She laid her head down between her knees, and wept and sobbed—while the beautiful child, bending over her, looked like the picture of some bright angel stooping to reclaim a sinner. Now something like this, only in a far nobler style, Jesus Christ has behaved towards us. He sees us lost and ruined, wicked—hopelessly wicked—and He comes as a holy Child and sits down by our ruined humanity. And He says, "I love you—I love you because you are so lost, so ruined, so hopelessly ruined—because I know the dreadful doom into which you will fall. There is nothing in you that makes Me loves you, but I do love you. I cannot bear to see you die like this. I would sooner die than you should remain a sinner. I would sooner die and bear My Father's wrath for you, than that you should be a sinner and disobedient to Him."

The holy Child sits down by you this morning and weeps for you. Will you grieve Immanuel? Will you break the heart of Jesus, your soul's Lover? Oh, will you open His wounds afresh and crucify Him again? If you would not, then trust Him now—fly to Him—give yourselves up to Him. He waits to be gracious to you. His loving arms are wide open to receive you. "Whosoever will," says He, "let him come and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Such is the coming of the "holy Child Jesus."

**III.** To conclude—it seems that the name of this holy Child is to work great wonders. Only for one second let us turn aside and behold THE GLORY OF HIS HUMANITY. Although Christ was a Man, all the powers of nature knew their Master and crouched at His feet. He could command the sea or the boisterous wind—diseases, the myrmidons of death, and Death their prince, all owned allegiance to Him who is immortality and life. After His resurrection He endowed His disciples with His own power and more than His own power—"For greater works than these shall you do, because I go unto My Father."

The name of Jesus was uttered, uttered by feeble men—and devils fled, dumb mouths began to sing, lame men leaped like a hart and the blind began to see—no, in several instances the grave, itself, yielded up its prey when the name of Jesus sounded through its hollow vaults! The age of miracles passed off, it was well it should. Miracles are but the cradle in which the man-child, the Church, must be rocked. When the Church became strong enough to stand alone, she left her swaddling bands behind her. But the name of Jesus has not less power today because no risen dead, no opened eyes follow in our train.

At this hour, dead souls hear the voice of God and live. At this moment, spiritual eyesight is restored—hearts that were stone are turned to flesh—and tongues that were ready enough at cursing begin to sing. The miracles of the spirit world are infinitely greater than those of the natural. It is little to turn a stone into bread, but it is much to turn a stony heart into

flesh. It is comparatively little to open a blind eye, but it is Divine, indeed, to enlighten the understanding and illuminate the dark heart. The name of Jesus is just as mighty in this Tabernacle, today, as it was on the lips of Paul upon Mars Hill, or when he stood in his own hired house in Rome.

Do not say that you entertain a doubt concerning it. Look around and see the proofs. O Brothers and Sisters, you and I have been the willing trophies of the power of that great name in this House, or in the Surrey Music Hall and elsewhere, where that name was proclaimed! We received a broken heart—we who once had hearts hard as adamant! There the tears of repentance began to flow. There the griefs, the heavy glooms of our spirit were scattered by the Sun of Righteousness. If we have been made to walk in holiness, this is one of the signs and wonders of His name. If drunkenness and lust have been shaken off, this, too, is to His praise.

If the demoniac, the man who was full of devilry, has been clothed and made to sit in his right mind at the feet of Jesus, this is another of the signs and wonders in this place—not only in this great chamber, but below stairs in our classes and in our Sunday schools, too, signs and wonders are worked by the name of the holy Child, Jesus. And in other places of worship in London, wherever Christ is lifted up—wherever His sacrifice is made the prominent theme—the dry bones in the valley come together—the Spirit breathes upon them and they live as an exceeding great army! We defy the whole world to show anything comparable to the power of Jesus' name!

There is more magic in it than ever was in Moses' rod. It is more mighty even than his voice, though he divided the Red Sea and brought water out of the rock. Brethren, let us spread His name. Let it be always on our tongues. Let us each, in our proper sphere, declare His glory and we shall see His kingdom come and His will shall be done on earth even as it is in Heaven. I wonder whether there is anyone here who will be a sign and wonder of the love of Christ! Do you wish to be? Ah, then, I hope you are. Do you wish to be? Then, the door is open. "Whosoever believes in Him is not condemned." One look at Jesus, and you are saved—a trustful casting of yourself on Him and you are delivered!

God enable you to do this now and you shall see in the change which is worked within you, an internal evidence of the majesty of Christ's Person, which shall never fail you. You shall be established by that which you feel within in so sure and certain a manner that the arguments of infidelity or deism shall never be able to shake you off the Rock. May God grant this for His holy name's sake. Amen.

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# THE CHARGE OF THE ANGEL

## NO. 2032

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JULY 8, 1888,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.”*  
*Acts 5:19, 20.*

THE second persecution of the Church, in which all the Apostles were put into the common prison, was mainly brought about by the sect of the Sadducees. These, as you know, were the Broad School, the liberals, the advanced thinkers, the modern-thought people of the day. If you want a bitter sneer, a biting sarcasm, or a cruel action, I commend you to these large-minded gentlemen. They are liberal to everybody, except to those who hold the Truth of God—and for those they have a reserve of concentrated bitterness which far excels wormwood and gall.

They are so liberal to their brother errorists, that they have no tolerance to spare for evangelicals. We are expressly told that “the high priest, and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees) were filled with indignation.” That which had been done deserved their admiration, but received their indignation. Such gentlemen as these can be warm at a very short notice when the doctrine of the Cross is spreading and God the Holy Spirit is bearing witness with signs following. Let them display their indignation, it is according to their nature.

To them the only answer which God gave was spoken by His angel: “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.” Argument will be lost upon them—go on with your preaching. They have lost the faculty of believing—go and speak to the people. They are so given over to their doubts, that it is like rolling the stone of Sisyphus to persuade them to faith. They are so eaten up with objections, that to attempt to answer all the questions they raise would be as vain as the labor of filling a bottomless tub. Go on with your preaching, you Apostles—but address yourselves mainly to the people.

Extend as widely as possible the range of the Truth of God, and thus answer the opposition of its adversaries. It is better to evangelize than to controvert. The preaching of the Word of Life is the best antidote to the doctrine of death. Clearly enough, if they had known it and had been capable of seeing it, these blind Sadducees were answered at every point when the Apostles were brought out of prison and bore witness to their Lord.

Here was the creed of the Sadducees—they said that “there was no resurrection, neither angel, nor Spirit.” But these Apostles stood up and witnessed to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. What did they make of that? An angel had come from Heaven and had brought these Apostles out of prison. Then there were angels. As these Apostles were set

free while the sentries remained standing before the doors—and those doors were afterwards found fastened—if there were no Spirit, assuredly materialism had acted in a singular fashion.

Every item of their negative creed had been made to fall like Dagon before the ark. The Lord always arranges Red Seas for Pharaohs. All that the Apostles had to do was to go on with their preaching and this they did, for “daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”

This morning may we be profited while we consider our text and its surroundings. May He who spoke by His angel now speak to our hearts by His Spirit.

**I.** In reviewing the whole story which we read just now, from the seventeenth verse to the end of the chapter, my first thought is that THE AGENTS EMPLOYED FOR SPREADING THE GOSPEL ARE MEN, AND NOT ANGELS.

The angel of the Lord opened the prison door and set free the preachers, but might not be a preacher himself. He might give the ministers their charge, but he had no charge to preach himself. Surely the angel who brought them out of prison was quite able to have gone and proclaimed the Gospel, and so he might have brought many out of their prison spiritually. But no. It must not be. His commission permits him to say to the Apostles, “Go and speak to the people,” but it does not permit him to join in their testimony.

I think that almost with reluctance the angel of the Lord returned to his Master and left the chosen men to go upon their blessed errand. As our Lord took not on Him the nature of angels for man’s redemption, so neither does He employ the agency of angels for man’s conversion. I feel glad that in the preaching of the Everlasting Gospel angels are not our competitors, at this present time at any rate. “Unto the angels has He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.” They are ministering spirits but they have not received the Holy Spirit anointing them to the ministry of Christ.

This Divine choice of human instrumentality puts honor upon manhood. Those redeemed by the blood of Christ are men and their redemption from sin by power is to be instrumentally accomplished by men. The great fight which began in the Garden of Eden is to be waged by men even to the end. The conquest of the revolted world is to be achieved by men under the leadership of the all-glorious Son of Man. You see your calling, Brethren. I pray you, everyone, to preach the Gospel in your vocation—but specially would I plead for zeal with those whose very vocation it is to preach the Gospel.

What a vocation is ours! What can be more honorable? What more responsible? To rule empires is a trifle compared with speaking to the people all the words of this life. “Lord, what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?” You make him higher than the angels in this respect, that out of his mouth You have ordained strength because of Your enemies. Such honor have all the saints, for they may all either teach or preach Jesus Christ.

My dear Hearers, you may be yourselves grateful that this ministry is committed to men because it is a condescension to human weakness. Imperfect as human ministers are, we are better preachers to you than angels could be. We cannot sing with their celestial melody, nor charm you with their seraphic eloquence—but we have a sympathy with you which they cannot feel—seeing they are not compassed with infirmities, nor humbled by imperfections. We know your sins, your sorrows, your struggles. We know the roughness of the road you travel—for we, too, came in at the wicket-gate, and have floundered in the Slough of Despond, and scrambled up the Hill Difficulty.

We can have compassion and give direction learned by experience. I suppose an angel would command a very large congregation for a time. But after a while you would feel that there was something alien and distant about the manner of his teaching. You would be awed rather than comforted. A being altogether superior to yourselves would before long drive you to cry for your old minister—with lips of clay and heart of love. You would prefer our feeble pleadings to the more glorious but less brotherly address of an angel from Heaven.

God's use of the ministry of men is honorable to men and it is condescending to men. And surely it is a blow at Satanic pride. The Prince of the power of the air might have felt proud to contend with angels, finding in them foemen worthy of his steel. But when the Arch-enemy sees before him no combatant but a man sent of God, he feels like Goliath when he saw David—a youth and ruddy, approaching him with a sling and a stone. Disdaining such an adversary, I hear him cry, "Am I a dog, that You come to me with staves?"

Yes, Satan, you are no better than a dog and we come against you in the name of Jehovah of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom you have defied. By humble, truth-speaking, earnest men, the Lord turns the battle and routs the forces of error, that the old Serpent may still feel the foot of the Seed of the woman upon his head. He thought he had made an easy prey of man—but it shall be by man that the enemy shall be driven back to his infernal den with defeat. By man came death and by man came also the resurrection of the dead—which glorious fact is proclaimed by man, to the eternal shame of him that has the power of death, that is, the devil.

To work by men must bring special glory to God. The weaker the instrument, the more honor to the worker. I like to think whatever I may feel driven to believe from Scripture, that the great fight between good and evil will be so fought out that the Lord shall conquer by feeble men even to the end. The omnipotence of God will be glorified in the insignificance of the agents by whom He will achieve the everlasting triumph. Those first Apostles brought all the more glory to God because they came from the fishers' nets, and were called "unlearned and ignorant men."

The weakness which men despised compelled them to confess that the power which they wielded was Divine. The Spirit of God who spoke by them found in them no fancied wisdom to obstruct His impulses. If the Lord will graciously use us poor ministers to the end it will wonderfully illustrate His wisdom and power. Somebody once said that it proved the

Divinity of our holy religion that it survived ministers—and there was a good deal of truth in the remark. How I have wondered that this congregation has survived me! And I think we may wonder that as a whole the Gospel survives its advocates. We are poor tools. I do not refer to you, Brethren from America, but I mean all of us in England, and specially myself.

We are poor tools after all—and if God uses us to save sinners and sanctify saints, He must certainly have all the glory of it. Brethren, the Lord has used us, blessed be His name! He has used us—we should give the lie to manifest facts if we were to deny it. Brethren, the Lord *means* to use us. He has said, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

I cannot help adding that the employment of men as soul-winners gives a tender joy to the heart of Jesus. It pleases the Lord Jesus Christ that God should use men—for He Himself is a Man. God, as He is, blessed forever, yet is He most truly Man, delighting in humanity and pleased to see men called to a work of so much glory and honor. He loves to bless men and to see them made a blessing. He delights to see the many Brethren used in their measure in the same way as Himself, the First-born. The Lord Jesus must take great pleasure in the attempts of His servants to seek and to save souls—for they are learning to be shepherds like Himself.

When our King, Edward III, heard that the Black Prince was having a hard battle with the French, he smiled to think that his son was in a place where he could show his valor. When he was entreated to send reinforcements, he refused—for he wished his son to have the undivided honors of the day. The Lord Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, puts some of His chosen into places of great peril and He does not seem to send them all the help they could desire—in order that they may prove their faith and consecration and thus earn their spurs.

He takes a brotherly pleasure in the courage and faith which He Himself has worked in them. All the valor of Christ’s soldiers is given them by Himself and all that it achieves is to be attributed to Him. He finds joy in seeing them exercise their graces. Like a father delights to see his boy take prize after prize at the University, like a friend delights to see his friend elected to one honorable position after another, so does Jesus rejoice in the honors earned by His servants in the field of service. When we save a soul from death, Jesus, the Savior, rejoices in the deed. When we thus cover a multitude of sins, Jesus, the sin-bearer, sees of the travail of His soul.

The father in the parable was glad when his prodigal son was found—but he would have been more glad still had a brother found him. Our Lord Jesus desires to make us happy with that which makes Himself happy, and so He sends us out to win souls. All these are good reasons why the Lord should employ men and women to spread the Gospel rather than cherubim and seraphim. Dear Friends, do you not think that the angels must often wonder at us? When they see men eager upon politics and negligent of souls, are they not astonished? Do they never say, “We wish the great Lord would let us go and speak to perishing souls. We would speak with all our hearts”?

Do they not sometimes say to one another, "What are these men doing? Do they disdain their high calling? God has given to them the great privilege of preaching and teaching His holy Word but they do not care to do it. They speak as if they were half asleep. Where is their zeal for God, their love to men, their earnestness for Christ"? Brethren, these holy spirits must feel ashamed of us! True, they are our servants and bear us up in their hands, lest we dash our feet against a stone—but must they not sometimes wish that we were stronger on our feet, and were more eager to dash our hands against the enemies of God?

We are carried as invalids, when we ought to be fighting like champions. I charge you by the angels of God who are not permitted to touch this holy work—preach the Word, be instant in season, out of season. Preach with a vigor worthy of the Divine exercise. Preach the Word in some such style as you would expect from those who are bought with the precious blood of Jesus.

So have I spoken to you who are men. As for you, O angel of God, you have opened the prison doors and set free the men of God—but you must now go back to Him that sent you. Bright Spirit, I dare not offer you my pulpit. Feeble as I am, I must do the preaching. Oh, that your Lord and mine may help me and enable me to make full proof of my ministry! Farewell, angel of God, go your way!

**II.** Secondly, THESE MEN ARE TO TEACH THE PEOPLE. All the words of this life they are to speak.

The manner of their teaching is hinted at—they are to do it promptly, yes, immediately. "Go," says the angel, "go. Do not linger here. Go at once." They did go, so that they were in the temple courts early in the morning. The first beams of the sun that were reflected from the golden roof met their eyes. The first worshippers in those hallowed courts heard the Apostles testifying of Jesus and His love. O dear Servants of God, let us run with the glad tidings. "The King's business requires haste." The first moment we can get man or woman to listen to us, let us speak the Living Word which we have learned at the feet of Jesus.

They were to make this their primary business. "Go," said the angel, "before anything else—this is your chief employ." I should have been tempted to linger a little just to find out how the angel released the prisoners. He had opened the doors, so we are told, but yet they were found closed and fastened when the officers came and the sentries had not left their posts. Here is a mystery—I should like to clear it up. Are there not many such mysteries? But the command is pressing and peremptory—"Go, speak to the people."

Let me tarry. One does not see angels every day. Let me stay and take in a more complete idea of the heavenly stranger. Indulge me with a little conversation with one who has seen my Lord. There are a great many questions which I would hope have answered. Dear fellow-worker, we perhaps are tempted to study very deeply into mysterious points which do not minister to profit—let us, then, hear the angel say, "Go, speak to the people." Let us keep our thoughts to that Gospel which we are sent to preach. "The words of this life" will furnish ample scope for all our powers. Let us not wander into endless debates which are rather for curiosity than

salvation and tend rather to gratify our taste than to accomplish our life-purpose.

The first and chief business of the man of God is, “Go, stand and speak to the people.” However simple the speaking, it may be rather talk than oratory. This is our one great business here below. It is clear from the text that they were to take a conspicuous place and speak boldly—“Go, stand in the temple.” Go where the Sanhedrim holds its sittings, where the high priest and his Sadducees are on the watch. Let not the danger hinder you. Go where all can see you. Stand up and stand out. Wherever the people are, there let your voices be heard. Be there perseveringly, taking your stand and keeping it till removed by force.

The object was to make the Gospel known. Therefore, let them go to headquarters, let them stand in the chief place of concourse, let them be in the resort of the devout, let them challenge the observation of pilgrims from every corner of the land. Brethren, it is not ours to hide in holes and in corners. Our Gospel is like the sun whose line has gone out through all the earth. Let us not speak timidly for we have not received the spirit of fear, neither will we hide our candle under a bushel. We are to publish the tidings of that life from the dead which has brought life for the dead.

The persons for whom this preaching is designed are mentioned—“Speak into the people.” “Unto the people”—that does not mean the poor to the exclusion of the rich, nor the many to the exclusion of the few. The expression is most comprehensive and embraces both the masses and the classes. If the men of the council would hear them, let them speak to them. They did so, alas, with small result. This is a truly Gospel word of command—for the Gospel is glad tidings to all people—and it is to be preached to every creature under Heaven.

A restricted audience is not an evangelistic idea. Go and speak unto the people, then—to all sorts of people—to everybody. Let not a soul escape if you can help it, for your mission is to all mankind. O Gospel fisherman, spread the great net, which will encompass a great multitude of fishes, and with diligence draw it to shore.

If we take the word “people” in its popular sense, it has a lesson to all who teach the Word. Some aim at the intellectual—let us speak to the *people* all the words of this life. A minister whose congregation numbers about forty all told rejoiced in the smallness of it because he professed that a greater work could be done with a few than with a large number. In answer, a friend suggested that he should infer from that statement that a greater work could be done with no people at all. This reduced the hypothesis to an absurdity.

“I am sure,” said one, “that the better a man preaches, the smaller his congregation will become.” This shows what a large number of very excellent preachers we have in London. But our business is to reach the people somehow. To obey the text we must, “Go and speak to the people.” They need it. Are they not perishing for lack of knowledge? The Gospel is adapted to their needs and capacities—it is simple, suitable, seasonable, saving. The people will receive it. If the poor have the Gospel preached to them they will hear it. God inclines the hearts of the multitude to hearken.

We read of Jesus, that “all the people were very attentive to hear Him.” Moreover, the people retain the Truth of God when they receive it. Note this fact in history—the Reformation in Spain was among the nobility and it was the same in Italy—and the work soon subsided. In England the common people received the Truth of God from Wycliffe and it never died out. If you wanted to burn a haystack, you would set it alight at the bottom—and if you want a whole nation to feel the power of the Gospel, it must first be received by laborers and artisans. The martyrs of England were largely taken from weavers and such like.

The people love the man “chosen out of the people.” The Bible is their charter, the Gospel is their estate, and when they know it, they will retain it with heroic constancy. What is more, they will spread it. Christ’s first preachers were of the people. In the streets of London today and in the Sunday schools of England today, you will find that the people are to the front in holy work. We are glad to see the noble, the great, the rich, the cultured dedicated to our Lord—but, after all, our chief hope lies among the people.

The angel even mentioned the place to which they were to go. “Go, stand in the temple.” It was the most public place in all Jerusalem. Therefore, “Go, stand in the temple” rather than in a private house. It was the likeliest place to find attentive hearers. The noise of the sheep market and the bazaar would be absent. Those who came early would probably be among the most devout. “Go, stand in the temple.” But when they were bid to stand in the temple it meant that they were to stand in any place and every place where an audience could be gathered.

So they understood it according to the last verse of the chapter—“Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” Fellow workers, our business is to speak to the people concerning eternal life—and we must see that we do it. If in this great house so many will gather that the utmost capacity of my voice is used up, this is the place for me to preach in. But if the people will not come here, I must go after them. We must take public halls and assembly rooms. We must even hire theatres and music halls, or stand in the streets—for we must speak to the people.

As men enlightened from on High we must carry the light to the eyes of men. We must carry bread to the hungry and healing to the diseased. If not by one style of speaking, yet by another. We must so speak as to be heard—it is of no use to go on droning to empty pews, or holding forth to bare walls. We must get at the people. This is what the angel bids us do. “Go,” said he, “speak to the people all the words of this life.”

**III.** Thirdly, THIS MESSAGE IS DESCRIBED: “Speak to the people all the words of this life.” Our teaching, if we are true to Christ, will be not only a doctrine, but a life. The high priest conceived that they preached doctrine. For he said, “Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine.” Yet it may as truly be called life, as truth. The Christian religion is like Christ—Way, Truth and Life. We have to preach “words of life.” Truth which brings life, feeds life and perfects life. We are to preach all the great Truths which concern eternal life.

What are the “words of this life”? If I had to give a short list of them, I should say, the first word of this life is “Jesus Christ.” In the forty-second verse we read, “They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” Jesus has the words of eternal life. We preach His Deity, His manhood, His offices, His sacrificial death, His resurrection and everything about Him. We preach Christ crucified and if we did not, we should not speak the words of life.

The next word to use would be “atonement.” There is no preaching “the words of this life” except we preach the sacrificial death of the Son of God. The Apostles boldly spoke of our Lord’s death for they said to the council, “Whom you slew and hanged on a tree.” They had mentioned the precious blood—for the high priest said, “You intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” Leave out the satisfaction made by Christ for sin, leave out the doctrine of a real and effective substitution and you have left out of the Gospel “the blood which is the life thereof.” “The words of this life” are not preached to the people where the Cross is put in the background.

The next word, to my mind, would be “resurrection.” This they preached very fully, saying, “Him has God raised from the dead.” The resurrection of Christ secured the justification of Believers and also guaranteed their resurrection from the dead by virtue of their union with Him. If the resurrection were more fully preached at this time, I am positive that it would be a powerful means of conversion.

Nor could the Apostles forget “regeneration.” They would echo their Lord’s words, “You must be born again.” This new birth is possible to you for, “He that sat upon the Throne said, Behold, I make all things new.” Leave out the doctrine of the new birth and you have left out one of the cardinal “words of this life.”

Then comes “faith.” What a word is this! “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” “By grace you are saved through faith.” He who does not preach justification by faith has not begun to preach “the words of this life.” He that believes in Christ has everlasting life—but without faith all is death.

The sixth out of seven words is “indwelling.” The Holy Spirit comes into the heart and abides there, working sanctification within and producing holiness without. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” And if holiness is not preached as the effect of the indwelling Spirit of God, “all the words of this life” are not spoken to the people.

Then comes the doctrine of the eternal life—that the life given by the Holy Spirit never dies. “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” This eternal life is seen here in the perseverance of the saints—it is seen hereafter in their immortality and endless glory. To leave out this would be to leave out the grandest of “the words of this life.”

If you desire another outline of the Gospel, I would refer you to Peter’s little address to the council. Read at the twenty-ninth verse. Here is the principle of this life: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” He who gets this life into him will be under law to God and when that law goes counter to the authority of man, man’s law will go to the wall. God is supreme to the man who has this life—he lives as an obedient child of God.

The next great Truth of God mentioned by Peter is the cause of this life. He declared the death of Christ—"Whom you slew and hanged on a tree." That followed by His resurrection—"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus." That followed by His ascension to glory—"Him has God exalted with His right hand." These are historical facts which contain vital doctrines. We must keep on hammering away at this—Jesus died, rose again, and rose to Heaven to make intercession for us. Because of all this, there is life for the sons of men. There is no teaching "all the words of this life" unless these three great facts flame out like the stars of heaven and are made to be essential to our eternal life.

Then comes the manner by which we receive this life, namely, as a free gift. Jesus is exalted "to give repentance." The gift of God is eternal life. Salvation is by Free Grace and Free Grace alone. "This life is never an evolution. Spiritual life does not lie dormant within the dead heart of man. It is an importation from heaven, an implantation by the Spirit. We are quickened by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit. Here we have the beginning of this life, namely, repentance, a sense of sin, a turning from it, an abhorrence of it—this is the gift of Jesus and the beginning of the new life.

Then you have the privilege of this life—"forgiveness of sin." He that lives in Christ is set free from the guilt of sin by the righteousness of Christ. Then comes the evidence of this life—"whereof we are witnesses." We speak to you of a life which we have felt. We do not talk to you about an imaginary thing. We speak about a fact which we have observed, no, a fact which we have *felt*. A far greater witness is the Holy Spirit, who, as He converts and sanctifies men, bears the best possible testimony to the truth and life of the Gospel.

The fruit of this life must also be preached—"whom God has given to them that obey Him." There is no life in Christ apart from obedience to Christ. Obedience is the sure result of our being made to live by the Spirit of God, nor must this ever be forgotten. Thus have I very roughly told you what you are to preach.

**IV.** But now, fourthly, THE WHOLE OF THE DIVINE MESSAGE MUST BE DELIVERED. "Stand in the temple, and speak unto the people all the words of this life."

Dear Brethren, it is forbidden us to omit any part of the Gospel. I am very glad it is—for if we were permitted, we should sometimes shirk the unpopular parts of it. Yet surely it would be very dangerous to omit any part of the Gospel, would it not? It would be like a physician giving a prescription to a dispenser, and the dispenser omitting one of the ingredients. He might kill the patient by the omission. The worst results follow the keeping back of any doctrine—we may not see those results—but they will follow. Possibly only the next generation will fully display the mischief done by a Truth of God concealed or denied. It would be a dangerous experiment for any one of us to make.

And would it not be presumptuous to leave out a word? If we might take away from the testimony, who among us is wise enough to know what to omit? It is a thousand mercies that we are not left to pick and choose, for this would involve us in responsibilities far too weighty to be

borne. It is too responsible a business for us to enter upon. Would not the liberty be injurious to us? Would it not encourage pride? Should we not think ourselves somebody if we were allowed to make a selection of the best parts of the sacred message? Surely, he that judges is greater than that which is judged. We should soon imagine ourselves to be far more nearly infallible than the Holy Scriptures.

Would not this greatly dishonor God? Would it not suggest that God's Gospel is full of superfluities and excrescences, and needs our wisdom to make it perfect? Should we not conclude that the Lord was not so wise as ourselves if He needed our assistance to adapt His Gospel to the occasion? Do you not think it would open a very easy way for another Gospel? If we might omit, we might also add—and I feel sure we should very soon add a great deal which would neutralize and paralyze that of the Gospel which remained. If we felt at liberty to leave out something, we should naturally omit that which is offensive and away would go the tooth and edge of the Gospel.

That which is offensive in the Gospel is just that which is effective. What men oppose is what God uses. If the offense of the Cross had ceased, the power of the Cross would have ceased, also. It is not left to us to cut and carve the doctrine of Christ—we are to preach “all the words of this life.”

Have we done so? That is the question. Have we knowingly concealed anything? “Well,” says one, “I have not preached all the words of this life to the people but I have preached them to a choice company.” But you are told to preach them all to the *people*. The doctrine of reserve must not be tolerated among Protestants. We must not make that philosophical division which is expressed in those two ugly words, esoteric, and exoteric. This is abolished by the command to preach to the people “all the words of this life.” We shall get into no end of mischief and dishonesty if we incline to this practice of the Jesuits.

We want an open Bible for every eye and a plain ministry for every ear. We are to preach “the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth” in fair proportions and to preach this to the people openly. At the present moment there is a great tendency to be obscure upon the true and proper Deity of Christ. I enjoyed the commencement of the prayer just offered by our dear friend, Dr. John Hall. I enjoyed the whole of it but I was greatly touched by his lowly adoration of our Divine Lord.

The Broad men will say that Jesus is Divine but they do not mean that He is God. They speak of His Divinity but they reject His Godhead. This is juggling with words. I hate deceptive phrases. We believe in the Godhead of Jesus and worship Him as God. Christ Jesus is either God or an impostor—there is no in between the two. He said that He was God, He permitted His disciples to think that He was God. He has left words in Scripture which have made millions believe Him to be God—and he could not have been a good Man if, as a mere man, He had produced such an impression and had taken no pains to remove it.

There is also a sad tendency to becloud the truth of man's Fall and Depravity. If you do not preach man's ruin, you cannot preach “all the words of this life.” You must be clear about his spiritual death, or you will never

be right about his quickening into spiritual life. Unless you preach the terrible doom of the wicked you will never see the greatness of the salvation which comes to us by our Lord Jesus, who has “the words of eternal life.”

The work of the Holy Spirit is left too much in the rear by many preachers. Have we not heard of late that certain children do not need to be converted, that the Divine life is in them at their birth? Have they not preached education rather than regeneration, evolution rather than conversion? This is not speaking “all the words of this life.” It is telling “old wives’ fables.”

Brethren, have we not also a few about us who will not bear “all the words”? If you preach holiness as the fruits of the new life, they say you are legal. Verily, the results of this life are among the most important of the words which must be spoken to the people. Grace which does not make us hate sin is false grace. We must preach repentance from dead works and faith which works by love and the people must be told that Christ has not come to save men *in* their sin but *from* their sin. On this we will be clear as the sun at noon.

If there is any other point of the Truth of God which is kept back, let us bring it the more forward. Let us insist doubly upon that which others neglect. It needs that the whole Gospel be brought before the people, that they may know it and feel its power. It will involve you in strife and struggle if you resolve on delivering an all-round Gospel—but fear not, the Lord will help you, even He who says to you by His angel—“Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.”

I have done when I have asked what we are doing about this. We who are God’s people—what are we doing in this matter? Some of us are preaching—are we preaching the whole Gospel? Has any doctrine been withheld? Let us bring forth things new and old and keep back nothing. Let us put every stone into the arch, lest our building come to nothing. Have we also preached these Truths as words of life? Have we felt the life in them? Have we expected life to come by them? Our preaching will be very much what we believe it will be. If we do not believe that God is going to bless it, He is not likely to bless it. If we do not expect to see life created by the living Word, we shall preach dead sermons to dead ears.

Have we preached as witnesses? Complaint is made sometimes of a preacher that he says too much about his own experience. I do not believe that he can do so, for our experience is our witness-bearing. You can be egotistical and say that which is to your own credit, and this is censurable. But you can also be happily egoistical, and say that which is to God’s glory, and that is commendable. You may lawfully say, “This is true. I have proved it!” This is one great reason why God uses men instead of angels to speak the Gospel, because men can support their message by their experience, and angels cannot.

But, beloved Friends, are there not some of you who never tell anybody “the words of this life”? In such a congregation ought it to be possible to put your finger upon a single regenerated man or woman who has never for a whole lifetime spoken to another about the things of God? Are such persons regenerated? I will not come round and mark you. But, alas,

some of you have never even confessed your faith in Christ. If you have not obeyed that important command for yourselves, you are not likely to have done much for the souls of others.

But having joined the Church of God, are any of you satisfied to be silent? Are you content to let those around you sink to Hell? What? Never tell of Christ's love? What? Never speak of salvation to your own children and servants? Can this be right? In God's name, wake up! What are you left on this earth for? If there is nothing for you to do, why are you in this sinful world? You ought to be hurried off to Heaven, where you might praise God. No, no, I am afraid I am mistaken. You could not praise God in Heaven—you have not learned how. You could not join in the song of the redeemed for you have never had a rehearsal. Begin, begin, begin at once to praise Jesus in the ears of someone. Tell of Jesus and His love to sinners on earth, or how will you be able to make it known to angels, and principalities, and powers?

Could not some of you do more than you are doing? Are there not young men who might preach in a street corner or at a cottage meeting? Some of our evangelistic societies flag for want of preachers. It ought not to be the case. What are you doing? If you could not preach to men and women, could you not teach the children? Very many Sunday schools in this region are straitened dreadfully for want of teachers. I could tell you of Ragged schools on Sunday evenings where multitudes of children are turned away because there are no teachers.

What are you doing? You confess that you are not your own but bought with a price by the Lord Jesus—why, then, do you not serve Him? I have succeeded to a large degree in routing some of you out—I miss you on Sunday evenings—and a good miss too, since I know where you are and that you are out serving God. You take your meal in the morning and then you feed others in the after part of the day. The Lord bless you in it. You were not created to sit in these pews and listen to me—there is something better for a mortal man to do than to be a hearer only.

I charge every Christian man and woman here to listen to what I am about to say. Though I am no angel, I repeat in the name of the Lord Jesus the command of the heavenly messenger—"Go, stand out boldly, and speak unto the people all the words of this life." And may God bless you. Amen.

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# A PRINCE AND A SAVIOR

## NO. 1301

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 25, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior,  
for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”  
Acts 5:31.***

THE same fact appears very differently to different people. Our Lord Jesus, having risen from the dead, was exalted with the right hand of God. To the Jewish priests and rulers this was a *dreadful* announcement. They could not endure to hear that Jesus, whom they slew and hanged on a tree, was yet alive. As the murderer is startled at the apparition of the ghost of the man he has slain, so were these rulers altogether dismayed at the idea that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had nailed to the Cross, was risen from the grave. And they were astounded at the very thought that He, whom they had put to death with all the shame that they could devise, was with the full might and majesty of God exalted to the highest heavens. They were cut to the heart by the announcement as though a sword had cut them in two, dividing their very bones. Full of indignation, they consulted how they could compass the death of those who had brought such evil tidings to their ears.

The fact had a very different effect upon the Apostles. They were the friends of Jesus and witnesses to His majesty. And when they were certain that, though they had seen Him laid in the grave, He had risen and had ascended, and was now sitting at the right hand of God, even the Father, it filled them with the greatest boldness and consolation! They might well speak in such a name, for it was assuredly Divine! He who had conquered death and opened the gates of Heaven must be able to take care of His own followers and, therefore, with delight and courage, they bearded His enemies in their dens! There was no need for trembling—who could harm them? They blushed not—there was nothing to blush at, for it was a triumphant cause! They feared not—there was nothing to fear, for the name high over all in Heaven, earth and Hell would surely protect them from all peril! What was to the rulers a source of dismay was to the Apostles a cause of courage!

Let now enquire of you all how this fact of the exaltation of Christ impresses you? What do you think of Christ? As time would fail me to press this enquiry upon all classes in this assembly, I shall confine myself to those who have not yet found peace with God—and shall set the Ascended One before them that in *Him* they may find salvation! That is to be my subject—I want, this morning, to discover seekers! And by the help of God's Holy Spirit I want to encourage them, to direct them and, if possible, may this be the last morning in which they shall be called *seekers* and the first day in which they shall be *finders*! And may they, this day,

know how sweet Christ is to those who find Him and how inestimably precious His salvation is to those who receive it by faith in Him!

I should be very glad, this morning, if we could get down to business, for a great deal of hearing is not earnest hearing, but mere playing at hearing. Too many of you have ears to hear and yet do not truly hear. The Word of God reaches the outward ear and goes no further because you do not listen heartily and with earnestness. Thousands of hearers are like spectators at a banquet who come into the gallery and look down upon the guests who are feasting below—but they never taste a morsel, themselves. For them there are no dainties for actual tasting! They look at the oxen and the fatlings. They see the enjoyment of the feasters. Sometimes they even feel their own mouths watering for the good things and they almost envy those who are banqueting. But they do not seek a place at the loaded tables for themselves—they remain lookers-on.

I pray this morning, and may God hear the desire of my soul, that you may *all* become partakers of the exceeding Grace of God in Christ Jesus at this moment! May you who have fed, feed again as you see the feast prepared in Christ! And may you who have never ventured to “taste and see that the Lord is good,” approach the provisions of love this morning and be fed with bread to the fullest! I want to see an end of mere wishes and desires! I want to rejoice over the commencement of actual faith and realized salvation! Let’s get down to business and let us have no more talk or delay! I long to see you saved and saved at once, or perhaps you may never be saved at all!

Seeker, you know right well that if you are ever to be saved your salvation lies in Jesus Christ. “There is none other name given under Heaven whereby we must be saved.” And you know that it is so! The point is to obtain the salvation which is in that name and so to lay hold of Christ, that what is stored in Him may become your own! May the Spirit of God bless you, now, so that while we speak to our text you may be led by it to actual salvation in Christ Jesus!

**I.** First, then, let me invite you to NOTE HIS TITLES and learn their meaning. He is called, “*a Prince and a Savior.*” You must know the Savior or you cannot be saved. It is important to you to understand the Nature and Character of Him whom the Lord has set forth to be the only salvation of guilty men. The Lord Jesus is here described to you under two instructive names which comprehend within themselves the moat of His offices and relationships. Consider him now with deep attention.

He is called a *Prince* first. This tells you that He is receiving *honor* at this time as the reward of His sufferings on earth. While He was here below, He was treated by His rebellious subjects as if He had been a felon. What a mass of presents the Prince of Wales has brought home from his foreign travels! But when the Prince of Glory visited His dominions here below what did He take home with Him except His wounds? “He came unto His own and His own received Him not.” The shame and the rejection are now ended, and in Glory, yonder, our Lord Jesus is manifestly a Prince—reverenced, obeyed, and honored! Every angel in Heaven delights to sing, “You are the King of Glory, O Christ!”

The highest powers and potentates of the spiritual kingdom bow before Him and hail Him—joyfully hail Him—as Lord over all, blessed forever! His dominion extends over all creation. All things are put under His feet. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth, yes, He is Lord of All! Think of Him, then, O seeking Sinner, in this honorable estate! Let your mind conceive of Christ as worthy of all the homage and reverence that you can ever pay to Him! Do not approach Him without serious thought and careful reverence, for though He is condescending and gentle, yet is He a Prince to whom honor and obeisance must be paid!

The title of “Prince,” in our Lord’s case, signifies not only honor, but actual *power*. His is no nominal principedom—He has both glory and strength! Unto Him is given the mediatorial kingdom which includes all power in Heaven and in earth, so that He is well styled, “the Blessed and only Potentate.”—

***“His hands the wheels of Nature guide  
With an unerring skill,  
And countless worlds, extended wide,  
Obey His sovereign will.”***

Was it not said of old, “The government shall be upon His shoulders and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”? He is the Prince of the house of David! He opens and no man shuts. He shuts and no man opens. There is no boundary to the power of Christ! If you seek His salvation, think of Him as Almighty and remember that His power is now employed for the salvation of those who trust in Him.

He is exalted on high to be a Prince that He may give repentance and forgiveness of sins—so that the power which you see in Him is available for your salvation! Is not this encouraging? Does not this remove those fears which are suggested by your own feebleness? I desire that you may be led by the power of the Holy Spirit to conceive of our glorified Lord with the reverence which His honor deserves and with the confidence which His power should command. Remember, too, that a Prince signifies one who has dominion. And if Christ is to be yours, today, you must let Him have dominion over you. “He must reign.”

He claims to be Master and Lord to those who ask salvation at His hands—and is not the claim a just one? Whom should we serve but the Lord who became a servant for our sakes? It must be so, or salvation is impossible! Those who serve sin are not saved, nor can they be unless by being brought to serve the Christ of God—

***“This know, nor of the terms complain.  
Where Jesus comes, He comes to reign.  
To reign, and with no partial stray.  
Lusts must be slain that disobey.”***

You must accept Jesus to be Leader and Commander to you or you cannot win the battle of life! You must yield Him loving obedience, or He will not be married to your souls. His dominion is sweetly tempered by love, so that, as the Prophet writes, “You shall call Me no more Baali,” that is, “My Lord,” with a hardness of rulership, but *Ishi*, “My Lord,” because you are My man, My husband.

Even so Jesus is our Head and Lord, but His rule is that of supreme affection. There must be obedience to Jesus if there is faith in Him, for true faith works by love. Will you render it? Thus, Christ Jesus our Prince is crowned with honor and clothed with power—and He rightly claims and exercises dominion. I pray, dear Hearer, that you may pay homage before Him at once as your Prince. The other title of the text is, a “*Savior*,” and this name, it seems to me, should be very delightful to every seeking soul. Struggling into light and prizing every ray of hope, it must be sweet to you to know that the Son of God is still a Savior, though manifestly a Prince!

Observe here *the perseverance of the Lord’s love*. He was a Savior here below. He is a Savior now that He has reached His Throne. We read of Him while on earth, “The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” And now that He has gone, we still hear concerning Him, “He is able, therefore, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” He has not paused in His blessed work of love! “He is the Savior of the body.” Savior He was when He wore the garment without seam and traversed the weary leagues of Palestine. Savior He is *now* that He is girt about with a golden belt and sits upon the Throne! And Savior He shall be in His Second Advent, for which we look, even the glorious appearing of our God and Savior!

Savior He was when He wept over Jerusalem. Savior He is, still, though His eyes are like a flame of fire. And Savior shall He be to His own redeemed when, before His glance, this earth shall flee away. Look up to Him under that aspect, O you who seek Him! Remember that our exalted Lord is a Savior in virtue of *the prevalence of the work which He achieved while here below*. When He dwelt here among men, He was able to save, but His salvation was not complete, for He had not yet said, “It is finished.” Now His redeeming work is done and saving is a simple matter to Him. Never did He so well deserve the name of Savior as when He climbed to His Throne.

The ransom price has all been paid and now, O Jesus, You are Savior, indeed! The head of the serpent has been broken beneath Your heel—You are Savior, indeed! The gates of the grave have been burst, the sepulcher is bereaved of its prey and the Resurrection is brought to light—You are, from now on, a Savior to the uttermost, O Jesus! “By Your agony and bloody sweat, by Your Cross and passion, by Your precious death and burial,” you have finished salvation and now our spirits shall rejoice in God our Savior! I pray that you who seek Him may have Grace, this morning, to see Him in the light of a Savior, as still pursuing the work of saving souls, but yet pursuing it only to apply the Atonement which His death completed. Look at him, O you ends of the earth, as the Savior, for such He is, and there is none else!

If He is a Savior, remember, this shows to trembling hearts *how approachable He is*. You might be abashed at coming to a Prince, but you may be encouraged in coming to a Savior! O you that would be rid of your sin, do you fear the Prince? Well may you, for He can punish you! But fear not, for the Savior will forgive you! Diseased with sin, do you think your-

self unworthy of His princely Presence? Yet He is Physician as well as Prince—therefore come where the glance of His eye, or the touch of His hand will make you perfectly whole!

I wish I knew how to put my Lord before you in the best of words and describe Him so sweetly that you would all fall in love with Him, but, indeed, I believe Him to be so beautiful that if I can only convey to you the *faintest* idea of Him you must be enamored of Him, if you love that which is good and fair! While I am describing Him I feel I do but put a mist about Him. But, He is the sun and He can break through my cloudy language and cause your hearts to see Him in all His glory. “A Prince and a Savior.” Suppose I put the words together and say, a Prince-Savior—One who is lordly and kingly in the salvation which He brings? He deals out no stinted Grace, but makes us to receive of His fullness, Grace for Grace.

Turn the titles the other way and reverse the order, and truly He is a Savior-Prince whose Glory it is to save, whose kingdom and power and dominion are all turned in full force to achieve the work of rescuing His people from destruction. “A Prince and a Savior.” This is the Christ to whom you must come, O you who would be delivered from your sins. Look to Him and live!

**II. APPROACH HIM, THEN, UNDER THESE TWO CHARACTERS.** I would come to very close quarters with you who are seeking the Lord, while I urge you to approach Jesus Christ as a Prince. “And how shall we do that?” you ask. I answer, come to Him at once with the *sorrowful confession* of your past rebellion. You have lived, I do not know how many years, you unconverted ones, without paying due homage to Jesus! You have known about Him, but you have not obeyed Him. Up to this moment you have resisted His love and said, “Let us break His bands asunder and cast His cords from us.” Confess this and be ashamed, for it is a great disgrace not to be swayed by such love as that of Christ!

It is a great sin not to be in love with such an One as that which shines in the Person of the Son of God! It shows moral hardness of heart and bluntness of perception. It shows prejudice of soul and ignorance of mind not to be, at once, the willing subject of Christ. These many years you have said, “I will not have this Man to reign over me.” Oh, may the gentle Spirit cause you, now, to see the folly and the sin of this conduct! And may you confess it with tearful eyes while you obey the bidding of the old Psalm and, “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry.”

When you have confessed the past before this Prince, then I charge you *accept His great purpose and submit to His rule*. He is a Prince, therefore yield yourself to be His subject. Do you know what the objective of His rule is? It is to make you love God and to be like God! You are created and, therefore, launched upon the sea of existence! You cannot help this fact or alter it—your existence has been *given* you and you cannot lose it! How can this creation of yours be an eternal blessing and the danger be removed of its becoming a never-ending curse? The answer is simple—if you are right with your Creator, you are right with everything! If you are reconciled to Him, you will be happy in time and in eternity!

But you cannot be right with your Creator until past guilt is forgiven and sin is given up—and the love of wrongdoing, the love of everything that is contrary to His pure and holy mind—is destroyed in you. Now, Jesus comes in order that He may kill in you everything that is contrary to the mind of God. He comes to make you holy, yes, to make you perfect! Will you yield yourself to His gentle purpose? Are you ready to obey His precepts by means of which His Spirit will sanctify you wholly—spirit, soul and body? He is able to save from sin! His name is Jesus, “for He shall save His people from their sins.”

Do you really wish to be saved from sin? Jesus once asked a sick man, “Will you be made whole?” It is the question which He asks of you today, dear Friend. You would be glad to be saved from going to Hell. Yes, but that is not it. Do you desire to be saved from that which created Hell, from that which is the fuel of the unquenchable fire and the tooth of the undying worm—namely, the love of iniquity, the love of sin? Christ can save from sin, as a Savior, and lead you into the Kingdom of Righteousness of which He is the Prince. Are you willing that He should do so? If it is taken for granted that you have approached the Lord Jesus in this way, I would next say, as He is a Prince, surrender everything to Him. Christ claims of you that if you are saved, since it is through His redemption, you should, from now on, be His. If He has redeemed you, then you belong to Him—from now on you are not your own—you are bought with a price.

It is an inevitable consequence of being redeemed from death and Hell by Jesus’ blood that you should be Christ’s forever. Oh, can you lift your eyes to Heaven and say, “If He will have me, I will cheerfully be His”? Can you make over now, this morning, by the help of God’s Spirit, your body and your soul as a living sacrifice? Can you give to Him, now, all that you owe and all that you have? Could you stand at the foot of the Cross and say—

***“And if I might make some reverse,  
And duty did not call,  
I love my God with zeal so great,  
That I would give Him all”?***

He asks it of you. Will you do it, O seeking Soul, will you do it? For if that is done, surely, then, Christ is to you a Prince and a Savior! And if this is accomplished and He is Lord, then *pay your loving, loyal homage to your Prince*. Behold Him in His Glory, where all the angels cast their crowns before Him while the elders adore Him with vials full of sweet odors!

If Christ is to be your Savior, He must be your Prince, and you must have a loyal attachment to Him, deep and true. Is this a hard thing to ask of you? I think it is the joy of my life to be the subject and the servant of King Jesus! The name of the Queen stirs the British soldier’s heart and oftentimes, in the hour of battle, he has thought of his Sovereign and his country, and has been willing to lay down his life. But the love of Jesus is a more intense passion, by far, and the loyalty of a good soldier to Jesus Christ is a stronger force than any loyalty to earthly princes! You must have this! Do you see how right it is that you should have it? Towards such an one as Jesus we are proud to cherish a love which many waters cannot quench! A love stronger than death! Approach Him, then, with lov-

ing hearts, or at least bring your hearts and ask to have them *made* loving.

You must also approach the Lord Jesus as Savior. Do not proudly murmur at this. I have known some who have been willing to take Christ for their *example* and as their *teacher*—and so far they have acknowledged Him as a Prince—but they cannot stand it that they should confess their need of a Savior! But you must have Jesus as a Savior, as well as a Prince, or you will be lost forever! I do now affectionately urge the sinner who is seeking mercy to come to Christ Jesus, confessing that he needs a Savior. Look at your sin and consider your past life with all its transgressions. Are you not ashamed of it? Are you not afraid to stand before that Judgment Seat where you must give an account for every idle word that you have spoken?

Does not conscience fill you with trembling? Well, come and tell the Savior! Tell Him all! Pour out your heart before Him! Acknowledge that you are undone and condemned unless He can, in His pity, obtain a pardon for you. Are you actually doing so, now? Let us get down to business, as I have said before! Make the confession, now, from your heart while we are yet speaking. That done, since Christ is a Savior, *believe that He is able to save you*. Seeing He died the bitter death of the Cross, suffering from Divine Justice in a most terrible manner upon Calvary, there must be, in those five wounds, power enough to be the death of every sin! O crimson blood, you must have merit enough in you to wash out crimson sin! It must be so! He who died upon the Cross is God as well as perfect Man and a Sacrifice offered by Him must have infinite power and efficacy to remove sin.

Believe this, also, and when you have believed it, then understand that you must *submit yourself entirely to His processes of salvation*. He is able to save you, but He has a way of His own and He will *not* save you in *your* way, but only in His way! And His way of saving you is to make you feel the smart and bitterness of sin, to make you hate that sin, loathe it and to turn you from it forever! Thus He saves you—are you willing to have it so? Can you say, “Farewell,” this morning, to the sins you have loved so long? Is there any attraction to you, yet, in the harlots and the riotous with whom you have spent your Father’s substance? Have you still a lingering love to the far country, or can you bid its citizens a long farewell?

Do the swine attract you? Have you a hankering after the husks which they eat, so that you can refuse to go to Christ when He would take you away from these filthy pleasures and degrading delights? Can you say, “I cannot linger longer here. It is Sodom and the fire will soon descend from Heaven! I must flee for my life and look not behind me. I must and will do so, for Jesus takes me by the hand and leads me on”? If you have sincerely done this and you are willing to have a divorce from your sins—all and thoroughly—from table, bed, hearth and in all ways so that sin and you shall no more be on loving terms, then, I say, if you are willing for this, all you have now to do is to *trust your Savior*! Lean all your weight on Him! Repose your whole self on Him!

You see your need of Him. You see His power to save you and you know what is meant by being saved, namely, delivered from the power of sin—will you now trust Him to make you pure? If you do, you have come to Him as a Prince and a Savior, and He has said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,” and He will not, *cannot* cast you out! This approach to the Lord Jesus should be made at this moment, where you now are! There is no need to go elsewhere, or tarry for an hour. While yet you are here, God’s Holy Spirit can enable you to come to Christ as your Prince and your Savior. I am putting the Truth of God very plainly. I have scarcely used one figure of speech or a single ornament of language. I have tried to tell you the way of salvation very plainly. And having told you, I can do no more but earnestly ask you—will you have this Prince and Savior, or not? May the Spirit of God persuade you to give the right reply!

**III.** In the third place, NOTE THE GIFTS OF THE LORD JESUS. He is “exalted with God’s right hand to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.” Now if, dear Hearer, you are distressed, this morning, beneath the burden of sin, I pray you to catch at this blessed sentence, for there is honey here which shall take away the bitterness of your soul! I think I heard you say, “Gladly would I have Christ as Prince and Savior! I am willing enough, but this hard heart, this rebellious will—what can I do with them?” Listen—“He is exalted to give *repentance*.” This does not mean, as some have said, to give *space* for repentance. We must not add words to Scripture!

Nor does it mean to make repentance acceptable. Look at the text and no trace of such a meaning is there. But, “to give repentance,” and repentance, itself, is intended, which is as much the *gift* of the ascended Savior as the forgiveness which follows upon it! What is repentance? If we keep to its *literal* meaning it is a *change of mind*, but then it is a very wonderful change of mind! He can give you to change your mind about all the past so that the things which pleased you shall grieve you! That which charmed you shall disgust you! That which you do love you shall hate and that which you do desire you shall abhor. This is His gift to His *chosen*—“I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh and I will give them a heart of flesh; a new heart, also, will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them.”

What a marvelous thing this change of mind as to the past is! He can also change your mind as to the *present* and the *future*, so that, instead of looking for present pleasure, you will find your delight in future Glory realized by faith! Do you understand me? It shall be pleasure enough to you to think of the pleasures at God’s right hand forevermore! Jesus can save you from living like the beast which looks not an hour ahead, but is content with the pasture around it—and will even walk into the slaughterhouse to be slain—so little does it know what is reserved for it! Jesus can save you from being so brutish and make you look into the eternal future with the eyes of a wise man!

He can give you a good hope and inspire you with a good objective worthy of the eternity which lies before you. Christ can give such a change of mind as shall make the whole world seem new—and yourself most

changed of all! Repentance includes a most necessary sense of sin and the Savior can give you this, by His Spirit. He can fill your soul with the barbed arrows of conviction till your heart bleeds with inward grief on account of sin, or He can work more gently and make you repent by melting you beneath the smiles of His love. He can make you sing—

***“Your mercy is more than a match for my heart,  
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart.  
Dissolved by Your goodness, I fall to the ground  
And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”***

He can work in you desires after holiness and hatred of every false way. He can take the guile out of your soul as well as the guilt out of your life. He can give you to be true and upright before Him and cleansed in the inward parts. Everything that is included in “repentance,” Jesus Christ is exalted to *give*.

Now, if no one obtains repentance, then Christ is exalted in vain—but somebody must have it, for Christ is not exalted in vain! Why, then, should YOU not have it? You need it! Your heart seems hard as granite and cold as a block of ice. Well, if you need it, why should you not have it? To whom does a man give his alms but to the needy? Do not the wise distribute their gifts to those who need them? If you need them, come and freely take them! Repentance will not spring out of your unrenewed heart, but the Prince and Savior can create it in you! Come to Him for it—

***“True belief and true repentance,  
Every Grace that brings You nigh,  
Without money,  
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”***

Here I preach Christ not merely to penitent sinners, but to impenitent sinners! O rock, be smashed with this rod! The Cross can fetch the waters of repentance out of stony hearts! O hard heart, be melted with this sacred fire! The fire of Jesus’ love can dissolve the northern iron and steel of obdurate impenitence! He is exalted on high to *give* repentance! Therefore, O Sinners, look to Him for repentance!

It is added as His second gift, “to give *forgiveness*.” And the forgiveness which Jesus gives is very blessed. I pray you, seeking Soul, pay attention to each word I now say on this point. He can pass an act of amnesty and oblivion for all your sins. If He forgives you, all your transgressions shall be as though they had never been! He will make clean work of it, blotting out every record of your sin so that in God’s book there shall be no grieving memory of your having been a sinner at all! So powerful is the atoning blood that all manner of sin and transgression shall be forgiven unto men for its sake. Sins against a holy God, sins against Christ’s love and blood, sins against conscience, sins against the Law, sins against the Gospel, sins which have lain in your bones from your youth up, sins of your middle age, sins of your old age, aggravated sins, black sins, damnable sins—all are gone when He says, “I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and as a thick cloud your transgressions.” Jesus has gone to Heaven on purpose to give this complete forgiveness!

Now mark, when full forgiveness comes, it brings with it the eternal removal of the penalty! The forgiven man cannot be punished! For him

there is no Hell, no worm that dies not, nor fire that never can be quenched. God cannot forgive and then punish! If He removes your transgressions from you as far as the east is from the west, then who is he that shall lay anything to your charge? Who is he that can condemn? And who is he that can punish you? With the pardon of sin, there shall come, also, a restoration of every privilege. All that Adam had in the Garden you shall have to be yours—not all of it to enjoy just now—but all and *more* than all shall be restored to you, for the man who wears the righteousness of Christ and is accepted in the Beloved may not have a Paradise on earth, but he has a Paradise above! For him there may be no golden apples of Eden, but there shall be the fruit of the Tree of Life, of which he shall eat forever and ever—

***“What Adam had, and forfeited for us all,  
Christ has, who cannot fail nor fall.”***

He that believes on Christ Jesus shall dwell in bliss and be satisfied with the goodness of the Lord!

And mark you, once again, you shall, when forgiven, *have quiet in your soul*, for when you are pardoned, all the hurly-burly of your spirit shall turn into a deep calm. You shall have the “peace of God which passes all understanding” to “keep your heart and mind by Christ Jesus.” “Oh,” says one, “I would give my eyes for it!” You shall have it without giving your eyes! Give your *heart*—no, and not even give your heart as a price for it—take the blessing *freely*, for freely it is given! Jesus is exalted on high that He may grant free pardons to great offenders! I come back to that statement—if Jesus is exalted on purpose to give pardon, then if He does *not* give forgiveness to someone, He is exalted in vain! He **MUST**, therefore, give it to some—why should He not bestow it upon *you*?

The text says, “to give repentance to Israel.” Who and what was Israel? The people of Israel, in our Lord’s time, were surely the very worst of sinners, for it was by them that the Lord was nailed to the Cross! It was the Jews who cried, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” It means, then, that Jesus is exalted to give repentance and pardon to the chief of sinners, and if I am one, if, instead of blaming Jews or the Romans, I blame myself! if I take the death of Christ on my own shoulders and say—

***“Twas you my sins, my cruel sins,  
His chief tormentors were!  
Each of my crimes became a nail,  
And unbelief the spear,”***

then He is exalted to give me repentance and remission for my great sins! Do I need to ask you, will you have these two gifts?

Ah, Friends, it shows how deep is the depravity of the human heart that we should have need to press our Master’s mercies on you. If sin were not a madness, it would only need the preacher to come and tell about this blessed Gospel and you would begin to sing, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings, that publishes salvation, that said unto Zion, Your God reigns as a Prince and a Savior in Heaven.” Instead, however, of offering my Lord a joyful reception, some of you will count it a weariness to be entreated and pleaded with. I feel in my own soul that though my Master enables me to put these things

before you, you will not receive them unless His love forces you. We can bring the horse to the water, but we cannot make it drink. And we can bring Christ before you, but we cannot make you accept Him.

I pray that there may be some soft relenting, some gentle melting of your spirit this very morning, for, “unto you is the word of this salvation sent.” My dear Hearer, I may never have addressed you before. Happy shall I be if at the very first assault I win your soul for my Master! Or perhaps I have spoken with you many, many times and my voice is getting rather stale and flat to you. Well, I am sorry if I mar the message, but still it is so good that, though I stammered it, you ought, still, to catch at it and say, “Yes, if He is exalted to give repentance and pardon, here is my bosom, Lord! Pour them both into my soul at this good hour.”

**IV.** As I said to you about the titles, approach the Lord Jesus as such, so now I say about His gifts—ASK HIM FOR THEM. Ask now, at this moment! Again, I say I want you to get down to business and be *doing* as well as listening. While I am speaking, may the Holy Spirit incline your hearts to practical obedience! At this moment ask the Lord Jesus *humbly* for repentance and pardon. You do not deserve these gifts—if He leaves you to perish He will be just. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion.

You have no claim to His love and must not set up any! Your heart is hard and He can leave you in your unbelief. You are guilty and He can justly leave you to bear your punishment. Ask humbly, therefore, not daring to claim anything, but appealing to His Sovereign Grace. Say—

**“O save a guilty sinner, Lord,  
Whose hope still hovering round Your Word  
Would light on some sweet promise there,  
Some sure support against despair.”**

Ask *importunately*. Do not come to Mercy’s gate, this morning, with a cold heart and unwilling spirit. Come with this resolve, “I will not leave the Cross till my sins have left me. I will plead for the Grace of God until I obtain it. With importunity will I wrestle saying—

**‘Lord, I cannot let You go  
Till a blessing You bestow.’”**

The Angel is near this morning! Seize Him! Grasp Him! And if He seem to fling you off, hold to Him, still, and say, “I will not let You go except you bless me, and bless me now!” You will get the blessing if you can pray like that! Pray with deep humility, because you are unworthy, but with violent importunity because you are in such fearful peril and you cannot endure to be lost!

But I ask you to pray *believingly* and this is, indeed, the heart of the matter. Ask for remission and repentance, this morning, believing that Christ can give it and believing that He is as willing as He is able. If you can look up and see those dear eyes which wept over sinners. If you can see those wounds, still open for sinners like so many gates of Heaven, you will perceive that Jesus still calls to you and bids you trust Him! Do not think Him unwilling to forgive. That would be too cruel a suspicion after He has died! Trust Him wholly, only, sincerely, solely! Have done with those works and prayers and tears which you have been known to rely

upon! All that you ever did to save yourself must be undone! Nature's spinning must all be unraveled—her fig leaves will wither—sin's nakedness requires a better covering. Your only hope lies in Him who is Prince and Savior. Cry at once to Him—

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

And—and this is the last word—*ask now!* Do not put me off this morning! I am in earnest, even if you are not! But oh, it is *your* soul, not mine, that is now at stake! I pray you be in earnest, O Man, and be so now! Perhaps you will never hear another plea! It may be this is the last Sabbath you will spend on earth! Where will you be if you reject the Savior? Where the Sabbath bell shall never ring out its happy summons! Where the silver voice of Mercy shall never again salute you! There is another world—you will not die like a dog! There is a *judgment* to come and you will have to stand before your Maker to give an account of all your life!

There is an everlasting punishment as surely as there is an eternal reward. Now I ask you, and I charge you, to go no further till you have answered this question—Is it worth while to lose your soul for whatever you can gain by it? The Romans, when they meant to bring things to an issue with an Oriental tyrant, sent their Ambassador. And the Ambassador was to bring his answer back—yes or no, war or peace. What do you think the Ambassador did? When he saw the king, he stooped down and with his wand he drew a ring upon the ground round the monarch. And then he said, “Step outside that ring, and it means war with Rome. Before you leave that circle you must accept our terms of peace, or know that Rome will use her utmost force to fight with you.”

I draw a ring round you while you are sitting in that pew, or standing in that aisle, and I demand an answer! Sinner, will you now be saved or not? Today is the accepted time! Today is the day of salvation! O Holy Spirit, lead the sinner to now ask and he shall receive! To believe, and he shall be saved. Amen and Amen!

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 5:17-42.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—304, 569, 332.***

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# THE ROYAL SAVIOR

## NO. 3229

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1910.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 1, 1872.

***“Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior,  
to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”  
Acts 5:31.***

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same verse is #1301, Volume 22—  
A PRINCE AND A SAVIOR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at  
<http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

THIS was part of the answer of Peter and the other Apostles to the question and declaration of the high priest—“Did not we command you that you should not teach in this name? And, behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your Doctrine and intend to bring this Man’s blood upon us.” Then Peter and the other Apostles replied, “We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew and hanged on a tree.” And, in the verse following our text, they claimed to be witness-bearers for the risen and reigning Prince and Savior. And, more than that, they declared that they were co-witnesses with “the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to them that obey Him.” These Apostles were the representatives of Messiah, the Prince, acting under His authority and, as far as they could, filling up the gap caused by His absence. They asserted that their preaching and teaching had been done by Divine Command which could not be set aside by any human authority—imperial or ecclesiastical—and that the true Prince of Israel, the Son of David, alone, had the power and the right to issue commissions to those who owned allegiance to Jehovah. They declared that Jesus, whom the chief priests had crucified, was still alive reigning in Glory, enthroned at the right hand of God and that they were only fulfilling His royal commands when they were “standing in the Temple and teaching the people.”

Moreover, when the Apostles stated that in addition to being a Prince, Jesus was also a Savior, and that He had been exalted with His Father’s right hand in order that He might “give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins,” they gave the very best reason in the world for their preaching—for they were all engaged in preaching that sinners should repent—and in assuring those who *did* repent that their sins were forgiven for Christ’s sake! I cannot conceive of any better argument than this which the Apostles used when answering the high priest—“You command us not to teach in Christ’s name, but the command of the Son of God, our Prince and Savior, is ‘that repentance and remission of sins [See

Sermons #329, Volume 6—CHRIST'S FIRST AND LAST SUBJECT; #1729, Volume 29—BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM and #3224, Volume 56—“REPENTANCE AND REMISSION”—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’ So, as we ‘ought to obey God rather than men,’ we have filled Jerusalem with *His* Doctrine. And we mean to go on preaching repentance and remission until, as far as we are able, we have filled the whole world with this Doctrine.” That purpose of Christ was, at least in part, fulfilled by the Apostles in their day. God did give repentance and remission of sins to a chosen remnant of Israel. And when the rest of the Jews rejected the testimony of Christ’s servants, they said, as Paul and Barnabas did to the Jews at Antioch, “It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you, but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” We must never forget, Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that we owe the first preaching of the Gospel to the Jews. They were, in all lands that were then known, the heralds of Christ, publishing the royal proclamation far and wide. Under the old dispensation, “unto them were committed the oracles of God” and the Gospel of the New Covenant was, in the first instance, entrusted to them—and it was through the Jews that it was made known unto us Gentiles! Let us remember this fact as we contemplate the glorious future, both of Jews and Gentiles. Israel as a nation will yet acknowledge her blessed Prince and Savior. During many centuries the chosen people who were of old so highly favored above all other nations on the face of the earth, have been scattered and peeled, oppressed and persecuted, until sometimes it seemed as if they must be utterly destroyed—yet they shall be restored to their own land which again shall be a land flowing with milk and honey. Then, when their hearts are turned to Messiah the Prince and they look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn over their sin in so long rejecting Him, the fullness of the Gentiles shall also come and Jew and Gentile, alike, shall rejoice in Christ their Savior!

In taking such a text as this, I think it is always right to first give the actual meaning of the passage before using it in any other way. This I have already done by showing you what I suppose the Apostles meant in replying as they did to the high priest. Now let us try to gather other Truths of God from this passage.

**I.** First, let us learn that ALL WHO RIGHTLY RECEIVE CHRIST RECEIVE HIM BOTH AS PRINCE AND SAVIOR. He is exalted this day for many purposes—as a reward for all the pangs He endured upon the Cross, as our Covenant Head and Representative—and that He may rule over all things for the good of His Church, as Joseph ruled over Egypt for the good of his brethren. Christ is exalted as a pledge of our exaltation, for, “we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is.”

But our text declares that *God has exalted Jesus that He may be to His own chosen people a Prince and a Savior*—not that He may be a Prince only, or a Savior only, but that He may be both a Prince and a Savior! He is a Prince to receive royal honors. A Prince to be the Leader and Com-

mander of His people. A Prince whose every word is to be instantly and implicitly obeyed. A Prince before whom we who love Him will gladly bow, even as in Joseph's dream, his brothers' sheaves made obeisance to his sheaf and as they, themselves, afterwards "bowed themselves to him to the earth" when he became a great lord in Egypt. The Lord Jesus Christ is a Prince among men, a Prince in His Church and a Prince in the highest heavens! Indeed, He is more than a Prince as we understand that word, for He is "King of kings and Lord of lords." But He is also a Savior to be trusted. A Savior to be accepted with our whole heart. A Savior who exactly meets our needs, for we feel that we need to be saved, we recognize our inability to save ourselves and we perceive in Him the ability, the Grace, the power and everything else that is required in order to save us! So He is a Savior to be trusted and accepted as well as a Prince to be obeyed and honored!

Let us never imitate *those who talk of Christ as a Prince, but will not accept Him as a Savior*. There are some who speak respectfully of Christ as a great Leader among men, a most enlightened Teacher and a holy Man whose life was perfectly consistent with His teaching so that He can be safely followed as an Example. He is their Prince, but that is all. We cannot occupy such a position as that! If we were to say that Christ is our Prince but not our Savior, we would have robbed Him of that honor which is, perhaps, dearer to Him than any other! It was not simply to reign over the sons of men that He came from Heaven to earth—He had legions of nobler spirits than those that dwell in bodies of clay, everyone of whom would gladly fly at His command to obey His behests! Besides, if He had pleased to do so, He had the power to create unnumbered myriads of holy beings who would have counted it their highest honor to be subservient to His will! Mere dominion is not what Christ craved—from of old His delights were with the sons of men because He had covenanted with His Father that He would save them. Therefore was He called Jesus, because He came to save His people from their sins! In order to accomplish that great purpose, it was necessary for Him to take upon Himself our nature and to live a life of perfect obedience to His Father's will and, at last, to die a shameful death upon the Cross that He might offer the one Sacrifice for sins, forever, that alone could bring salvation to all who believe in Him! We never read that Jesus said to His disciples, "I am longing for the hour when I shall take the reins of government into My hand and wear upon My head the crown of Universal Sovereignty." But we do read that He said to them, "I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it is accomplished." We never read that He said to the Jews, "I am come to rein over you." On the contrary, when men would have taken Him by force and made Him a king, He hid Himself from them. He was a King, but not a man-made king, and His rule was to be a contrast to that of every other monarch! Christ's own description of His mission was, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." I think that our royal Savior puts the saving before the ruling—and if I call Him, Prince, and deny Him the title of Sa-

rior, He will not thank me for such maimed and mutilated honors! No, God exalted Him to be a Prince and a Savior—and we must receive Him in both offices, or not at all.

For, mark you, *we cannot really receive Christ as Prince unless we also receive Him as Savior*. If we say that we accept Him as our Prince, but reject Him as our Savior, is there not merely disloyalty, but treason of the deepest dye in that rejection? This gracious Prince tells me that I am lost and undone and bids me trust Him to save me. If I practically tell Him that I do not need Him to save me—and I do that by rejecting Him—I virtually say that He came from Heaven to earth on an unnecessary errand, at least as far as I am concerned. If I do not put my trust in His expiatory Sacrifice, I say, in effect that His death upon Calvary was a superfluity by which He foolishly threw away His valuable Life in needless Self-sacrifice! But that would be rank blasphemy! If I reject Christ as Savior, I do by that very act reject Him as Prince. It is sheer mockery for me to say, “I honor Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, [See Sermons #1353, Volume 23—ECCE REX and #3123, Volume 54—“THE KING OF THE JEWS”—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] but I refuse to be washed from my sin and uncleanness in the fountain filled with His blood! I am willing to accept the Man Christ Jesus as my Exemplar and I will try, as far as I can, to follow His steps, but I will not accept pardon at His hands.” If I talk like that, Christ is neither my Prince nor my Savior, and I am His enemy! And unless I repent and bow before Him in real homage, and accept Him both as Prince and Savior, He will at the last condemn me with the rest of His enemies who said, “We will not have this Man to reign over us.” You may extol Him with your tongue, but the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart would be far more prized by Him than all your empty praises! It is a higher praise to Christ to stoop to kiss His pierced feet and find in His wounds perfect healing for all the wounds that sin has made, than to pronounce the most fulsome compliment upon His spotless Character! He needs not the meaningless flatteries of men, but He thirsts for the trustfulness of souls that are willing to be saved by Him! This is the best refreshment He can ever have, as He told His disciples when He had won to Himself the soul of that poor fallen woman at Sychar, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work.”

There are *some who seem willing to accept Christ as Savior who will not receive Him as Lord*. They will not often state the case quite as plainly as that, but *as actions speak more plainly than words*, that is what their conduct practically says. How sad it is that some talk about their faith in Christ, yet their faith is not proved by their works! Some even speak as if they understood what we mean by the Covenant of Grace, yet alas, there is no good evidence of Grace in their lives, but very clear proof of sin (not Grace) abounding. I cannot conceive it possible for anyone to truly receive Christ as Savior and yet not to receive Him as Lord. One of the first instincts of a redeemed soul is to fall at the feet of the Savior and gratefully and adoringly to cry, “Blessed Master, bought with Your precious

blood, I acknowledge that I am Yours—Yours only, Yours wholly, Yours forever! Lord, what will You have me to do?” A man who is really saved by Grace does not need to be told that He is under solemn obligations to serve Christ—the new life within him tells him that. Instead of regarding it as a burden, he gladly surrenders himself—body, soul and spirit, to the Lord who has redeemed him, reckoning this to be his reasonable service. Speaking for myself, I can truthfully say that the moment I knew that Christ was my Savior, I was ready to say to Him—

***“I am Yours and Yours alone,  
This I gladly, fully own!  
And in all my works and ways,  
Only now would seek Your praise.  
Help me to confess Your name,  
Bear with joy Your Cross and shame,  
Only seek to follow Thee,  
Though reproach my portion be.”***

It is not possible for us to accept Christ as our Savior unless He also becomes our King, for a very large part of salvation consists in our being saved from sin’s dominion over us—and the only way in which we can be delivered from the mastery of Satan is by becoming subject to the mastery of Christ! The “strong man armed” cannot keep us under his cruel sway when the stronger One overcomes him and sets us at liberty! In order that we may be rescued from this power of the Prince of Darkness, the Prince of Light and Life and Peace must come into our soul—and He must expel the intruder and take His rightful place as our Lord and Master, guarding by His own power what He has saved by His own right hand and His holy arm! If it were possible for sin to be forgiven and yet for the sinner to live just as he lived before, he would not really be saved. He might be saved from some part of the punishment due to sin, but he would still be a most wretched man, for if there were other punishment for sin than the slavery and tyranny of sin’s own self, that would be punishment enough to make a man’s life utterly miserable, like the poor wretch chained to a corpse and compelled to drag it about with him wherever he went. Let a man once know what sin really is and he needs nothing else to make him thoroughly unhappy. I was talking, only today, with a Christian Brother about our crosses and I said that I thanked God we were not left without a cross to carry. “Ah,” my Friend replied, “but, there is one cross we would gladly throw away if we could, and that is the heaviest cross of all—the body of sin and death that is such a burden to us.” Yes, that is, indeed, a grievous burden to true Christians! That is the iron that enters into our very soul. That is the gall of bitterness, the deadly venom of the old dragon’s teeth and, therefore, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we do not really receive Christ as our Savior unless we also receive Him as Prince. But when He comes to reign and rule in our mortal bodies, the tyranny of the usurper is broken and we know Jesus as the complete Savior of our body, soul and spirit. He would not be our Prince if He were not our Savior—and He would not be our Savior if He

were not our Prince—but what a blessed combination these two offices make!

The man who is taught of God to understand this great Truth of God will be a wise teacher of others. I believe that many errors in Doctrine arise through lack of a clear apprehension of Christ's various relationships towards His spiritual Israel. To some, Christ is only a Prince, so they have a sort of lifeless legality. Others live in Antinomian licentiousness because Christ is not the Prince and Lord of their lives. Beloved, he who receives Christ both as Prince and Savior has the blessed and happy experience of resigning his own will and subjecting all the passions of his soul to the sacred control of his glorious Prince and, at the same time he daily realizes in his soul the cleansing power of the precious blood of Jesus and so, as Mary sang, his spirit rejoices in God his Savior! This, also, is the true Christian practice as well as the Christian Doctrine and experience—to be always “looking unto Jesus” as my Savior, feeling that I always need Him in that capacity and that I shall need Him to save me even to my last moment on earth—yet also looking up to Him as my Prince, seeking to be obedient to Him in all things as far as I can learn His will from His Word and by the teaching of His Holy Spirit. And to conform my whole life to the royal and Divine commands that He has issued for my guidance. I have not the time to enlarge upon this Truth, but it seems to me that there is a practical lesson to be learned from the fact that all who rightly receive Christ receive Him both as Prince and Savior.

There are preachers who preach mere morality. I trust their number is smaller than it used to be, but there are still too many professedly Christian ministers who are like that notable man who said that he preached morality till there was no morality left in the place. Yet afterwards, when he imitated Paul and preached Christ crucified, he soon found that vice hid her dishonored head and that all the Graces and virtues flourished under the shadow of the Cross! So have we found it and, therefore, whoever may preach anything else, we shall still stick to the old-fashioned theme that Paul preached—that old, old story which the seeker after novelties condemns as stale, but which, to the man who needs eternal life and longs for something that will satisfy his conscience and satiate his heart—has a freshness and charm which the lapse of years only intensifies, but does not remove!

**II.** The second lesson we learn from our text is that REPENTANCE AND REMISSION OF SINS ARE BOTH NEEDED BY THOSE WHO DESIRE TO BE SAVED. Those needs are clearly indicated by Christ's offices as Prince and Savior. Inasmuch as He is a Prince, we must repent of our rebellion against Him. And inasmuch as He is a Savior, He is exalted with His Father's right hand to give us remission of sins as well as repentance—and we must have both these blessings if we are to be saved!

First, *we cannot be saved without repentance*. No remission of sin can be given without repentance. The two things are so joined together by God, as they are in our text, that they cannot be separated. Many mistakes are made as to what true evangelical repentance really is. Just now

some professedly Christian teachers are misleading many by saying that “repentance is only a change of mind.” It is true that the original word does convey the idea of a change of mind, but the whole teaching of Scripture concerning the repentance which is not to be repented of is that it is a much more radical and complete change than is implied by our common phrase about changing one’s mind. The repentance that does not include sincere sorrow for sin is not the saving Grace that is worked by the Holy Spirit! God-given repentance makes men grieve in their inmost souls over the sin they have committed—and works in them a gracious hatred of evil in every shape and form! We cannot find a better definition of repentance than the one many of us learned at our mother’s knee—

**“Repentance is to leave  
The sin we loved before  
And show that we in earnest grieve  
By doing so no more.”**

I am always afraid of a dry-eyed repentance and, mark you, if forgiveness should be granted to those who were not sorry for their sin, such forgiveness would tend to aid and abet sin—and would be no better than the Romish heresy that when you have sinned, all you have to do is to confess it to a priest, pay a certain sum of money according to the regular Roman tariff and start over again on your career of evil. God forbid that we should ever fall into that snare of the devil! If I could keep on living in sin and loving it as much as I ever did, and yet have remission of it, the accusation of the blasphemer that Christ is the minister of sin would be a just one! But it is not so! On the contrary, we must loathe sin, leave sin and have an agonizing desire to be clean delivered from it—otherwise we can never expect the righteous God to say to us, “Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven.”

Besides, if remission of sins could be obtained without repentance, the sinner would be left very much as he was before. Indeed, he would be in a worse condition than he was in before. If God *could* say to him, “I forgive you,” and yet he remained unrepentant, unregenerated, unconverted—he would still be an enemy of God, for “the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither, indeed, can be.” Forgiveness would only make such a man a more impudent, hardened, self-righteous enemy of God than he was before! If there is not such a thorough Spirit-worked change in him that he flings away his weapons of rebellion and casts himself penitently at the feet of his offended Sovereign, I fail to see in what sense we can call him a saved man. No—repentance is the absolutely necessary prelude to remission!

On the other hand, *we cannot be saved without the remission of our sins following upon our redemption.* God exalted Jesus “with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” Note that, “repentance,” and, “forgiveness of sins,” are separate and distinct Gifts of the exalted Christ. Our repentance does not entitle us to claim from God the pardon of our sin apart from His gra-

scious promise to give it to us! If I get into a man's debt and then feel sorry that I owe him so much money, that regret will not pay my debt. If I transgress the law of the land and when I stand in the dock, say how grieved I am that I have broken the law, my sorrow will not pay the penalty that I have incurred! The magistrate or judge, in passing sentence upon me, may remit a portion of it because of my contrition, but I have no right to claim even that clemency on his part! And before God my sorrow for my sins gives me no claim upon Him for the remission of them. No, I must say to Him, as Toplady so truly sings—

***“Let the water and the blood,  
From Your riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure—  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power!  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears forever flow,  
All for sin could not atone—  
You must save, and You alone.”***

Suppose I do now hate some sin that I once loved or that I hate all sin? No credit is due to me, for that abhorrence of sin is what I ought always to have had! God had the right to claim from me the hatred of sin of every sort, but that hatred does not discharge the debt which I owe to God. I will go further than that and say that no one ever repents of sin so thoroughly as he does when he knows that it is forgiven. Hence when Christians begin their new life, they do not repent once and then leave off repenting—but repentance and faith go hand in hand with them all the way to Heaven! Indeed, dear old Rowland Hill used almost to regret that in Heaven he might not still have the tear of penitence glistening in his eyes, but of course, that is not possible, for of the redeemed in Glory it is expressly declared that, “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

**III.** Thirdly, and very briefly, BOTH REPENTANCE AND REMISSION ARE GIFTS FROM CHRIST. God has exalted Him “to give repentance...and forgiveness of sins.”

*The same Lord who gives the remission also gives the repentance.* This is worked in the Holy Spirit, yet it is not HE who repents, He cannot do so—and, besides, He has nothing of which He needs to repent! But *we* repent, and though it must always be our own act, yet it is Jesus' gift to us and the Spirit's work in us. Jesus bestows this gift upon us in His capacity as Savior—and we never truly repent until we recognize Jesus as our Savior and put our whole trust in His atoning Sacrifice. Smitten by the Cross, our rocky heart is broken and the streams of penitential tears gush forth even as the water leaped from the Rock smitten by the rod of Moses in the wilderness! When Jesus grants the Divine Grace of forgiveness, at the same moment He gives the tender heart that mourns that it should have needed forgiveness. I believe that if this Truth of God were thoroughly understood, it would help many more to receive the Calvinistic system of theology which now puzzles them. I know that when I first realized that my repentance was the gift of God, the whole Doctrine of Salvation by Grace fell into my soul as by a lightning flash!

The other side of the Truth is that *the same Lord who gives the repentance also gives the remission*. No one will dispute the fact that the forgiveness of sins is the free gift of the exalted Savior. This priceless blessing could never be purchased by us, or deserved by us on account of our feelings, promises, works, or anything else. It is a gift—freely, wholly, absolutely a gift of God’s Grace! It is given *with* repentance, but not given *for* or *because* of repentance! And wherever remission of sin is given, it works in the soul more and more repentance of sin, but it is, in itself, a gift independent of repentance, yet given with it—a royal gift from the royal Savior exalted with His Father’s right hand. So what you have to do, dear Friends, is to look to Christ, and to Christ alone to give you penitence while you are impenitent, and to give you pardon when you are penitent. So, as Hart sings—

**“Come, you needy, come and welcome,  
 God’s free bounty glorify!  
 True belief and true repentance,  
 Every Grace that brings us nigh,  
 Without money,  
 Come to Jesus Christ and buy!  
 Let not conscience make you linger,  
 Nor of fitness fondly dream—  
 All the fitness He requires  
 Is to feel your need of Him—  
 This He gives you!  
 ‘Tis the Spirit’s rising beam.”**

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ROMANS 10.**

**Verse 1** *Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.* They had hunted Paul from city to city, but the only feeling for them that he had was a wish that they might be saved! Such a wish as that should be in the heart of every Christian. His desire for his bitterest enemy should be that he may be saved.

**2.** *For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.* We should always give people credit for every good thing that there is in them—it will often enable us all the better to point out other matters in which they are deficient. So Paul put it on record, concerning the Jews of his time, that they had a zeal for God, though it was not a zeal “according to knowledge.”

**3.** *For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* [See Sermons #1899, Volume 32—ZEALOUS, BUT WRONG and #2214, Volume 37—BARRIERS BROKEN DOWN—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] They were so busy trying to work out a righteousness of their own that they had never accepted the righteousness which God is prepared to freely give to all those who will receive it at His hands!

**4.** *For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes.* [See Sermon #1325, Volume 22—CHRIST THE END OF THE LAW—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This is the very essence of the Gospel, that believing in Christ brings to sinners a righteousness which they can never obtain in any other way!

**5, 6.** *For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the Law, That the man which does those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith—* Is of quite another sort, for it—

**6-9.** *Speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (That is, to bring Christ down from above). Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (That is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.* [See Sermon #1898, Volume 32—MOUTH AND HEART—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Oh, what a blessedly simple plan of salvation is here revealed! “If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.” The Apostle says this plan of salvation is so near to men that it is in their mouth! When anything is in your mouth, how can you make it your own? Why, by swallowing it! And so near is the Gospel to every man that he has, as it were, but to drink it down to make it his very own! It is not up there on the lofty heights, nor down there in the deeps of the abyss, but it is here and wherever else Christ is preached and wherever His Word is read! O, Sinner, the Word of God is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart”—then put it not away from you, but hold it fast forever!

**10.** *For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* [See Sermons #519, Volume 9—BELIEVING WITH THE HEART; #520, Volume 9—CONFESSION WITH THE MOUTH and #3011, Volume 52—FAITH FIRST, CONFESSION FOLLOWING—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] After believing in Christ, the man must confess that he does believe in Him. It would be a shame for any Believer to try to sneak into Heaven without acknowledging that Christ has saved him. If any man is ashamed of his religion, you may depend upon it that it is one of which he has cause to be ashamed! But he who has true saving faith in his heart should never blush to acknowledge it. What is there to blush about in being a Christian? Let those blush who are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ!

**11, 12.** *For the Scripture says, Whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. Whoever they may be, Jews or Gentiles, rich or poor, learned or illiterate, black or white—if they will but call upon God in prayer, He will not be miserly towards them, but He will be generous towards them in the abundance of the blessings which He will give them in answer to their cry!*

**13, 14.** *For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? They cannot rightly pray without faith, “for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”*

**14.** *And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? Those who do not hear the Gospel are not likely to believe it. And there are many unbelievers who never seek to hear it—and it is always wrong for a man to refuse to believe any Truth of God before he knows what it really is. There should at least be a sincere searching of the Holy Scriptures and a candid listening to the preaching of the Word before it is rejected.*

**14, 15.** *And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of Peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.”* [See Sermon #2327, Volume 39—THE WHOLE MACHINERY OF SALVATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The Gospel brings gladness wherever it comes. The Word which we preach tells of joys that will last forever! The Gospel shall make the whole world sing with new music when it is received by all! And it shall roll away the mists that now swathe this poor dusky planet and make it shine out like its sister stars in all the Glory of God when once Christ is fully acknowledged here as Lord and Savior!

**16.** *But they have not all obeyed the Gospel.* [See Sermon #2804, Volume 48—DISOBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] All who have heard the Gospel have not obeyed it.

**16.** *For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report? And what Isaiah said is what we also have to say today, “Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”*

**17.** *So, then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.* [See Sermon #1031, Volume 18—HOW CAN I OBTAIN FAITH?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Salvation comes by faith, and faith comes by hearing, but that hearing must be the hearing of the Word of God! Surely there is no great difficulty in understanding the Gospel. This is no maze in which a man may lose himself. Here are no puzzling directions which only the learned can comprehend! No, but here stands the plain, simple, soul-quickenings words, “Believe and live.”

**18, 20** *But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But, I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Isaiah is very bold and says, I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me. Is not that a wonderful text? There are some who have heard the Gospel year after year, and who have refused it—and perished. And there are, on the other hand, scattered up and down this world, thousands of people who have never yet heard it,*

but the very first time they do hear it, they will accept it and be eternally saved!

**21.** *But to Israel*—To God’s ancient people to whom the Gospel had been preached when Paul wrote this Epistle—“to Israel”—

**21.** *He says, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.* It is strange that many who first hear the Word and often hear it, turn away from it. While others, to whom it comes as a complete novelty, are blessed the first time they hear it! I sometimes say that there are some hearers who regularly occupy these seats who are just like pieces of India rubber. They are easily impressed, they yield ascent to every Truth of God that is uttered, but they soon get back into their old shape again—and they are exactly the same after 20 years of hearing the Gospel as they were before—only that they are still more hardened. On the other hand, there will sometimes drop into this House of Prayer a thoroughly irreligious man with a heart as hard as a flint—and the very first tap of the hammer of the Gospel breaks the flint so effectually that it is never a flint again and God’s Grace renews his heart then and there! It is our earnest desire, on all occasions whatever hearers are gathered here, that God’s saving power may be manifested to all present. So may it be now, for Christ’s sake, and to God’s glory! Amen.

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

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

# THE FIRST SERMON IN THE TABERNACLE NO. 369

A SERMON DELIVERED ON MONDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 25, 1861,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

*“And daily in the temple and in every house, they ceased  
not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”  
Acts 5:42.*

I DO not know whether there are any persons here present who can contrive to put themselves into my present position and feel my present feelings. If they can effect that, they will give me credit for meaning what I say when I declare that I feel totally unable to preach. And, indeed, I think I shall scarcely attempt a sermon, but rather give a sort of declaration of the truths from which future sermons shall be made. I will give you bul- lion rather than coin. The brook from the quarry and not the statue from the chisel.

It appears that the one subject upon which men preached in the apos- tolic age was *Jesus Christ*. The tendency of man, if left alone is continually to go further and further from God and the Church of God itself is no ex- ception to the general rule. For the first few years during and after the apo- stolic era, Christ Jesus was preached but gradually the Church departed from the central point and began rather to preach ceremonials and church offices rather than the Person of their Lord. So has it been in these modern times—we also have fallen into the same error, at least to a de- gree—and have gone from preaching Christ to preaching doctrines about Christ, inferences which may be drawn from His life, or definitions which may be gathered from His discourses.

We are not content to stand like angels in the Sun—our fancies disturb our rest and must needs fly on the sunbeams—further and further from the glorious source of light. In the days of Paul it was not difficult at once, in one word, to give the sum and substance of the current theology. It was Christ Jesus. Had you asked any one of those disciples what he believed, he would have replied, “I believe Christ.” If you had requested him to show you his Body of Divinity, he would have pointed upward reminding you that divinity never had but one body, the suffering and crucified human frame of Jesus Christ who ascended up on high.

To them Christ was not a notion refined, but unsubstantial—not an historical personage who had left only the savor of his character behind but whose person was dead. To them He was not a set of ideas, not a creed, nor an incarnation of an abstract theory—but He was a Person. One whom some of them had seen, whose hands they had handled—no, One of whose flesh they had all been made to eat and of whose blood they had spiritually been made to drink. Christ was Substance to them. I fear He is too often but shadow to us. He was a reality to their minds. To us— though, perhaps, we would scarcely allow it in so many words—rather a myth than a man—rather a person who was, than He who was and is and is to come—the Almighty.

I would propose (and O may the Lord grant us grace to carry out that proposition from which no Christian can dissent), I would propose that the subject of the ministry of this house, as long as this platform shall stand and as long as this house shall be frequented by worshippers, shall be the Person of Jesus Christ. I am never ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist, although I claim to be rather a Calvinist according to Calvin, than after the modern debased fashion. I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist. You have there [pointing to the baptistery] substantial evidence that I am not ashamed of that ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But if I am asked to say what is my creed I think I must reply—"It is Jesus Christ." My venerable predecessor, Dr. Gill, has left a body of divinity admirable and excellent in its way. But the body of divinity to which I would pin and bind myself forever, God helping me, is not his system of divinity or any other human treatise, but Christ Jesus, who is the Sum and Substance of the Gospel. Who is in Himself all theology—the incarnation of every precious Truth—the all-glorious personal embodiment of the Way, the Truth and the Life.

This afternoon I will try to describe *the subject, Christ Jesus*. Secondly, to speak for a little while upon *its comprehensiveness*. Then to enlarge upon *its excellencies*. And conclude by testing *its power*.

**1. First, then, the SUBJECT.**

They continued both to teach and preach *Jesus Christ*. To preach Jesus Christ aright we must preach Him in His *infinite and indisputable Godhead*. We may be attacked by philosophers who will either make Him no God at all, or one constituted temporarily and, I must add, absurdly a God for a season. We shall have at once upon us those who view Christ as a Prophet, as a great man, as an admirable exemplar. We shall be assailed on all sides by those who choose rather to draw their divinity from their own addled brains than from the simplicity of Holy Writ.

But what matters this? We must reiterate again and again the absolute and proper deity of Christ. Without this we are in the position of those described by the Prophet—their tacklings are loosed, they could not well strengthen their mast and soon will our enemies prevail against us and the prey of a great spoil shall be taken. Take away the divinity of Christ from the Gospel and you have nothing whatever left upon which the anxious soul can rest. Remove the Word who was in the beginning with God and who was God and the Joachim and Boaz of the temple are overturned.

Without a Divine Savior your Gospel is a rope of sand, a bubble. A something less substantial than a dream. If Christ is not God, He is the basest of impostors. He is either one of two things—very God of very God, or else an arch-deceiver of the souls of men—for He made many of them believe He was God and brought upon Himself the consequences of what they called blasphemy. If He is not God, He is the greatest deceiver that ever lived. But God He is. And here, in this house, we must and will adore Him. With the multitude of His redeemed we *will* sing—

***"Jesus is worthy to receive,  
Honor and power Divine.  
And blessings more than we can give  
He is Lord forever more."***

To preach Christ, however, we must also preach *His true humanity*. We must never make Him to be less man-like because He was perfectly Divine. I love that hymn of Hart which begins—

**“A Man there was—a real Man,  
Who once on Calvary died.”**

“Real man!” I think we do not often realize that manhood of Christ. We do not see that He was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—feeling, thinking, acting, suffering, doing just like ourselves—one of our fellows and only above us because He is “exalted with the oil of gladness above His fellows.” We must have a human Christ and we must have one of real flesh and blood, too—not of shadows or filmy fancies. We must have one to whom we can talk, one with whom we can walk, one—

**“Who in His measure feels afresh  
What every member bears,”**

who is so intimately connected with us in ties of blood that He is as with us one the head of the family, first-born among many Brethren.

I am never more glad than when I am preaching a personal Christ. A doctrinal Christ, a practical Christ or an experimental Christ, as some good men make Him to be according to the temper of their minds, I do not feel to be sufficient for the people of God. We want a *personal* Christ. This has been a power to the Romish church—a power which they have used for ill, but always a power. They have had a *personal* Christ, but then it has either been a baby Christ in His mother’s arms, or else a dead Christ upon the Cross.

They never reached the force of a real full-grown Christ, one who not only lived and suffered, but who died and rose again and sits at the right hand of God, the Head of the Church, the one ruler of men. Oh, we must bring out more and more clearly each day the real personality of the Redeemer in His complex Person. Whatever we fail to preach, we must preach Him. If we are wrong in many points, if we are but right *here*, this will save our ministry from the flames. But if we are wrong here, however orthodox we may pretend to be, we cannot be right in the rest unless we think rightly of Him.

But, further—to preach Christ Jesus it is absolutely necessary we should preach Him as *the only mediator between God and man*. Admitting the efficacy of the intercession of *living* saints for sinners, never for a moment denying that every man is bound to make supplication for all ranks and conditions of men—yet must we have it that the only Mediator in the heavens and the only direct intercessor with God is the “man Christ Jesus.” No we must not be content with making Him the *only* Mediator—we must set aside all approach to God in any way whatever, except by Him.

We must not only have Him for the priest, but we must bare Him for the altar, the Victim and the Offerer, too. We must learn in full the meaning of that precious text—“Christ is all.” We must not see a part of the types here and a part there but all gathered up in Him, the one door of Heaven, the one crimson way by which our souls approach to God. We must not allow that approaches can be made in human strength, by human learning, or by human effort.

But in Him and through Him and by Him and in dependence upon Him must all be done between God and man. We have no wings, my Brethren,

with which to fly to Heaven. Our journey there must be on the rounds of Jacob's ladder. We cannot approach God by anything *we have*, or know, or *do*. Christ crucified and He alone must lift us up to God.

And more—we must preach Christ in the solitariness of His redemption work. We must not permit for a moment the fair white linen of His righteousness to be stained by the patchwork of our filthy rags. We must not submit that the precious blood of His should be diluted by any offering of ours co-acting for our salvation. He has, by one Sacrifice, forever put away sin. We shall never preach Christ unless we have a real atonement. There are certain people nowadays who are making the atonement first a sort of compromise and the next step is to make the atonement a display of what ought to have been, instead of the thing which should have been.

Then, next—there are some who make it to be a mere picture, an exhibition, a shadow—a shadow the substance of which they have not seen. And the day will come and there are sundry traces of it here and there, in which in some churches the atonement shall be utterly denied and yet men shall call themselves Christians, while they have broken themselves against the cornerstone of the entire system. I have no kith nor kin nor friendship, nor Christian amity with any man whatever who claims to be a Christian and yet denies the atonement. There is a limit to the charity of Christians and there can be none whatever entertained to the man who is dishonest enough to occupy a Christian pulpit and to deny Christ.

It is only in the Christian Church that such a thing can be tolerated. I appeal to you—was there ever known a Buddhist acknowledged in the temple of Buddha who denied the basis doctrine of the sect? Was there ever known a Mohammedan Imam who was sanctioned in the mosque while he cried down the Prophet? It remains for Christian churches only to have in their midst men who can bear the name of Christian, who can even venture to be Christian teachers, while they slander the Deity of Him who is the Christian's God and speak lightly of the efficacy of His blood who is the Christian's atonement.

May this deadly cancer be cut out root and branch and whatever tearing of the flesh there may be, better cut it out with a jagged knife than suffer to exist, because no lance is to be found to do it daintily. We must have, then, Christ in the efficacy of His precious blood as the only Redeemer of the souls of men and as the only Mediator, who, without assistance of ours, has brought us to God and made reconciliation through His blood.

Our ministry will scarcely be complete unless we preach *Christ as the only Lawgiver and Rabbi of the Church*. When you put it down as a canon of your faith that the Church has right and power to decree rites and ceremonies, you have robbed Christ at once of His proper position as the only Teacher of the Church. Or when you claim the office of controlling other men's consciences by the *decree* of the Church, or the *vote* of a synod, apart from the authority of Christ, you have taken away from Christ that chair which He occupies in the Christian Church as the Teacher in the great Christian school, as the Rabbi and the only Rabbi of our faith.

God forbid that we should hold a single Truth except on His authority. Let not our faith stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. You refer me to the writings of Doctor this and Doctor the other—what are these? The words of *Christ*—these are Truth—and these are wisdom. You bring the authority from the practice of a church three or four centuries removed from the crucifixion as the proof of the existence of a certain ceremony and the righteousness of certain ecclesiastical offices. What is your proof worth?

If Christ has not specially ordained it and if He has not commanded His people to obey it, of what value is any rite whatever? We acknowledge Christ is ordaining all things for His Church and presenting that Church with a finished code of law from which any deviation is a sin and to which any addition is a high crime. Any Church officer who is not ordained of Christ occupies an office which he ought to resign. Any person who practices a ceremony for which he has not Scriptural authority should renounce it and any man who preaches a doctrine for which he has not Christ as his Certifier, should not demand for it the faith of men.

But I fear there are times coming when the minister will not be true to his duty unless he goes further and preaches Christ as *the sole King of the Church*. There has been a disposition on the part of the State, especially with regard to the Free Church of Scotland, to exercise power and judgment over Church decrees. No king, no queen that ever lived, or can live, has any authority whatever over the Church of Christ. The Church has none to govern and rule over her but her Lord and her King. The Church can suffer, but she cannot yield. You may break her confessors alive upon the wheel, but she, in her uprightness, will neither bend nor bow. From the sentence of our Church there is no appeal whatever on earth.

To the court of Heaven a man may appeal if the sentence of the Church is wrong, but to Caesar never. Neither the best nor the worst of kings or queens may ever dare to put their finger upon the prerogative of Christ as the head of the Church. Up, Church of God! If once there are any laws of man passed to govern you, up—dash them in pieces! Let us each catch up the war cry and uplift the lion standard of the tribe of Judah. Let us challenge the kings of the earth and say, "*Who shall rouse Him up?*" The Church is queen above all queens and Christ her only King. None have jurisdiction or power in the Church of Christ save Jesus Christ Himself.

If any of our acts violate the civil laws, we are men and citizens and we acknowledge the right of a State to govern us as individuals. None of us wish to be less subjects of the realm because we are kings and priests unto God. But as members of Christian churches we maintain that the excommunication of a Christian Church can never be reversed by the civil power, or by any State act, nor are its censures to be examined, much less to be removed, mitigated, or even judged.

We must have, as Christ's Church, a full recognition of His imperial rights and the day will come when the State will not only tolerate us as a mere society, but admit that as we profess to be the church of Christ, we have a right by that very fact to be self-governing and never to be interfered with in any sense whatever, so far as our ecclesiastical affairs are concerned.

Christ must be preached and exalted in all these respects or else we have not preached a full Christ. But I go one step further. We have not yet mounted to the full height of our ministry unless we learn to preach *Christ as the King of kings*. He has an absolute right to the entire dominion of this world. The Christian minister, as ordained of God to preach, has a perfect right in God's name to preach upon any subject touching the Lord's kingdom and to rebuke and exhort even the greatest of men.

Sometimes I have heard it said, when we have canvassed the acts of an emperor or senator, "These are politics." But Christ is King of politics as well as theology. "Oh, but"—they say—"what have you to do with what the State does?" Why, just this—Christ is the Head of all States and while the State has no authority over the Church, yet Christ Himself is King of kings and Lord of lords. Oh, that the Church would put her diadem upon her head and take her right position! We are not slaves. The Church of God is not a groveling corporation bound forever to sit upon a dunghill—never queen was so fair as she and never robe so rich as the purple which she wears.

Arise, O Church! Arise—the earth is yours, claim it. Send out your missionary, not as a petitioner to creep at the feet of princes, but as an ambassador for God to make peace between God and man. Send him out to claim the possession which belongs to you and which God has given to you to be yours forever and ever by a right which kings may dispute, but which one day everyone of them shall acknowledge.

The fact is we must bring *Christ Himself* back into camp once more. It is of little use having our true Jerusalem swords and the shields and the banners and the trumpets and the drums—we want the King Himself in the midst of us. More and more of a personal Christ is the great lack of the time. I would not wish for less doctrine, less experience, or less practice—but more of all this put into Christ and Christ preached as the sum and substance of it all.

**II.** But, secondly, I am now to speak, for a short time, upon the COMPREHENSIVENESS OF THE SUBJECT which the text announces.

It is an old and trite saying that the ministers of the Gospel may be divided into three kinds—the doctrinal, the experimental and the practical. The saying is so often repeated that very few would contradict it. But it betrays at once, if it is true, the absence and lack of a something essentially unnecessary for the church's success. Where is the preacher of Christ without *all* of these?

I propound this, that if a man be found a preacher of Christ, he is doctrinal, experimental and practical. The *doctrinal* preacher generally has a limited range. He is useful, exceedingly useful. God constitutes him a barrier against the innovations of the times—he preaches upon his subjects so frequently that he is well versed in them and becomes one of the armed men about the bed of Solomon. But suppose the doctrinal preacher should have it all his own way and there should be none others at all—what would be the effect?

See it in our Baptist churches about one hundred and fifty years ago. They were all *sound* and sound asleep. Those doctrines had preached them into a lethargy and had it not been for some few who started up and

proposed the missions for the heathen and who found but little sympathy at first, the Church would have been utterly inactive. Now, I would not be hard with any, but there are some Brethren still whose preaching might justly be summed up as being doctrinal, nothing more than doctrinal and what is the effect of their ministry? Bitterness.

They learn to contend not only earnestly for the faith, but savagely for it. Certainly we admire their earnestness and we thank God for their soundness. But we wish there were mingled with their doctrine a somewhat else which might tone down their severity and make them seek rather the unity and fellowship of the saints than the division and discord which they labor to create.

Again—I will refer you to the next class of preachers, the *experimental*. How delightful it is to sit under an experimental preacher! Perhaps of all ministries this one is the most useful. He who preaches the doubts, the fears, the joys, the ecstasies of the people of God. How often do the saints see the footsteps of the flock and then they find the shepherd under an experimental minister! But do you know the effect of an experimental minister, purely so, I mean—when all else is put aside to make room for experience?

There is one school of divines always preaching the corruption of the human heart. This is their style—“*Except you be flayed alive by the Law; except you are daily feeling the utter rottenness of your heart. Except you are a stranger to full assurance and do always doubt and fear. Except you abide on the dunghill and do scrape yourself with a potsherd, you are no child of God.*”

Who told you that? This has been the preaching of some experimental preachers and the effect has been just this—men have come to think the deformities of God’s people to be their beauty. They are like certain courtiers of the reign of Richard III, who is said by history to have had a hump upon his back and his admirers stuffed their backs that they might have a graceful hump, too. And there are many who, because a minister preaches doubts and fears, feel they must doubt and fear, too, and then that which is both uncomfortable to themselves and dishonoring to God comes to be the very mark of God’s people.

This is the tendency of experimental preaching, however judiciously managed, when ministers harp on that string and on that alone. The tendency is either to preach the people into a soft and savory state, in which there is not a bit of manliness or might—or else into that dead and rotten state in which corruption outswells communion and the savor is not the perfume of the king’s ointments, but the stench of a corrupt and filthy heart.

Take also the *practical* preacher. Who would say a word against this good man? He stirs the people up, excites the children of God to holy duties, promotes every excellent object and is in his way an admirable supplement to the two other kinds of ministers. But sit under the practical preacher—sit under him all the year round and listen to his people as they come out. There is one who says, “*the same thing over again—Do, do, do, nothing but do.*”

There is a poor sinner yonder just gone down the front steps. Follow him. "Oh," says he, "I came here to find out what *Christ* could do for me and I have only been told what I must do for myself." Now this is a great evil and persons who sit under such a ministry become lean, starving things. I would that practical preachers would listen to our farmers who always say it is better to put the whip in the manger than upon the horse's back. Let them feed the people with food convenient for them and they will be practical enough but all practice and no promise, all exhortation and no sound doctrine will never make the man of God perfect and zealous for good works.

But what am I driving at in bringing up these three sorts of ministers? Why, just this—to show you that there is one minister who can preach *all* this—without the dangers of any one of the others but with the excellencies of the whole. And who is he? Why, any man in the world *who preaches Christ*. If he preaches Christ's Person he must preach *doctrine*. If I preach Christ I must preach Him as the Covenant Head of His people and how far am I then from the doctrine of election?

If I preach Christ I must preach the efficacy of His blood and how far am I removed then from the great doctrine of an effectual atonement? If I preach Christ I *must* preach the love of His heart and how can I deny the final perseverance of the saints? If I preach the Lord Jesus as the great Head and King, how far am I removed from Divine Sovereignty? Must I not, if I preach Christ personally, preach His doctrines? I believe they are nothing but the natural outgrowth of that great root thought, or root substance rather, the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who will preach Christ fully will never be lax in doctrine.

And what better *experience* can you preach than in preaching Christ? Would you preach the sufferings of the saints—preach *His* agony and bloody sweat, His Cross and passion. For the true sufferings of the saints are in fellowship with Him. If you would preach their joys—preach *His* resurrection, *His* ascension and *His* advent. You are never far from the joys of the saints when you are near to the joys of Christ. For did not He say, "*My* joy shall be in them that their joy may be full"?

And what better *practice* can be preached than preaching Christ? Of every virtue He is the Pattern. Of the perfection of human character, He is the very mirror of everything that is holy and of good report. He is the abiding incarnation. He cannot fail, then, to be a good doctrinal, experimental, practical preacher who preaches Christ. Did you ever know a congregation grow less spiritual by a minister preaching Christ? Did you ever know them get full of doubts and fears by preaching Christ? Did you ever hear of their getting lax in sentiment by his preaching Christ? Did you ever hear a whisper that men became unholy in their lives because they heard too much about Christ?

I think that all the excellence of all ministers may be gathered up into the teaching of the man who preaches Christ every day in the week. And there will not be any of the evil connected with the other forms of preaching.

**III.** I shall now pass on to notice some of the surpassing excellencies of the subject.

First, he will always have a *blessed variety* in his preaching. In Australia I have heard that the only change for the backwoodsmen is to have one day damper, tea and bread—the next day, bread, damper and tea. And the next day, tea, bread and damper. The only variety some ministers give, is one Sunday to have depravity, election and perseverance and the next Sunday, election, perseverance and depravity. There are many strings to the harp of the Gospel. There are some Brethren who are so rightly charmed with five of the strings, which certainly have very rich music in them, that they never meddle with any of the other strings. Cobwebs hang on the rest, while these five are pretty well worn out.

It is always pretty much the same thing from the first of January to the last of December. Their organ has very few keys and upon these they may make a very blessed variety, but I think not a very extensive one. Any man who preaches Christ will ensure variety in his preaching. He has all manner of precious perfume, myrrh and aloes and cassia. He has all sorts of music, he has everything that is sweet to the ear—he has all manner of fruits.

This Tree of Life bears twelve manner of fruits. *He* is all manner of raiment. *He* is golden raiment for beauty. *He* is the warm raiment for comfort. *He* is the stout raiment for harness in the day of battle. There are all things in Christ and he that has Christ will have as great a variety as there is to be found in the scenery of the world where are no two brooks alike and no two rivers wind in precisely the same manner and no two trees grow in precisely the same form.

Any other subject you may preach upon till your hearers feel satisfied—but with Christ for a subject, you may go on and on and on, till the sermon swells into the eternal song and you begin to sing, “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.”

There is yet another excellence about this subject, namely, that *it suits all sorts of people*. Are there rebels present? Preach Christ. It will suit them. Are there pardoned sinners present? What is better to melt their hearts than the blood of the Lord Jesus? Are there doubting Christians? What can cheer them better than the name of Christ? Are there strong believers? What is stronger meat than Jesus crucified? Are there learned, polite, intellectual hearers? If they are not satisfied with Christ, they ought to be. Are there poor, ignorant, unlettered men? Jesus Christ is just the thing to preach to them—a naked Christ to their simple ears.

Jesus Christ is a topic that will keep in all climates. Land in New Zealand in the midst of uncivilized men. Move off to another post and stand in the midst of poetical Persia or fickle France—the Cross is adapted to all. We need not inquire into the doctrinal opinion of our hearers. If they are high, I am sure Christ will suit *them*. If they are low, if they are true believers, I am sure Christ Jesus will suit. No Christians will reject such meat as this. Only prepare it and with a hot heart and serve it up on the table and they will be satisfied and feed to the full so that there is adaptation as well as variety in this subject.

**IV.** But more than this, I must add and this will bring me to my last point, for my time flies—there is a power about this subject when it is preached with the demonstration of the Spirit, which is not found in any

other. My Brethren, what power there is in this subject to promote *the union* of the people of God! There is a man there, he is almost a Puseyite. "I do not like him," says one. Stop till I tell you something more about him and you will. There is another man there, a Presbyterian—true blue. He cannot bear Independence, or anything but Presbytery—a covenant man. "Well," says one, "I like him a little better. But I do not suppose we shall get on very well."

Stop! I will tell you some more about him. There is another man down there. He is a very strong Calvinist. "Humph," says one, "I shall not admire *him*." Stop, stop! Now, here are these three men. Let us hear what they say of each other. If they know nothing of each other except what I have stated, the first time they meet there will be a magnificent quarrel. There is yonder clergyman—he will have little fraternity whatever with the ultra-Evangelical, while the Presbyterian will reject them both, for he abhors black prelacy. But, my dear Brethren, all three of you, we of this congregation will approve of you all and you will approve of one another when I have stated your true character.

That man yonder, whom I called almost a Puseyite, was George Herbert. How he loved the doornails of the Church! I think he would scarce have had a spider killed that had once crept across the church aisles. He was a thorough churchman, to the very center of the marrow of his bones but what a Christian! What a lover of his sweet Lord Jesus! You know that hymn of his which I have so often quoted and mean to quote a hundred times more—"How sweetly does my Master's sound," and so forth? I hear a knock at the door. "Who is that?" "Why, it is a very strong churchman." "Do not show him in. I am at prayer. I cannot pray with him. "Oh, but it is George Herbert!" "Oh, let him in, let him in! No man could I pray better with than Mr. Herbert. Walk in, Mr. Herbert. We are right glad to see you. You are our dear companion—your hymns have made us glad."

But who was that second man, the Presbyterian, who would not have liked George Herbert at all? Why, that was Samuel Rutherford. What a seraphic spirit! What splendid metaphors he uses about his sweet Lord Jesus! He has written all Solomon's Song over without knowing it. He felt and proved it to be Divine. The Spirit in him re-dictated the song. Well now, I think, we will introduce Mr. Rutherford and Mr. Herbert together and I am persuaded when they begin to speak about their Master they will find each other next of kin. And I feel sure that, by this time, Samuel Rutherford and George Herbert have found each other out in Heaven and are sitting side by side.

Well, but then we mentioned another. Who was that high Calvinist? He was the man who was called the Leviathan of Antinomians. That he was a leviathan I will grant, but that he was an Antinomian is false. It was Dr. Hawker. Now, I am sure George Herbert would not have liked Dr. Hawker and I am certain that Dr. Hawker would not have liked George Herbert and I do not suppose that Samuel Rutherford would have had anything to do with either of them. "No, no," he would say, "your black prelacy I hate." But look at Hawker, there is a sweet spirit, he cannot take up his pen but he dips it in Christ and begins to write about his Lord at once. "Precious

Immanuel—precious Jesus.” Those words in his morning and evening portions are repeated again and again and again.

I recollect hearing of Mr. Rowland Hill, that he said to a young man who was at tea with him one night when he was about to go—“Where are you going to?” “Oh,” said he, “I am going to hear Dr. Hawker, at St. George’s in the Borough.” “Oh, go and hear him,” he said, “He is a right good man, worth hearing. But there is this difference between him and me—my preaching is something like a pudding, with here and there a plum. But Dr. Hawker’s is all plum.” And that was very near the mark, because Dr. Hawker was all Christ. He was constantly preaching of his Master. And even if he gave an invitation to a sinner, it was generally put in this way—“What say you? Will you go with *this Man* and be married and espoused unto *Him*? It was the preaching of a personal Christ that made his ministry so full of marrow and fatness.

My dear Friends, let a man stand up and exalt Christ and we are all agreed. I see before me this afternoon members of all Christian denominations—but if Christ Jesus is not the topic that suits you, why then I think we may question your Christianity. The more Christ is preached, the more will the Church prove and exhibit and assert and maintain her unity. But the less Christ is preached and the more of Paul and Apollos and Cephas, the more of strife and division and the less of true Christian fellowship.

We will only mention the power of the preaching of Christ *upon the heart of sinners*. There is a person, now a member of my church, whose conversion was owing to the reading of that hymn—

**“Jesus, lover of my soul.”**

“Ah,” said he, “does Jesus love my soul? Then how vile I have been to neglect Him.”

There are scores whose conversation is distinctly and directly traceable, not to doctrine—though that is often useful—nor experience, nor practice, though these are fruitful, but to the *preaching of Christ*. I think you will find the most fertile sermons have always been the most Christly sermons. This is a seed which seldom rots under the clod. One may fall upon the stony ground, but it more often happens that the seed breaks the stone when it falls and as Christ is a root out of a dry ground, so this finds root for itself even in dry, hard, stony hearts. We ought to preach the Law, we ought to thunder out the threats of God, but they must never be the main topic. Christ, Christ, Christ, if we would have men converted.

Do you want to convince yonder careless one? Tell him the story of the Cross. Under God it will arrest his attention and awaken his thoughts. Would you subdue the carnal affections of yonder profligate? Preach the love of Christ and that new love shall uproot the old. Would you bind up yonder broken heart? Bring forth Christ, for in Him there is a cordial for every fear. Christ is preached and we do rejoice, yes, and will rejoice, “for He is the power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believes.”

Judge not, my dear Brethren, any man’s ministry. The world has too often condemned the man whom God intended to honor. Say not of another, “He can do no good, for his language is rough and rude.” Say not of another that his style is too often marred with flippancy. Say not of a third that he is too erudite or soars too high. Every man in his own order. If that man preaches Christ, whether he is Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, we

wish him God speed. For God will bless the Christ he preaches and forgive the error which mingled with his ministry.

I must even frankly admit the Truth of many a criticism that has been uttered on my ministry. But I know it has been successful and under God it has been because I *have* sought to preach Christ. I say that without boasting or egotism. If I had not done so I had no right to be a minister of Christ at all and as I claim to be God's minister, I will and must declare it—whatever I have not preached, *I have preached Christ* and into whatever mistakes I have fallen, I have sought to point to His Cross and say, "Behold the way to God."

And if you see others preaching Christ, be not their foe. Pray for them, bear them in your arms before God, their errors may yet be outgrown, if they preach Christ. But if not, I care not what their excellency may be, the excellency shall die and expire like sparks that go out in darkness. They have not the fuel of the flame, for they have not Christ Jesus as the substance of their ministry.

May I entreat, in closing, your earnest prayer, each one of you, that in this house as well as in all the places of worship round about, Christ may evermore be preached. And I may add my own sincere desire that this place may become a hissing and the abode of dragons and this pulpit be burned with fire if ever any other Gospel be preached here than that which we have received of the holy Apostles of God—of which Jesus Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone. Let me have your incessant prayers. May God speed every minister of Christ. But where there is so large a field of labor may I claim your earnest and constant intercessions, that where Christ is lifted up, men may be drawn to hear and afterwards drawn to believe, that they may find Christ the Savior of our soul.

"He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned." "Repent and be converted, every one of you," said Peter. Yet again said Paul to the jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved and your house." God give us grace to believe and unto Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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

# **OPENING SERVICE OF THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NO. 369A**

**Monday, March 18, 1861**

**NEWINGTON.**

MORE than 1,000 persons assembled at 7 in the morning on Monday, March 18th, to offer solemn prayer. The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon presided and first addressed the Throne of Grace. He was followed by one of the deacons, Mr. W. Olney and one of the elders, Mr. H. Hanks, a student, Mr. Tubb, E. Ball, Esq., M.P. for Cambridgeshire and Mr. G. Moore, deacon of the church. Fervency and intense earnestness marked every petition and the Brethren separated with a firm belief that the Lord would be with us.

The hymns to be used during the Dedication Service are printed as a penny hymn-book, but as many will not be able to obtain it, we subjoin two of the hymns sung at this first meeting. The first was composed by J. Tritton, Esq., for the occasion and the second is a specimen of that joyous Gospel which we trust will long be proclaimed within our hallowed walls—

***Spirit of glory and of grace,  
Your favor we entreat,  
You true Shekinah of the place,  
Where true disciples meet.  
Oh, let the labor of our hands  
Be precious in your sight  
And long as this our temple stands,  
Your Presence be its light.***

***Here float the Gospel's banner wide  
O'er faithful hearts and brave;  
And here, O Jesus crucified,***

***Come forth in power to save!***

***Make bare Your arm, You King of saints,  
To bring dead souls to life;  
And when Your children's courage faints,  
Renew them for the strife.***

***No Bochim this—a place of woe—  
But Pisgah's holy steep;  
Where dying ones their Heaven shall know,  
Ere yet they fall asleep.  
While we who live shall urge the race,  
If Jesus be but here,  
Spirit of glory and of grace,  
Revealing Christ, appear!***

***Saved from the damning power of sin,  
The Law's tremendous curse  
We'll now the sacred song begin  
Where God began with us.  
We'll sing the vast unmeasured gram  
Which, from the days of old,  
Did all His chosen sons embrace,  
A sheep within His fold.***

***The basis of eternal love  
Shall mercy's frame sustain;  
Earth, Hell, or sin, the same to move,  
Shall all conspire in vain.***

***Sing, O you sinners bought with blood,  
Hail the Great Three in One  
Tell how secure the covenant stood  
Ere time its race begun.  
Ne'er had you felt the guilt of sin  
Nor sweets of pardoning love,  
Unless your worthless names had been  
Enrolled to life above.***

***O what a sweet exalted song  
Shall rend the vaulted skies,  
Then, shouting grace, the blood-washed throng  
Shall see the Top Stone rise.***

The Bazaar was held during the week and crowned with abundant success. On Monday, March 25th, the Rev. O. Rogers presided over the second prayer meeting and addressed the brethren in a sweet and savory manner upon "The House of God, the Gate of Heaven."

The first sermons, it will be observed, are admirably adapted to be companion sermons, but the ministers were quite unaware as to what text each had selected.

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

# GOOD EARNESTS OF GREAT SUCCESS

## NO. 802

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 12, 1868,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And the Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”*  
*Acts 6:7.*

CERTAIN things preceded this prosperity—the counterpart of which I verily believe we have experienced among ourselves. There had been a little trouble in the Church—some had thought one thing, some had thought another. There appeared to have been a just cause for complaint. The Apostles, conciliatory in their temper and earnest in their endeavor to keep the Church together, as all true ministers should be, proposed the election of seven men who should distribute the contributions impartially among the poor. This was agreed to and acted upon by the entire assembly, and straightaway the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.

Well might great Grace rest upon them all, for they loved each other with a pure heart fervently. Such unanimity, as a rule, I consider essential to Church prosperity. If there are divisions among you, and one shall say, “I am for this,” and another, “I am for that,” how can you expect that the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of *peace*, to be present with you and working among you? But when we are knit together in brotherly affection, the Lord *commands* the blessing, even life for evermore. Where brotherly love continues and saints walk in holy unity, the witness they bear is powerful, and the increase they gather is palpable.

So I felt when I met with the Brethren last Thursday night. The attendance at the Church meeting was very numerous, and the unanimity that prevailed not only gratified me, but I must confess astounded me, too. I think all of us who know anything of the history of churches, especially those of a democratic order where we recognize the rights of every member, understand how easy it is for thoughts to diverge, for counsels to vary, and for excellent Brethren conscientiously to disagree. A breach once made has a tendency to widen, and a cut, unless speedily repaired, may tear a Church to pieces.

But not so much as a single word was spoken, nor do I know that so much as a single *thought* crossed the breast of anyone that evening contrary to the general current of unanimous opinion with which you elected my Brother to take upon himself the office proposed to assist me in my work. I felt as if I could only weep my joy. I knew of no words by which I could express it, because I looked not only at the unity itself, but regarding it as one of the qualifications for future prosperity, I thought within myself, “Surely God will bless us! Surely He will bless us yet more abundantly than before.”

Moreover, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you know that some two or three years ago, Baptist Churches of London scarcely knew each other. There might have been some secret love between them, but certainly there was no manifest *display* of it. But now for two years we have been associated together to the number of 80 or ninety. In fact, there are now nearly a hundred of the Churches among whom union has been cemented. We have been enabled to do some service for the Master by this incorporation, but whatever service we may have done, or may not have done, this certainly has been the result of our meeting with each other—that the Churches have come to feel themselves to be a whole, they keep rank, they walk together as a phalanx—they desire to be faithful to Christ and to bear each others' burdens.

If anyone had told me, three or four years ago, that I should live to see, as I did last year, this house filled with the representatives of our Baptist Churches met together to pray, I should have said, "If the Lord will open windows in Heaven, may such a thing be?" But it has been, and by God's Grace it will be yet again! And we shall clasp hands next Tuesday and go on for another campaign against the common enemy, united as one man, first to Christ, and then to one another. May we not look upon this as a sign that God is intending to bless *all* our Churches, to pour us out a blessing such as we shall not have room enough to receive? May the Lord send prosperity! Amen, say we! Amen from our hearts! Amen, we hope, all God's saints will say.

May the blessing speedily be sent. Since we have the first matter I am hopeful. But many will urge discouragements. "How is it likely," says one, "that we can hope to make an impression upon the present age? What means have we but the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ?" We are certainly not among the wealthy, and we count not among us the great ones of the land. Our membership has always been, and still is, among the poor. How shall we expect to tell upon so huge a city as this, or to exert any influence upon so great a country? And, above all, how shall we make any impress upon the population of the whole globe?

My dear Brethren, we are weak, but we are not weaker than the first disciples of Christ! Neither were they learned, nor were they the wealthy of the earth—fishermen, the most of them, by no means men of cultivated ability—their tramp was that of a legion that went forth to conquer as well as to fight. Wherever they went and wielded the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, their enemies were put to confusion! It is true they died in the conflict. Some of them were slain by the sword and others of them were torn in sunder by wild beasts—but in all these things they were more than conquerors through Him that loved them. The primitive Church did tell upon its age and left a seed behind which the whole earth could not destroy! And so shall *we*, by God's Grace, if we are equally set upon it, equally filled with the Divine life, equally resolved by any means and by all means to spread abroad the savor of Jesus Christ's name!

Our weakness shall be our strength, for God shall make it to be the platform upon which the Omnipotence of His Divine Grace shall be displayed. Keep together, Brethren! Keep close to Christ! Close up your ranks! Heed the battle cry! Hold fast the faith! Quit yourselves like men in

the conflict, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against you! Only may the King Himself lead us onward to the fray and we shall not fear the result.

Having thus looked at the precedents of that prosperity enjoyed by the Church at Jerusalem, we shall, this evening, with deep earnestness, ask your attention to the *means* by which a like prosperity may be procured for such Churches as do not enjoy it now. Secondly, we shall have a word or two upon the results of such prosperity, and then, thirdly, upon the alternative which is before every Church—either to obtain such prosperity or else to mourn over grievous evils.

**I. WHAT ARE THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS PROSPERITY MAY BE PROCURED?** If we pant to see the Word of God increase, multitudes added to the disciples and a great company of those who are least likely to be saved brought in, there must be an adequate *instrumentality*. Nothing can survive without the operation of the Holy Spirit and the smile from Heaven. Paul plants, Apollos waters and God gives the increase. We must never begin our catalog of outward means without referring to that blessed and mysterious Potentate who abides in the Church, and without whom nothing is good, nothing efficient, nothing successful—

**“Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,  
With all Your quickening powers.”**

This should be our first prayer whenever we attempt to serve God, for if not, we begin with *pride* and can little hope to succeed by prowess. If we go the warfare at our own charges we must not marvel if we return stained with defeat. O Spirit of the living God, if it were not for Your power we could not make the attempt! But when we rely upon You we go forward in confidence! As for the ostensible means, would any Church prosper there must be much plain preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I have been struck lately, in looking through the history of the Reformation and of the times before the Reformation, with the remarkable downrightness of the testimony of the early preachers. If you look at the life of Farren you find him not preaching *about* the Gospel, but preaching the Gospel.

So it was with John Calvin. He is looked upon now, of course, as a theologian only, but he was really one of the greatest of Gospel preachers. When Calvin opened the Book and took a text, you might be sure that he was about to preach, “Through Grace are you saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” And it was the same with Luther. Luther’s preaching was just the ringing of a big bell, the note of which was always, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and live! It is not of works, lest any man should boast, but by faith are you saved, and by faith alone.” They spoke this, and they spoke it again and again!

Neither did they couch the doctrine in difficult words, but they labored with all their might, so to speak, that the farmer at the plow-tail should understand, and that the fish-wife should comprehend the Truth of God. They did not aim at lofty periods and flowing eloquence—of rhetoric they had a most contemptible opinion—but they just dashed right on with this one Truth, “He that believes has everlasting life.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” And, my Brethren, if we are to see the

Church of God really restored to her pristine glory, we must have back this plain, simple, Gospel-preaching.

I do believe that the hiding of the Cross beneath the veil of fine language and learned dissertation is half the cause of the spiritual destitution of our country. Jesus Christ came into the world to save *sinner*s. He came to seek and to save that which was *lost*. I would sooner say these few words, and then cease my testimony, than utter the most splendid oration that ever streamed from the lips of Demosthenes or of Cicero but not have declared the Gospel of Christ. We must keep to this! This must be the hammer that we bring down upon the anvil of the human heart again, and again, and again! God forbid that we should glory save in the Cross of Jesus Christ our Lord! God forbid that we should know anything among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified! Look to Him—not to the priest, not to your good works, not to your prayers, not to your Church attendance or your Chapel attendance—but to Christ Jesus exalted!

Look to him in faith, and God is *willing* to forgive you, *able* to forgive you, to receive you, to make you His children, and forever to *glorify* you with Himself. We must have much more of this plain preaching, and not only plain preaching but plain *teaching*. Sunday school teachers, you must teach this same Gospel. I know you do, but full many Sunday school teachers do not. A certain denomination has made the confession that after having had their schoolrooms crowded with children, they do not know that any of those children have afterwards come to be attendants at the places of worship. Miserable confession! Miserable teachers must they be!

And have we not known teachers who believed in the doctrines of Grace, and upstairs in the Chapel they would have fought earnestly for them—but downstairs in the schoolroom they have driveled to the little children in this kind of way—“Be good boys and girls. Keep the Sabbath. Do not buy sweets on Sunday. Mind your fathers and your mothers—be good, and you will go to Heaven”—which is not true, and is not the Gospel—for the same Gospel is for little children as for grown-up men and women! It is not, “Do this and live,” which is after the Law that was given by Moses, but “*Believe* and live,” which is according to the Grace and Truth that came by Jesus Christ! Teachers must inculcate the Gospel if they are to see the salvation of their classes! The Gospel, the *whole* Gospel, and nothing but the Gospel—for without this no great thing will be done.

And if we would see the Gospel spread abroad in London as once it did in Geneva. As once, under John Knox, it did in Scotland. As it did in Luther’s day throughout Germany, we must have much *holy living* to back it all up. After we have done the sermon, people say, “How about the people that attend there? What about the Church members, are they upright? Are they such people as you can trust? What about their homes? Do they make good husbands? Are they good servants? Are they kind masters?” People will be sure to enquire of this, and if the report of our character is bad it is all over with our testimony. The doctor may advertise, but if the patients are not cured, he is not likely to establish himself as being skilled in his art. And the preacher may preach, but if his people do not love the Gospel they kick down with their feet what he builds up with his hands.

As I told you this morning, the followers of the early Reformers were distinguished by the sanctity of their lives. When they were about to hunt out the Waldenses, the French king, who had some of them in his dominions, sent a priest to see what they were like, and he, honest man as he was, came back to the king and said, "As far as I could find, they seem to be much better Christians than we are. I am afraid they are heretics, but really they are so chaste, so honest, so upright, and so truly pious, that, though I hate heresy—I hope Your Majesty does not suspect me on that account—yet I would that all Catholics were as good as they are."

Now this was what made the Gospel victorious in those days—the stern integrity of those who received it—and thus it will be still. It cannot be otherwise. But if you become worldly—if you members of this Church are just the same as other men who have no Divine Grace and make no pretensions—what is the good of your profession? You are liars before God unless you live above the common life of the rest of mankind! Oh, to get back to the simplicity of Christian manners! I cannot go into particulars, and ordain that this you shall do and that you shall avoid, but you know very well what the simplicity is—and were it carried out there is a great deal that is now practiced among professors that would have at once to be given up!

As the books were burned when Paul preached, so there would be a great deal to be burned in the Christian Church if we had the Spirit of God in all His power to bring us back to the old simplicity of the Christian faith. And why not? If you put the sword into the scabbard, you cannot kill with it. You must pull it out and let it glitter in all its naked sharpness. If you put the sword of the Gospel into the scabbard of worldly conformity, as some of you do, you cannot expect that there will be any power in it! Draw it away from your worldly company, and your pernicious customs, and then shall you see that it still has power to kill and to make alive! There must, then, be *holy living* as well as plain testimony.

Yet all this would not suffice if the Church is to be multiplied and many are to be saved, unless we add individual, personal exertion. I am so full with one theme today that if I plow in the same furrow this evening as I did this morning I cannot help it, [*Lingerers Hastened*, Sermon #792] for I am anxious to make that furrow very deep and broad. I believe that no Christian Church can have prosperity if only a part of the members are active for the conversion of souls. Why, Sirs, it has got to be a thought among Christians that we *ministers* are to do all the work of bringing souls to Christ and that *you* are to sit still and enjoy the sermon, and perhaps criticize it and pull it to pieces.

But *this* is not orthodox—according to Christ's Law, *every* Christian is to be a minister in his own sphere. *Every* member of the Church is to be active in spreading the faith which was delivered, not to the *ministers*, but delivered to the *Believers*, to every one of them, that they might maintain it and spread it according to the gift which the Spirit has given them. Shall I venture a parable? A certain band of men, like knights, had been exceedingly victorious in all their conflicts. They were men of valor and of indomitable courage. They had carried everything before them, and subdued province after province for their king.

But all of a sudden they said in the council chamber, "We have at our head a most valiant warrior, one whose arm is stout enough to smite down 50 of his adversaries. Would it not be better if, with a few such as he to go out to the fight, the mere men-at-arms who make up the ordinary ranks, were to stay at home? We should be much more at our ease. Our horses would not so often be covered with foam, nor our armor be bruised in returning from the fray, and no doubt great things would be done."

Now the foremost champions, with fear and trembling, undertook the task and went to the conflict—and they fought well, no one could doubt it—to the best of their ability they unhorsed their foe and they did great exploits. But still, from the very hour in which that scheme was planned and carried out, no city was taken, no province was conquered, and they met together and said, "How is this? Our former prestige is forgotten. Our ranks are broken. Our pennons are trailed in the dust—what is the cause of it?" When out spoke the champion and said, "Of course it is so! How did you think that some 12 or 15 of us could do the work of all the thousands? When you all went to the fight, and every man took his share, we dashed upon the foe like an avalanche and crushed him beneath our tramp. But now that you stay at home and put us, but a handful, to do all the work, how can you expect that great things should be done?"

So each man resolved to put on his helmet and his armor once again and go to the battle, and victory returned. I speak to you tonight, I, one of the rank of God's servants, and I say, my Brethren, if we are to have the victory you must be, every one of you, in the fight. We must not spare a single one, neither man nor woman, old nor young, rich nor poor! You must each fight for the Lord Jesus according to your ability, that His kingdom may come, and that His will may be done upon earth even as it is in Heaven. We shall see great things when you all agree to this and put it to *practice*.

Combined with this there must be much earnest prayer. The prayer of faith! Have we not held it in high esteem? Have we not made some considerable proof of it in this place? We hope to have *more* faith—a great increase both of volume and power. Nothing is impossible to the man who knows how to overcome Heaven by wrestling intercession. When we have seen one, two, or 10, or 20 penitents converted, and when we have sometimes been heartily thankful that a 100 have been added to this Church in a month, ought we to have been satisfied? Should we not have felt that the prayer which was blessed to the conversion of a 100—had it been more earnest, might, in the Divine purpose—have been answered with the conversion of a thousand? Why not? I do not know why London should not be shaken from end to end with Gospel Truth before this day 12 months from now!

You will say, "We have not enough ministers." But God can make them! I tell you, Sirs, He can find ministers for His Truth—yes, if He willed it, among the very offscouring of the earth! He can take the worst of men, the vilest of the vile, and change their hearts and make them preach the Truth if He pleases. We are not to look to what we *have*. The witness of the senses only confuses those who would walk by faith. See what He did for the Church in the case of Saul of Tarsus. He just went up to the devil's

army and took out a ringleader, and said to him, "Now, Sir, *you* preach the Gospel which once you despised."

And who preached it better? Why, I should not wonder if before long in answer to prayer we see the Ritualistic clergy preaching the Gospel! Who can tell—the Romish priests may yet do it, and repeat the tale of Luther and Melancthon! Were not Luther, and Melancthon, and Calvin and their comrades brought out of Papal darkness to show light unto the people? We have *heard* with our ears—why may we not *see* with our eyes the mighty works of God? The Lord can find His men where we know nothing about them. "Of these stones," said the Baptist, as he pointed to the banks of the Jordan, "Of these stones God can raise up children unto Abraham." And as He could then, so He can now! Let us not despair. If we will but *pray* for it, our heavenly Father will deny His children nothing.

Come, do but come, in simplicity of heart, and according to your faith shall it be done unto you. Would you see the Church greatly increase and the kingdom come to the Throne of the Son of David? Then we must all get a more intense, glowing, spiritual life. Do you understand me? There are two persons yonder. They are both alive, but one of them lies in bed. He wakes, but he says, as the sluggard—

***"You have woke me too soon,  
I must slumber again,"***

and when he gets up he gazes round with vacant wonder and strange bewilderment. He has no energy, he is listless, and we say of him, "What a lifeless creature he is!" "He is living, but with how little vitality!"

Now, you see another man. His sleep is short. He wakes soon. He is out to his business. He takes down the shutters. He is standing behind the counter waiting upon this customer and that. He is all active. He is here, there, and everywhere. Nothing is neglected—his eyes are wide open, his brain is active, his hands are busy, his limbs are all nimble. Well, what a different man that is! You are glad to get this second man to be your servant. He is worth 10 times the wages of the first. There is life in them both, but what a difference there is between them! The one is eagerly living, the other is drawling out an insipid existence.

And how many Christians there are of this sort! They wander in on a Sunday morning, sit down, get their hymn book, listen to the prayer without joining in it, hear the sermon, but might almost as well not have heard it, go home, get through the Sunday, go into business. With them there is never any secret prayer for the conversion of men, no trying to talk to children, or servants, or friends, about Christ—no zeal, no holy jealousy, no flaming love, no generosity—no consecrating of the substance to God's cause! This is too faithful a picture of a vast number of professing Christians! Would it were not so!

On the other hand, we see another kind of man—one that is renewed in the spirit of his mind. Though he has to be in the world, his main thoughts are how he can use the world to promote the glory of Christ. If he goes into business, he wants to make money that he may have the means to give bountifully for the spread of the Gospel. If he meets with friends, he tries to thrust a word in edgeways for his Master. And whenever he gets an opportunity, he will speak, or write—but he will be aiming

to do *something* for Him who has bought him with His precious blood. Why, I could pick out, if it were right to mention names, some here who are all alive till their bodies seem to be scarcely strong enough for the real vitality and energy of their souls!

Oh, these are the cream of the Church, the pick and choice of the flock, the men who are true men, and the women who are the true daughters of Jerusalem! The Lord multiply the number of such! Yes, may He make every one of us to be such, for I am afraid that we, all of us, need quickening. I know I do myself. It is a long time since I preached a sermon that I was satisfied with. I scarcely remember ever having done so. You do not know, for you cannot hear my groans when I go home, Sunday after Sunday, and wish that I could learn to preach somehow or other—wish that I could discover the way to touch your hearts and your consciences, for I seem to myself to be just like the fire when it needs stirring—the coals have got black when I want them to flame forth!

If I could but say in the *pulpit* what I feel in my study, or if I could but get out of my mouth what I have tried to get into my own soul, then I think I should preach, indeed, and move your souls! Yet perhaps God will use our weakness, and we may use it with ourselves, to stir us up to greater strength. You know the difference between slow motion and rapidity. If there were a cannon ball rolled slowly down these aisles, it might not hurt anybody. It might be very large, very huge, but it might be so rolled along that you might not rise from your seats in fear. But if somebody would give me a rifle, and ever so small a ball, I reckon that if the ball flew along the Tabernacle some of you might find it very difficult to stand in its way.

It is the *force* that does the thing. So it is not the great man who is loaded with learning that will achieve work for God—it is the man, who, however small his ability—is filled with force and fire, and who rushes forward in the energy which Heaven has given him, that will accomplish the work! It is the man who has the most intense *spiritual* life—who has real vitality at its highest point of tension, and living, while he lives—with all the force of his nature for the glory of God. Put these three or four things together and I think you have the means of prosperity.

**II.** Time flies, and therefore while I briefly hint, I must leave you largely to meditate. THE RESULTS WHICH FLOW FROM THIS PROSPERITY—souls are saved! John Owen said that if you had to preach to a whole nation for 12 months in order to win one soul, it would be good wages, for a soul is so priceless that to redeem it from going down to the pit would be worth the expenditure of all human strength.

Richard Knill once said that if there were only one unconverted person in the wilds of Siberia and that God had ordained that every Christian in the world must go and talk to that one person before he would be converted, it would be an exceedingly little thing for us all to do! To go all the way there through the cold, and frost, and snow—to win that one soul! And he was right, and I may well stir you up to energy when the result will be the conversion of souls. The name of our Lord Jesus Christ is glorified—who would not wish to live, or even to die, for this?—

***“Let Him be crowned with majesty,***

***Who bowed His head in death,  
And let His praise be sounded high,  
By all things that have breath."***

If you have not forgotten what He suffered for you, dear Friends, do you not wish to see Him crowned with many crowns? He wore the crown of *thorns* for you—would not you wish to see the fruit of His soul's travail, the removal of the curse, the extension of His kingdom, the honor of His fame, the growing enthusiasm of His subjects—to make His excellency apparent and His praise more and more famous to the very end of time? I know you would and therefore I ask you to strive together with us in your prayers and your efforts, that the number of His disciples may be multiplied greatly!

Moreover, the result will be to build up the Church itself, for there is no good done in the name of Jesus which does not redound to the satisfaction of His bride! If you do good to another, you are taking the shortest way to do good to your own soul. As those who promote sanitary measures for the benefit of the neighborhood are thereby favoring the conditions of their own health, so the promulgation of saving knowledge throughout the world is augmenting the peace and the welfare of our own hearts, and of all who are already saved. Truly, I believe, that some persons are never comfortable in religion because they are *selfish* in it. If they began to live with some objective their constant distress of mind would soon be rolled away. May God, therefore, stir us up that the whole Church may thereby be blessed.

**III.** But I must now come to the point with which I proposed to finish, namely, THE ALTERNATIVE WHICH I THINK STANDS BEFORE THIS CHURCH AND EVERY OTHER CHURCH. Either we must get a high state of prosperity or else we shall lack what is to be dreaded to the very uttermost. How many Churches there are which have proved the truth of what I am now going to say! They have not *tried* to increase! They have not cared about conversions and very soon there has been murmuring. One did not like the minister. Another did not like the deacons. A third objected to a Brother that was introduced! And all this, perhaps, was quietly hushed up because they were too respectable to come to an open disturbance, but still there it was—the fire in the embers.

And thus it kept on till, by-and-by, they come to one of two things—either lethargy or else division. They settled down as quiet and sober religious people. The minister was not excited, not he! The people could not be stirred. The boast was that there were so many *carriages* on a Sunday outside the Chapel. Some trusted in chariots and some in horses—but there was nothing about *conversion*. Why, I know Churches whose baptismal pool would have been green by now if the water had been standing in it, so few have there been added to their number. And yet they are not at all dissatisfied. "No," the good deacon says, "you know our pew-rents keep up very well! We have not a seat to let in the gallery!"

"Ah!" and says the minister, "And while we have the most respectable people in the town come among us, we do not approve of these revivalists down the back street who are trying to catch those poor sinners. If they want them, they may have them for *we* do not want them." That is the

style in which some of these people talk. If they do not say it in words, they think it in their hearts. Well, and when a Church does get into that dreadful state, it becomes noxious as a very dunghill! And when there is very little spiritual animation there soon comes to be the ferment of very great division. Somebody or other cannot bear this. Some young and fervent spirit speaks out about it and the minister does not like it. The deacons do not like it, and they try to put him down.

Then half-a-dozen more of the members think that he is right, and the life that is in the Church wakes up. The trumpet is sounded and there is a troop led off to establish a healthy organization somewhere else—and the old corpse is left to rot as it may—and to decay as many churches do. Now, were I a prophet I might tell you what should come to pass in latter days. But speaking as a *monitor*, rather than as a seer, I should not wonder but I could almost tell what you will come to, by-and-by. In my day may it never, never be. You will get to be very respectable over at the Tabernacle after I die. You will have an organ, I dare say, and you will get a fine parson to deliver the most polished discourses to you, and where you will then drift I can readily guess.

The Lord have mercy upon you, and save you from it! This is the tendency, however, of every Church. It matters not what it is. Where the most honest, simple, faithful preachers have been, the people get to be too great for the Gospel and too proud to receive the Truth of God in the love of it. May it never happen in our days, however, and if earnest prayer can prevent it, may it never happen so long as the world stands! Till Christ comes may you be an honest, Truth-loving people, striving together for the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and never departing from the earnest simplicity of the faith. But unless we keep up the earnest spirit among us, we shall very soon degenerate into the ordinary dead-alive Christianity which is only half as good as nothing at all, because it gives men a name to live when they are dead.

The picture I have drawn may seem to you too highly colored, but I assure you that I have seen such things. I am not old, but I have lived long enough to see Churches go in this way. Yes, and Churches, too, that were once warm-hearted. I have seen young members who were once earnest grow cold. I have seen old members who were once content to worship with the humble ones, get a little up in the world. Then “of course” they must go to the State Church! I have seen congregations broken to pieces, and Churches split up—and the bottom of it all has been because the vital godliness has been drained out of the system—the love of God has not remained in the heart, for when the rich man has the love of God in his heart, he delights to see the multitude gathered together.

He is glad to do his part, and help in all he can. And the learned man, if the preaching does not always suit him, yet he is glad to think that the *unlearned* have a preacher whom they can understand. Whoever the man may be, or however great and famous, if he loves Christ he is satisfied with the simple Truth of God. “Give me that,” he says, “and that is enough. I can get my fine thinking and my fine reading in the weekdays if I need it—on the Sabbath let me hear of Jesus! Let me hear the story of

the Cross! Let me see sinners led to Calvary—it is all I need, and I am well content if I have this.”

Are there not many here tonight who are unconverted? They will wonder, perhaps, what I am making all this stir about. Let me address myself personally to you. O you unconverted *women*, it is about *you* that we are concerned. And you, you unconverted *men*, it is about you that we are anxious—we are seeking after you. Why, for our own sakes, if there were none to be saved, we might be content to hear far different doctrine from this. The Doctrines of Grace are sweet in our ears, and our souls would be well enough fed by them. But because we want to see you saved we have to talk with you and attend to these practical matters since we want to see you brought to Christ.

Now look at the text, and it may give you some comfort if you are willing to lay hold on Christ. Do you notice, it is said that, “a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith”? Now, these priests were they that conspired to crucify Christ! They were once the bigoted enemies of the Gospel, but they became obedient to the faith! Why should not you, then? I know the devil tells you that you have been too great a sinner. That cannot be! Perhaps he reminds you that you have been a scoffer, or have lived an immoral life, or have been self-righteous which is as heinous a sin as any other. Ah, well, but the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from *all* sin.

A young woman wrote to me the other day—I do not know who she is, but she said, “I cannot tell anybody, but I have done such-and-such, a dreadful sin, indeed. If my mother knew it, it would break her heart.” I do not know her, and therefore her mother will never know it from *me*, but she says, “Can *I* be saved?” Young woman, you can! She says that she is worse than Magdalene, for Magdalene did not know Christ when she was a sinner, but *she* did know the Gospel, and yet sinned. Oh, well, if you are worse than Magdalene, Christ will be glorified in saving such a one as you are! Only come with all your sin about you and throw yourself at His feet! Trust Him! Trust Him! Do Him the honor to believe that He can save even such an abominable sinner as *you* have been!

Though you have gone to the utmost extremity of human guilt and looked over the gulf of endless misery, yet still believe Him! Trust Him and He will be as good as ever you can think Him to be—for when you think your highest thoughts of Him, He is higher than your highest thoughts, and can save even to the uttermost! The *priests* were obedient to the faith—why not you? They believed in Christ, saw the fold, entered in, and were saved! Why should not *you* be like they? Did you notice how it is described? They were, “obedient to the faith.” Then it seems that the Gospel is all summed up in that word, “faith.” To be obedient to the faith—to believe that Jesus is the Son of God—to trust Him because He has suffered in your place. To be obedient to the faith—to believe that the Divine Justice is satisfied with the death of Christ and to rely upon that satisfaction which Christ has rendered—that is to be saved, to be obedient to the faith!

We sang at the Lord’s Table, this morning, that sweet verse which really is the quintessence of the Gospel, and therefore I will repeat it to you, though you already know it so well—

***“Nothing in my hand I bring;  
Simply to Your Cross I cling;  
Naked, come to You for dress;  
Helpless, look to You for Grace;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly;  
Wash me, Savior, or I die.”***

Yes, just as you are, come and depend upon the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved! And this is what the stir is all about—we cannot bear that you should drift down to destruction! We cannot bear that there should be cataracts of souls leaping down the eternal gulf! We cannot endure that Satan should gloat his malicious soul with the prey of tens of thousands of mankind! We cannot bear that Christ should stand neglected—that His Cross should be despised—that His blood should be trampled on.

O come to Him! He will not reject you! He that comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out! Breathe a silent prayer to Him now. Cast your soul upon Him, sink or swim—

***“Venture on Him, venture wholly,  
Let no other trust intrude,  
None but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good.”***

He can do it! Rely on Him, and eternal life is yours!

Brothers and Sisters, as we are in the New Year now, and have only reached the second Sabbath in it, let us begin and sweep out of the house the old leaven of ease and self-indulgences and lukewarmness! Let it be our cry, before we go to our beds tonight, that the Lord would make us to be real living Christians—make us flames of fire from this time forth truly to serve Him who served us even to the death. You will never get to be too warm! I am persuaded you will not be too zealous! I only wish I could get into such a devout enthusiasm, myself, as that of the Apostle Paul when, constrained by the love of Christ, he said, “Whether we are beside ourselves, it is to God.”

When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants. How much more unprofitable when we have done so little! The Lord quicken this Church! The February meetings are coming on, when we shall be specially and earnestly seeking the ingathering of souls. Believers, you who are mighty with God in secret, pray for these February meetings, that the month may be a holy month to us—the best month we have ever had—that more may be gathered into the Church than ever have been in our times! Make that a point of prayer, and prove God, now, whether He will not hear you, and you shall find He will, to your soul’s comfort. Amen.

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

# THE SECOND TIME

## NO. 3096

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 1908.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 24, 1874.

*“And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers.”*  
*Acts 7:13.*

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this incident, based upon Genesis. 45:1-5, are as follows—  
#449, Volume 8—JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS and #2516, Volume 43—JESUS AND HIS  
BRETHREN—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

THIS did not happen on the first occasion when they went down into Egypt. Joseph knew them, then, but they did not recognize him. He filled their sacks with corn, put the purchase money into their sacks, gave them provision for the way and sent them home, but he gave them no token by which they were able to recognize him as their long-lost brother. And I want to show you that as it was with Joseph, so it is with Jesus. There are times when sinners do not know Him even when they are speaking to Him. And on the first occasion He does not manifest Himself to them, but it is a very delightful thought that, full often, at the second time, Jesus is made known unto His brethren even as Joseph was. I will tell you the gist of my discourse at once. It is this—if you have sought the Savior and have not yet found Him, seek Him again! If your first seeking has been a failure, let my text be a message of encouragement to you—“At the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers”—let it encourage you to seek the Savior again in the hope that, at the second time, Jesus may make Himself known to you!

We are constantly preaching the same Gospel, in the simplest terms we can find—and the Gospel that we preach is this, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Believing on Christ is simply trusting Him, trusting in His great atoning Sacrifice in which He stood in the place of sinners and suffered as their Substitute, so bearing, that they might never have to bear, the righteous wrath of God on account of their sin. We might have supposed that every person who attended our ministry did at least fully understand the plan of salvation, but it is not so. There are seekers here who are still in the dark. The light shines upon their eyes, but those eyes are blind—even in broad daylight they grope as in the night because there is a night within their spirit which it is not in our power to change into spiritual day! There are some seekers after Christ who, notwithstanding the simplicity of the Gospel, remain seekers by the space of weeks, months and even years. Yet, it seems to me that no man or woman who is out of Christ ought to remain in that condition for another hour! During that hour he may die and be damned,

and it ill becomes him to run so solemn and terrible a risk. If I had any doubt of my being saved in Christ, I would give no sleep to my eyes nor slumber to my eyelids until I had found Him. I would say to myself, "I must have Him! I cannot live without Him." Yet there are some who seem to be awakened to a sense of their danger and who are apparently concerned about their soul's eternal interests, yet they remain in that state of semi-concern and semi-awakening not merely for an hour, or for a day or two, but from month to month, and even from year to year, continually crying with Job, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" Yet they never get any nearer to the Savior—turning their faces towards Zion, yet never truly starting upon the heavenly pilgrimage! Desiring, hoping, fearing, resolving, debating, yet never actually trusting in Christ—and so not saved!

Our fear concerning these Seekers who are not finders, is that one of two things will happen to them—either they will fall into utter despair, or else into complete infidelity—perhaps into both, for despair is often the mother of infidelity. They will first, perhaps, fall into gloom, depression, despondency. And at last they will say, "It is no use for us to keep on seeking the Savior, for if we do seek Him, we shall not find Him. If we pray, we shall not be heard. If we listen to the Gospel, it will not bless us. If we make an appeal to Christ, He will not grant our request." And so they will settle down into deeper and deeper and yet deeper gloom and declare that there is no salvation for them. Out of this despair may ultimately come an utter infidelity like that of those of old who said, "There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices and we will, everyone, do the imagination of his evil heart." We have known some who have said that as there was no hope for them in the next life, they would have their swing in this life! They were going to be lost, they said, and therefore they might just as well enjoy themselves here while they could. If they could not be pardoned, they might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb—they would lay the reins upon the necks of their lusts, give full sway to all their passions—and plunge into sin till they were covered with its pollution!

Dear seeking Friend, I tremble lest that should ever be the case with you. I fear lest you should wipe away those tears and that they should be succeeded by the infidel's jest. I dread lest your trembling should cease and be succeeded by a conscience seared as with a hot iron! Such experiences have happened to others and I am afraid lest they should happen to you. The sun has been shining upon you and it seemed as if it was going to melt you into penitence. It will certainly do one of two things—it will either soften you or harden you. And if the melting time should pass over and you are not melted, there may then come a hardening time, and you will become Gospel-hardened and remain forever without hope concerning the world to come! May the God of Infinite Love and Mercy graciously grant that it may not be so with you! And that it may not be so, I shall try now to speak some words of encouragement to you. And may God the Holy Spirit move all who are the Lord's people to pray that these words of encouragement may be the

means of bringing you, this very hour, to full acceptance with God through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior!

**I.** I want to remind you, first, that THERE IS A SOMETHING WHICH YOU DO NOT KNOW.

Those who went down into Egypt did not know their brother Joseph in his exalted position, but “at the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers.” Sinner, *you need above everything to know Christ.* When Joseph’s brothers went down into Egypt, they thought that if they could buy corn there, it would be enough to supply all their needs. But the grand thing that God had in store for them there was not merely corn, but that they might find Joseph who would secure to them all the corn and everything else that they could possibly need! So, Sinner, I remind you again that your great need is to know Jesus Christ! And if you do come to know Him, you will have all that you can require.

*You need to know Christ as Lord of All.* The keys of all the granaries of Egypt were under the power of Joseph. He could open or close them when he pleased and when he gave his orders, none could countermand them. So, only in a much higher sense, it has pleased the Father that in Christ all fullness should dwell, “therefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” Infinite ability to save is treasured up in Christ because He is Lord of All. Oh, how I wish that you all knew this! You tell me, Friend, that you *do* know this. Yes, you know that it is a fact, but you do not realize that all that is needed for your salvation is laid up in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, and that nothing is needed from you and that you have not to procure anything from any other source! If you did but know Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, to be the appointed and anointed Savior, able to save you to the uttermost, it would make a grand change in your whole life!

But you also need to know not only that Christ is Savior and Lord, but that *He is your Brother, one with you in nature, relationship and love.* The sons of poor old Jacob did not know that the man who was lord over Egypt was their own brother! They had never even dreamed of such a thing, yet all the while his heart was palpitating with love to them. The passion of his soul could scarcely be restrained. He saw the well-remembered image of his father in every one of their faces and he longed to weep upon their necks and to tell them how much he loved them. He restrained himself for a while, but “the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers.” And then, oh, how glad they were to know him as their brother! And, dear Friend, if you ever found out that Jesus Christ is your Brother and that He loved you before the foundation of the world—if ever you should make this blessed discovery that for love of you, He took your nature upon Himself and was born at Bethlehem—that for love of you He sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane, and that for love of you He died upon the Cross of Calvary—oh, then what joy will fill your spirit! This is what you need to know—Christ in His eternal love for sinners, Christ in His brotherhood with all who trust Him, Christ in His everlasting union with all His redeemed people! And if you ever know

this, you will know more than Solomon, himself, could have taught you, and you will be able to speak upon a theme which will far exceed any upon which Demosthenes or Cicero was ever able to speak! O Soul, we want you to know that Jesus is ready to forgive you, ready to befriend you, ready to help you, ready to enrich you, ready to enrich you with His own spotless robe of righteousness in place of your own filthy rags, ready to be All in All to you between here and Heaven! I pray that the Holy Spirit may impart this knowledge to you this very hour, so that you may go out of this place saying, "Christ has now been made known to me. I never knew Him before. I have ridiculed His religion, I have despised His Gospel, but now that I know that He loved me and gave Himself for me, that makes all the difference! Knowing that I am one of His chosen people, one of His redeemed ones, one for whom His precious blood was shed, I can never speak against Him again! But I will praise Him as long as I live, and after I die I shall live again to extol Him forever and ever for having made Himself known to me as my Lord and Savior, and Brother!" That is what you all need to know if you have not yet learned it.

**II.** Now, secondly, THERE IS A REASON WHY, AT YOUR FIRST GOING, YOU DID NOT LEARN THIS.

Joseph was not made known to his brothers at their first visit, nor have you yet found Jesus so as to know His love. You have sought Him in some fashion or other, but He has not yet made Himself known to you. Shall I try to tell you why?

I cannot be sure, but I think that one reason is that *you have not really looked for Christ to be made known to you.* These sons of Jacob went down into Egypt, not to hunt for Joseph, but to buy corn. In like manner, you prayed, but for what did you pray? You say that you asked that your sins might be pardoned, that you might be saved from Hell. That is quite right as far as it goes, for you need that, even as Joseph's brothers needed corn, but you need more than that, as they did. Your prayers were not answered because you did not really ask for what you most needed. Your previous searches ended in failure because you were not seeking what you most needed. If you had truthfully said—

***"You, O Christ, are all I need—  
More than all in You I find"***

and then had presented to God this petition—

***"Gracious Lord, incline Your ear,  
My requests vouchsafe to hear.  
Hear my never-ceasing cry—  
Give me Christ, or else I die!  
Wealth and honor I disdain,  
Earthly comforts all are vain—  
These can never satisfy,  
Give me Christ, or else I die"—***

you would soon have received an answer to your supplication. But if you have been praying in the wrong fashion, it may be that is the reason why the first time you went to Christ, He was not made known to you.

In the next place, *you did not go to Him with a confession of your guilt.* Joseph's brothers went down into Egypt, the first time, simply to buy

corn—they did not go there to search for their brother, Joseph, feeling that they had done a great wrong to him. But he took means to bring home to them a sense of their guilt, so that they said one to another, “We are verily guilty concerning our brother.” Though his life had not actually been taken, it was no credit to them that he had been spared. They had practically aimed at his murder and they confessed their guilt. And you, Sinner, have been guilty of the death of Jesus. Have you ever realized that it was your sins that fastened Him to the Cross of Calvary? Have you ever thought how greatly you have sinned against Jesus, the ever-blessed Son of God? No, you have thought of your sin as committed against yourself, or against your neighbor, but not as against Jesus! Yet this has been the greatest of all your sins—that you have been the cause of His death. And when He convinces you that He loved you before He made the world, this will cause you to condemn yourself because you have not loved Him in return. I know that when I found out that Christ had bought me with His precious blood, I felt grieved at heart to think that I had so long been an enemy to Him. This is what you all need to know, and what some of you do not yet know. As you have not come to Him with a broken heart and contrite spirit, you should not wonder that Jesus has not yet revealed Himself to you!

You remember that when Joseph’s brothers went down into Egypt the first time, *they did not all go*. They left Benjamin at home, so Joseph would not reveal himself to them until Benjamin was with them. And sometimes, when sinners go to Christ, they do not go whole-heartedly. They leave some faculty or capacity dormant, just as these brothers left Benjamin at home. You prayed, you say, but what sort of a prayer was it? It was a cold, languid prayer, scarcely worthy of the name. You did not put your heart into it and you know that our Lord Jesus Christ said, “The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force,” implying that intense earnestness is required if we would prevail with God. Or if lukewarmness was not the hindrance in your case, possibly there was a Benjamin-sin that you had not given up, or a Benjamin-self-confidence that you wanted to keep—but all these must be abandoned if Christ is to make Himself known to us. We shall never learn to know the Lord until we go to Him and pray from our very soul—

***“You do freely save the lost!  
Only in Your Grace I trust—  
With my earnest suit comply  
Give me Christ, or else I die!  
All unholy, all unclean,  
I am nothing else but sin.  
On Your mercy I rely,  
Give me Christ, or else I die!  
Lord, deny me what You will,  
Only ease me of my guilt.  
Suppliant at Your feet I lie—  
Give me Christ, or else I die!”***

If you will to be lost, you will be lost, but if you resolve that, by God’s Grace, you will *not* be lost, but will cry to Him for mercy as long as there

is in you any power to cry, I venture to believe that you will not be lost! That very importunity which the Holy Spirit has implanted in your spirit is a token for good. You may well expect that the Lord means to save you when He makes you resolve that you will not let Him go except He shall bless you. Perhaps the reason why you have failed until now to find Christ is that you have not been in real earnest in seeking Him.

I may tell you one thing, *you have kept the Lord waiting so long that if He were to make you wait still longer, you ought not to wonder.* In some of our London squares which are still private property, you may drive through almost any day in the year and nobody tries to stop you. But, occasionally, the owner has the gate shut just for a minute or two, and you have to ask permission to go through. The gate is only shut in order to preserve the rights of the proprietor over the roadway. And, in a similar fashion, a sinner will sometimes find the gate of Mercy shut for a while to make him realize that God has the Sovereign right to do as He wills, and that it sometimes pleases Him to withhold for a season the Light of His Countenance. But, Sinner, if God were to make you pray to Him for 50 years, if He heard you at the last, it would be well worth your while to keep on praying! If He were to let you seek Him for 20 years and give you the Light of His Countenance only at the last, you might be satisfied to have it so! He is not likely to do anything of the kind, but if He did—you might be more than content as long as He did but bless you!

**III.** Now we will turn to the third point. I have reminded you that your great need is to know Christ. And I mentioned some reasons why you have not yet known Him. Now I want to assure you that **THERE IS GREAT HOPE IN YOUR GOING TO HIM AGAIN.**

I will read the text once more—“At the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers.” They went again to their brother—and you had better go again to Christ, for remember that *you must go or perish.* You sang just now—

***“Perhaps He will admit my plea,  
Perhaps will hear my prayer.  
But if I perish, I will pray  
And perish only there.  
I can but perish if I go—  
I am resolved to try,  
For if I stay away, I know  
I must forever die.”***

That is most true. There is only one door to salvation and that door is Christ! So you had better keep on knocking if the door remains closed. There is only one road to Heaven and if that road seems to be blocked, you had better try again and again to pass along it, for there is no other way! You must either know Christ or else everlasting Hell must be your portion. Joseph’s brothers knew that they must either go down into Egypt for corn or else starve, so they went there. And, poor Sinner, go to Christ because you *must* go—there is nowhere else for you to go.

Another reason why you should go to Christ again is *because others have gone to Him and done well by going.* I wish I could speak personally to every seeker here who has thus far sought Christ in vain, and

encourage him by my own case. I sought the Lord, when I was a child, not only for days and weeks, but for months and even for years before I found Him. I can scarcely tell how it was that my brain was so muddled and my heart so distracted that I could not find Him, but I know that I wanted Christ and yet could not get Him. I remember how I made up my mind that I would go to every place of worship in the town where I lived—and I did go to every dissenting place of worship that I knew of. Sometimes I heard a man preach up election and then I said to myself, “That Doctrine will do very well for the saints, but it is not for me.” I went to hear another man who was preaching the precept of the Gospel—that was just like teaching people to dance who had no legs, and was no good to me. Then I went to another place where the minister was preaching some intellectual doctrine of which I could make neither heads nor tails. So I went in vain from one place to another and often I went down on my knees and my little bedroom was the scene of sorrowful groans and falling tears. But, in God’s good time, I found the Lord, by His Grace, and at this moment I know that I am saved. So why should not you also come to know Christ even though, until now, He has not made Himself known to you? And not only I, but hundreds of those who are sitting here had a hard time in coming to Christ, but they did come to Him at last—so why shouldn’t you?

You are like poor Mercy in John Bunyan’s “Pilgrim’s Progress.” When Christiana and her children went in at the gate, Mercy was left outside. And while Christiana pleaded for her admission, she knocked so loudly that she startled her friend inside. When the Keeper of the gate looked out, poor Mercy had fallen down in a swoon through fear that she would not get in, but he took her by the hand and led her gently in and bade those that stood by bring something to stop her fainting. Thus you see that Mercy got in and so will you if you only keep on knocking! Knock as if you would break the gate down! Feel that you must get in! Put your whole soul into your prayers and keep on seeking for Jesus with all your might, feeling that you must be saved and that you cannot rest content until Christ reveals Himself to you. As others have found mercy, why shouldn’t you?

Go again, because, as I have already reminded you, *since you went the last time, you have lingered far too long.* You were very earnest in seeking the Savior a few months ago, but as you did not succeed in finding Him, your earnestness passed away. But remember that before this time your soul might have been lost. Thank God that you are still alive, for if your body had been this night in your grave, your soul would have been in Hell. As you are not there, take heart and resolve to seek the Savior once more, for it may be that you will soon find Him. I will tell you a secret—I believe that you are a man or a woman in whom God has put His Spirit, who has already begun to work within your heart. I think you are one of those to whom Jesus will reveal Himself. I believe He has long wanted to do so. When Joseph’s brothers went down to Egypt the first time, though he did not tell them who he was, he knew well enough who they were. He

was rough in his manner towards them, but when they went away, I am certain that he wished they would come back the next morning. And I expect he said to his servants, "Send word to the guards at the frontier of Egypt that when those men come back from Canaan, they are to let me know at once that they have come back." They probably made their corn hold out longer than Joseph thought it would, but even when he was busy about the affairs of the kingdom of Egypt, I have no doubt that he often sat down and said to himself, "I wonder when those brothers of mine will be here again. I should like to hear about my father. I should like to see my brother Benjamin."

He was wanting them badly, yet they did not know it! And Jesus Christ is wanting you, for those to whom He reveals Himself are those whom He loved long before they were born and long before the world was made. For love of them He came down from Heaven to earth, lived in poverty and died in shame that He might save them. He is married to them and they are as dear to Him as the spouse is to her husband. Jesus wants you, Sinner, and if you do but know this, I feel sure that it will be sufficient to make you say, "Then I will go to Him yet again trusting that He will reveal Himself to me."—

***"I'll go to Jesus, though my sin  
Has like a mountain rose.  
I know His courts, I'll enter in,  
Whatever may oppose."***

**IV.** What will happen if you do go to Christ again? This story of Joseph and his brothers gives us A FORECAST OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU DO GO TO CHRIST AGAIN.

Suppose that the Spirit of God should now work upon your soul and show you that all that is needed for your salvation is already done, that you have nothing to do because Christ has done it all? Suppose that the Holy Spirit should then enable you simply to put your trust in Jesus? You will be saved, saved now, and saved forever! Yet it is possible that your experience will be like that of Joseph's brothers. *At first, when you know who Jesus is, you will tremble in His Presence.* You will say to yourself, "After these many years of hearing the Gospel and slighting it, will Jesus receive me now?" You will fall on your knees and even while you are in prayer, possibly you will feel, "It cannot be any use for me to seek Him. I am growing old, now, and I have wasted a long life and spurned the Grace of God which has been pressed upon me all these years. I fear it is no use for me to seek the Lord now." Then I will tell you what will happen next. *Christ will bid you draw near to Him,* as Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, I pray you." The Holy Spirit will incline you to think about Christ and you will think about who He was and what He was, and what He did and what He is—and you will hear a Voice which will say to you, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." And you will look to Jesus and so you will be drawn near to Him!

What will happen then? Why, what happened to Joseph's brothers! *He will fall upon your neck and kiss you.* By that act you will realize that all your offenses are forgiven and your transgressions are all blotted out!

That kiss will be to you the token of forgiveness and acceptance. And then Christ will say to His servants, "Take off My brother's filthy rags. Make him clean, give him a change of raiment and let him sit at My table and feast with Me." Then He will tell you that He will provide for you all your days and, by-and-by, will take you to dwell with Him in Heaven forever and ever!

Does someone ask, "Can all that happen to me tonight?" I answer—Yes, if you will dispense with every other confidence and come and rest in Jesus only, it will happen to you tonight! "But, Sir," says another, "I have been so long seeking." There is really no need for anyone to be seeking Christ for a long while. Remember what Paul wrote, "Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what says it? The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God have raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, Whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed."

"But," says one, "I cannot understand how the simple act of trusting Christ can change the heart and save the soul." Even if you cannot comprehend it, it is true that as soon as a man has trusted Christ, he knows that he is saved! Then he loves Christ for saving him—the impulse of love and gratitude changes his whole attitude towards God and towards God's will so that he desires to do the very things which once he loved not to do, while sin, which was formerly his delight, has become a misery to him and he longs with all his heart to escape from it! There is salvation for each one here who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ, but there is no salvation in any other way! As my eyes range around this audience, I see that many of you are strangers to me. But I know the characters of some who are now present. I know that there are some here who were once members of a Christian Church, but who fell through drunkenness.

There are others here who once made a profession of faith in Christ, but who were turned aside by one sin or another and so disgraced their profession. Yet the Lord says to them, "Return, you backsliding children; come back to your God." I charge you to come back without further delay! Some of you have been inclined to return unto the Lord, yet I fear that you are again relapsing into indifference. May the Lord bring you a second time and make sure work of it, even as the second time Joseph was made known unto his brothers!

As for you strangers who are with us at this service, if you are unconverted it may be that you have been hitherto satisfied with your state even though you have never possessed real vital godliness. Well, if it is so, I pray that you may speedily learn to know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and your Brother! Never be satisfied with anything short

of that. Some people think they are all right because they have learned the catechism and are familiar with the prayer book. Others feel perfectly content because they know the creed of the place they usually attend. Ah, Sirs, all that is of no avail! Nothing and no one but Jesus Christ and Him Crucified can save a single soul! And it is no use merely to know Him by report—you must know Him personally and spiritually—your heart being humbled before Him because your sins slew Him. Your heart rejoicing before Him because God allowed Him to be put to death in order to save your soul!

Dear Hearers, if I should never be able to speak to you again, let this one Truth of God ring in your ears and abide in your hearts—“Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”—so that if you are not built upon Christ, the Rock of Ages, you are off the only foundation that will endure the test of time, and death, and judgment! And you are building on the sand—and down your building will come just when you most need a shelter! And great will be the fall thereof. You must have Jesus made known to you and only Jesus can make Himself known to you by His ever-blessed Spirit! The sun alone can show you the sunlight, and Jesus must visit you in a supernatural way and reveal Himself to you by His own Spirit. You must be born-again by the power of the Holy Spirit! And if it is not so with you, and if you are not resting in Him alone—where He is, you can never go! But if you know Him. If you are in Him, go your way in peace, for “there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” Knowing Him, you have saving knowledge and you shall, by-and-by, be with Him where He is, to behold His Glory and to dwell with Him forever! May God grant to all of you this privilege, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
MATTHEW 7:1-8.**

**Verses 1, 2.** *Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.* Use your judgment, of course—the verse implies that you will judge in a right sense. But do not indulge the criticizing faculty upon others in a censorious manner, or as if you were set in authority and had a right to dispense judgment among your fellows. If you impute motives and pretend to read hearts, others will do the same towards you. A hard and censorious behavior is sure to provoke reprisals. Those around you will pick up the peck measure you have been using and measure your corn with it. You do not object to men forming a fair opinion of your character, neither are you forbidden to do the same towards them. But as you would object to their sitting in judgment upon you, do not sit in judgment upon them. This is not the day of judgment, neither are we his majesty’s judges, and therefore we may not anticipate the time appointed for the final assize, nor usurp the prerogatives of the Judge of all the earth! Surely, if I know myself aright, I need not send my judgment upon circuit to try other men, for I can give

it full occupation in my own Court of Conscience to try the traitors within my own bosom.

**3-5.** *And why behold you the mote that is in your brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in your own eye? Or how will you say to your brother, Let me pull the mote out of your eye; and, behold, a beam is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of your own eye; and then shall you see clearly to cut the mote out of your brother's eye.* The judging faculty is best employed at home. Our tendency is to spy out splinters in other men's eyes and not to see the beam in our own! Instead of beholding, with gratified gaze, the small fault of another, we should act reasonably if we penitently considered the greater fault of ourselves. It is the beam in our own eye which blinds us to our own wrong doing! But such blindness does not suffice to excuse us, since it evidently does not shut our eyes to the little error of our brother. Officiousness pretends to play the oculist, but in very truth it plays the fool! Fancy a man with a beam in his eye pretending to deal with so tender a part as the eye of another and attempting to remove so tiny a thing as a mote or splinter! Is he not a hypocrite to pretend to be so concerned about other men's eyes and yet he never attends to his own? Jesus is gentle, but He calls that man a "hypocrite" who fusses about small things in others and pays no attention to great matters at home in his own person! Our reformations must begin with ourselves, or they are not true and do not spring from a right motive. Sin we may rebuke, but not if we indulge it! We may protest against evil, but not if we willfully practice it! The Pharisees were great at censuring, but slow at amending. Our Lord will not have His Kingdom made up of hypocritical theorists—He calls for practical obedience to the rules of holiness!

After we are ourselves sanctified, we are bound to be eyes to the blind and correctors of unholy living—but not till then. Till we have personal piety, our preaching of godliness is sheer hypocrisy! May none of us provoke the Lord to say to us, "You hypocrite!"

**6.** *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast you your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.* When men are evidently unable to perceive the purity of a great Truth of God, do not set it before them. They are like mere dogs and if you set holy things before them they will be provoked to "turn again and rend you." Holy things are not for the profane. "Outside are dogs"—they must not be allowed to enter the holy place. When you are in the midst of the vicious, who are like "swine," do not bring forth the precious mysteries of the faith, for they will despise them and "trample them under their feet" in the mire. You are not needlessly to provoke attack upon yourself, or upon the higher Truths of the Gospel. You are not to judge, but you are not to act without judgment. Count not men to be dogs or swine, but when they avow themselves to be such, or by their conduct act as if they were such, do not put occasions in their way for displaying their evil character. Saints are not to be simpletons—they are not to be judges, but, also, they are not to be fools. Great King,

how much wisdom Your precepts require! I need You, not only to open my mouth, but also at times to keep it shut!

**7, 8.** *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.* To men you may not always speak of heavenly things, but to God you may. “Ask, seek, knock.” Let your prayer be adapted to the case. Let it increase in intensity, let it advance in the largeness of its objective. To receive a gift is simple, to find a treasure is more enriching, to enter into a palace is best of all! Each form of prayer is prescribed, accepted and rewarded in a manner suitable to its character. The promise is universal to all who obey the precept. The commands are in opposition to the methods of carking care which have been denounced in the former chapter—and they are encouragements to the precepts of giving and non-resistance set forth previously, since he that can have of God for the asking may well give to men who ask and even yield to those who unjustly demand! With such boundless stores at command, we should not be either niggardly or litigious. Lord, help me to have done with fretting and to abound in asking, seeking, knocking! So shall I soon overflow with thanksgiving.

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

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

# STEPHEN'S MARTYRDOM

## NO. 740

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING MARCH 17, 1867,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”*  
*Acts 7:55, 56.*

TRUE Christian zeal will seek to do the highest work of which sanctified humanity is capable. Stephen is first heard of as a distributor of the alms of the Church to needy widows. He exercised what was virtually, if not nominally, the deacon's office. Being grave, and not double-tongued, and holding the mystery of the faith in a good conscience, he was well fitted for his work. Doubtless he used the office of a deacon well, and so purchased to himself a good degree and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Although the burdensome duty of serving tables might well have excused him from other service, we soon find him, full of faith and power, doing great wonders and miracles among the people. And not content with that, we see him defending the faith against a synagogue of subtle philosophical deniers of the Truth of God. These, with their allies, made the valiant deacon the object of their attack, and he at once rose to be an irresistible witness for the Gospel. Stephen the deacon became Stephen the preacher! This holy man not only used such gifts as he had in one department, but having abilities for a more spiritual form of service, he laid them at once upon the altar of Christ.

Nor is this all, he had a higher promotion yet—when he had thus become Stephen the wise apologist and brave defender of the faith he did not stop there—he mounted to the highest rank of the Christian army! He gained the peerless dignity, the foremost nobility, the brightest glory—I mean the *martyr's* name and honor. Stephen the deacon is first Stephen the preacher, and afterwards Stephen, God's faithful and true witness, laying down his life that he may seal his testimony with his blood.

Put a man without zeal into the front place and he will gradually recede into his native insignificance, or only linger in the front to be an impediment and a nuisance. But put a man into the *rear* of the army of God's elect, and if his soul is full of holy fire you will hear of the unknown Samson in the camps of Dan, and, before long he will dash into the vanguard and make the enemies of God's Church know that the Holy Spirit still dwells in the midst of Zion in the men whom He has chosen!

If there are any of my Brothers and Sisters here whose abilities are as yet dormant, I trust that, without ambitiously seeking the chief places of the synagogue, if they have been useful in any one walk of life they will

enquire whether they may not have talents for a yet wider sphere. In these evil days we have need to use every soldier in the army to the utmost of his capacity. When the world is so dark we had need that every lamp should give some light. We need that each lamp should burn as much oil as it will carry and that its light may be of the brightest possible kind.

Stephen, as a martyr, is set before us in the words of our text. I shall not so much look upon him as witnessing for the Truth, as ask you to look, first, at the power of the Holy Spirit in him that you may learn to rely upon that Divine power. Secondly, I shall ask you to look at the *Source* of his dying comfort that you may learn to gaze upon the same ravishing vision! And, thirdly, I shall bid you notice the *effect* of this heavenly comfort upon him in the hope that we may live in peace and fall asleep in ease by faith in the same great Sight which cheered his dying eyes.

**I.** First, then, this morning, I shall want every devout mind to OBSERVE THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AS DEVELOPED IN STEPHEN'S DEATH IN ORDER THAT WE MAY LEARN TO RELY UPON THAT POWER. Here our grapes hang in clusters and we would have you note them one by one! I would have you observe, first, that although Stephen was surrounded by bitter enemies, no doubt railing and caviling and muttering their observations to disturb him and distract his mind, yet his defense is wonderfully logical, clear, consecutive, and forcible.

If you read the seventh chapter through, you might think it was delivered from this pulpit to an audience as affectionate, appreciating and attentive as *you* may be! It does not read like an address delivered to a furious mob of bigots, gnashing their teeth at the lone, brave man. In calm, cool, deliberate, bold, stinging language he deals with them fearlessly and without reserve. He takes the sharp knife of the Word and rips up the sins of the people—laying open the inward parts of their hearts—and the secrets of their souls.

Between the joints and the marrow he deliberately inserts the two-edged sword and discovers the thoughts and intents of their *hearts*. He could not have delivered that searching address with greater fearlessness had he been assured that they would *thank* him for the operation! The fact that his death was certain had no other effect upon him than to make him yet more zealous. What secret spirit helped him thus to speak? Had he prepared that speech with long elaboration and forethought? Had that oration been carefully composed, revised, and learned by heart?

Far from it! He was not so unmindful of our Savior's words, "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you." Seized upon, doubtless, without previous notice, and dragged before the council without being allowed a moment for deliberation, Stephen stood up and defended himself with the Truth of God as it is in Jesus! He spoke with all the skill of a practiced debater, with all the deliberation of one laboriously prepared, and with all the vigor of one whose zeal was like a fire in his bones!

To what do we trace this mouth and wisdom which his enemies could not deny? To what, indeed, but to the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit exerts such a power over the human mind that when it is His will He can enable His servants to collect their scattered thoughts, to concentrate all their powers upon one topic, and to speak the words of Truth and soberness with unaccustomed power. Moreover, the Lord can also touch the stammering tongue and make it as eloquent as the tongue of Isaiah of old to proclaim the Truth of God in the name of the Lord.

I will not argue, my Brethren, that a minister, when called to speak for Christ, ought at all times to speak extemporaneously. I am so far removed from that opinion that I conscientiously believe that when we have the opportunity for studying the Word, if we waste it in idleness it is mere presumption to trust to the immediate inspiration of the moment. But I will say as much as this, that if the Christian minister, or if any one of you are called to speak for your Master—when you can have had no preparation, you may confidently depend upon the Spirit of God to help you in your hour of difficulty—yes, and I will go farther and say that if more of our ministers believed in the power of the Spirit of God to help them in their preaching, their preaching would be more effective and God would own it more greatly to the conversion of souls.

It seems to me a curious piece of absurdity, if not a specimen of blasphemy, for a preacher to ask the help of the Holy Spirit in his preaching, and then to pull his manuscript out of his pocket! Where is the room for the Holy Spirit to work? Have they not bolted and barred the door against Him? What thoughts can He suggest? What emotions can He excite? The *paper* is the guide of the hour. Why, then, should they mock the Holy Spirit by asking for His assistance—an assistance which they will not follow? Or, if I shall have committed every word to memory and prepared every sentence, and then shall come into the pulpit and ask to have an anointing from the Holy One to help me to speak, what do I but ask Him to do what I do not want Him to do, since I can do quite as well without Him as with Him, and should be thrown out of my course if He did assist me?

It seems to me that after due study of the Word, if the preacher—if you, dear Friend, the teacher—will cast yourself upon the teaching of the Spirit of God, though distractions may occur, though in the congregation or in the Sunday school class there may be much to throw you off track and to make you lose the thread of your discourse. If you can rest upon the Spirit of God, He will enable you to speak with power, point, propriety, and personality. It is better to be taught of the Holy Spirit than to learn eloquence from the rules of oratory or at the feet of masters of rhetoric. The Spirit of God needs to be honored in the Church in this respect. I am quite sure that if He were more glorified we should find more who spoke with power—because we should find more who spoke with the Holy Spirit. Let this first remark stand with you for what it is worth, and I am persuaded that there is far more in it than some will care to see.

Notice next the *energy* of the Holy Spirit conspicuously displayed in the manner and bearing of the martyr. What a right royal and triumphant bearing the man has! He does not stand in the midst of the raging multi-

tude with his eyes fixed upon the ground as though, humbly patient and doggedly resigned, he felt crushed and overwhelmed. Neither does he cast his eyes around to observe a gap in the dense ring of cruel persecutors! He has no wish to elude the penalty of witness-bearing. He gazes steadfastly up into Heaven. They may gnash their teeth but they cannot disturb that settled gaze!

Their noise and vehemence may roar like the raging waves of the sea, but from the serene depth of his inward peace his soul looks upward to the Eternal Throne and is ravished with unutterable delight. He despises the tumult of the people, not because he is contemptuous towards them, but because his whole soul is swallowed up in blissful adoration of his God! He looks up to Heaven and what he beholds through its opened portals makes him careless of the bloodthirsty foes below. Wondrous picture!

Behold the man of shining countenance steadfastly looking up as though he tracked the road through which his soul would soon wing its way! As though he saw the angelic bands ascending and descending to minister to him! As though he held perpetual and abiding fellowship with the great Father of spirits, and was not to be disturbed or distracted by the rage of men. The bearing of many of the martyrs has been singularly heroic. You will be struck, in reading "Foxe's Acts and Monuments," to find how many of the most humble men and women acted as if they were of noblest blood. In every age the line of martyrs has been a line of true nobility.

When the King of France told Bernard Palissy that if he did not change his sentiments he should be compelled to surrender him to the Inquisition, the brave potter said to the king, "You say I shall be *compelled*, and yet you are a king! But I, though only a poor potter, cannot be compelled to do other than I think to be right." Surely the potter was more royal than the king! The cases are numberless and should be as household words among you, in which humble men, feeble women and little children have shown a heroism which chivalry could not equal.

The Spirit of God has taken the wise in their own craftiness and answered the learned out of the mouths of babes. The answers of uneducated persons among the martyrs were frequently so pat to the point and hit the nail so well on the head that you might almost suppose they had been composed by an assembly of Divines! They came from a *better* source than that, for they were given by the Holy Spirit! The bearing of the bleeding witnesses for our Lord has been worthy of their office and right well have they earned the title, "The noble army of martyrs."

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, if you and I desire to walk among the sons of men without pride, but yet with a bearing that is worthy of our calling and adoption as princes of the blood royal of Heaven, we must be trained by the Holy Spirit. Those men who are cowardly, whose profession of religion is so timid that you scarcely know whether they have made it or not—those men who go cap-in-hand to the world, asking leave to live—know nothing of the Holy Spirit! When the Holy Spirit dwells in a man, he knows the right and holds the right and is not the servant of men.

Most humble among the humble in all things else, when it comes to a matter of conscience he owns no master but his Master who is in Heaven! No child of God need fear the face of the great, for he is greater than they—he is God's true aristocrat! God has put within him a spirit of uprightness and sternness for the right which the world cannot bend, let its blasts howl as they will. I pray God we may learn the manliness of Christianity, for much injury has been done to the faith by professors adopting another mode of procedure and fawning and cringing before the mighty.

That upward glance seems to say to us: "Eyes up, Christian! Eyes up! Let your heart go up to Heaven! Let the desires mount! Let the whole soul fly towards Heaven." With Heaven in our sight we may walk through the crowds of men as a lion walks through a flock of sheep, and our fellow men shall involuntarily acknowledge our power. The power of the Spirit was also very conspicuously seen in the case of Stephen in another respect, namely, in the calm and happy spirit which he manifested. I see no fear! I mark no sign of trepidation! He wipes no hot sweat from his brow! He faints not, much less does he offer any plea by which he may escape from their cruel hands.

He never walked out of that gate of Jerusalem with a more joyous and tranquil spirit on the brightest day of summer, than on that occasion when they dragged him out to die—still, resigned, calm, and happy! It is a great thing for a Christian to keep himself quiet within when turmoil rules outside. When the mind gets distracted we are not able to judge of what is wise. A disturbed and distracted spirit generally rushes in foolish haste to escape from the difficulty, and so falls into sin in some form or other.

To be calm amid the bewildering cry. To be confident of victory. To be still and know that God is God. To stand still with the children of Israel at the Red Sea and see the salvation of God. All this is hard, so hard that only the Divine Dove, the Comforter, can bring us from above the power to be so! But when once the art of being still is fully learned, what strength and bliss is in it! How many of us, in the face of death, could return death's stony gaze? If it were now decreed that at this moment you must lay down your life, could you smile? Why, the mere thought of it disturbs you, but the fact would alarm you beyond degree.

But not so Stephen! His soul rests at anchor in an unruffled haven. Oh, it is in these solemn moments of test when we are not merely *talking* of death and vaingloriously boasting of our love to Christ, but when death actually comes and our love is sternly put to the trial—it is *then* that the Omnipotence of the Holy Spirit is seen—when He gives to His servants that sweet peace which none can know but the man who enjoys it! I have not yet declared all the glorious works of the Holy Spirit upon this first Christian martyr. In addition to the accuracy of his defense, and the royalty of his manner, and the happiness of his spirit, the Spirit of God was even more clearly seen in his holy and forgiving temper.

In Stephen's dying prayer he imitates his Lord: "Lay not this sin to their charge." He stood erect when he prayed for himself, and I know not that he spoke aloud. But when it came to praying for the multitude around

him, his spirit acquired a greater vehemence and earnestness. We are told, in the first place, that he knelt down, as if to make them see *how* he prayed. And then he prayed with a loud voice that they might *hear* as well as see. He spent his last breath in a loud cry to Heaven—that his murder might not be laid at the door of his persecutors!

O sweet Spirit of the Son of Man lingering still on earth! "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," has been the pattern and the forerunner of ten thousand prayers of a similar heavenly character! It has been the mark of a Christian to die patiently with forgiveness on his lips. Thousands of those who wear the ruby crown this day and are—

***"Foremost of the sons of light,  
Midst the bright ones doubly bright,"***

passed away from earth with just those very words upon their lips! Surely this is a work of the Holy Spirit, indeed! We can scarcely forgive those who offend us but a *little*. We find it not altogether easy to live at peace with all men—but to *die* at peace with them and to die at peace with our *murderers*—what shall I say of it? Surely this is what the world cannot understand—a celestial, a Divine virtue—which must be implanted in human hearts by God Himself!

Note, once more, the power of the Spirit was seen in enabling Stephen—at such a juncture when the stones were rattling about his ears and his body was bruised and mangled by them—to pray one of the most prevalent prayers that ever went up to Heaven! The prayer we have just mentioned did not die in the air outside Jerusalem's gate—it passed through the gate of pearl—it reached the heart of God and it obtained an answer! See that eager, impetuous, young man yonder, about thirty years of age? The clothes of the witnesses are laid down at his feet!

He desires to have a prominent part in stoning the hated Nazarene. He is one of the most fiery of those ferocious bigots. He belongs to the synagogue of Cilicia, and, having been defeated in argument, he rejoices that harder weapons are at hand. He is glad to see the heretic die. He gloats his eyes with the spectacle, for he feels that Moses and the Law, and the rabbis and the traditions are this day avenged! Mark that young man well, for Stephen's prayer is meant for *him*, though he knows it not. It may be that he heard the plaintive petition and despised it. It is just possible that having heard it he went away to sneer at it and to remark upon the hypocritical character of those disciples of Jesus who could lisp their Leader's dying words as if they were their own.

Yet I think that blessed petition must have rankled in his heart. He must have felt that there was a spirit there far better than his own. Whether or not that prayer remained with him just then, in after years he must have looked upon Stephen as being, if anyone was, his spiritual father by whose dying prayer he was begotten unto God! In speaking of his conversion, surely Paul must have thought within himself it was the prayer of Stephen that was the means of changing Saul the persecutor into Paul the Apostle of the crucified Son of God!

Ah, well, my Friends, you and I cannot always prevail in prayer, even in sunny weather. What a grand Spirit must that be who could help Stephen

to unlock Heaven's gates in the dreary article of death! To have power with God to pluck the Savior by the sleeve and to bring Him to save this guilty, raving persecutor just when the stones were falling upon him and his flesh was being battered and bruised! O blessed Spirit, though the outward man decays, You do renew the inner man day by day!

Behold, Beloved, how independent of outward circumstances the Holy Spirit can make the Christian! See what a bright light may shine within us when it is all dark outside! See how firm, how happy, how calm, how peaceful we may be when the world shakes to and fro, and the pillars of the earth are removed! See how even death itself, with all its terrible influences, has no power to suspend the music of a Christian's heart, but rather makes that music become more sweet, more clear, more heavenly till the last kind act which death can do is to let the earthly strain melt into the heavenly chorus—the temporal joy into the eternal bliss! Let us have confidence, then, in the blessed Spirit!

Are you looking forward, my dear Friend, to poverty? Does your business decline? Do you see clearly before you that you will have to put up with the woes of penury? Fear not! The Divine Spirit can give you, in your need, a greater plenty than the rich have in their abundance! You know not what joys may be stored up for you in the cottage which Divine Grace will make the cottage of content.

Are you conscious of a growing failure of your bodily powers? Do you expect to suffer long nights of languishing and days of pain?

Oh, be not sad! That bed may become a throne to you! You little know how every pang that shoots through your body may be a refining fire to consume your dross—a beam of glory to light up the secret parts of your soul! Are the eyes failing? Do you expect blindness? Jesus will be your light! Do the ears fail you? Do you hear but few sounds? Jesus' name will be your soul's best music and His Person your dear delight! Socrates used to say—"Philosophers can be happy without music." And we Christians can be happier than philosophers when all outward causes of rejoicing are withdrawn! In You, my God, my heart shall triumph come what may of ills without! By Your power, O blessed Spirit, my heart shall be exceedingly glad even should all things fail me here below.

May this first point be practically serviceable to you! Trust the Holy Spirit! Rely firmly upon Him and He will not suffer you to be confounded.

**II. THE SOURCE OF RICHEST COMFORT WILL NEXT BE INDICATED WITH THE HOPE THAT WE MAY LEARN TO LOOK THERE.** It was the end and aim of the Holy Spirit to make Stephen happy. How could this be done? By revealing to him the living and reigning Savior at the right hand of God! Whether or not Stephen saw *literally* with his eyes the Lord Jesus standing at the right hand of God we do not know. It is possible that what is meant here is that his faith became so unusually strong that he had the most clear and vivid sense of Christ's reigning in Heaven—so much so that it might be fitly said that he actually *saw* the Lord Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

If it were really a supernatural vision, you and I have no ground to expect a repetition of it, but, if it were a vision of *faith*, as I think it was,

there is no sort of reason why we should not enjoy it even now! If we have like precious faith with Stephen, since it is a great fact that Christ is there, there is no reason why our faith should not see what Stephen's faith saw! And there is no reason that this very day our soul's eyes may see Jesus, and our souls may receive the same joy and gladness of a sight of Christ which Stephen obtained!

What, then, did Stephen see? He saw first, that Jesus was alive. This is no small thing—

***“He lives, the great Redeemer lives!  
What joy the blest assurance gives!”***

Alive, too, after the Crucifixion! Stephen knew that Christ had died upon the Cross. In that fact was the confidence of his soul. But he saw that, though once dead and buried, Jesus still lived! Here was great comfort for Stephen. He was not serving a dead Christ! He was not defending the honor of a departed Prophet! He was speaking for a Friend who still existed to hear his pleadings and to accept his testimony!

Stephen argued within himself, “If Christ lives after crucifixion, why should not Stephen live, through Christ, after stoning? If the nails of the Cross sufficed not to leave the Savior dead, neither shall the stones from the Jews avail to rob Stephen of resurrection! Jesus rises from His grave, and Stephen shall rise also! No mean assurance was this! It is a rich source of comfort for you and me this day if conscious of our frailty and of the near approach of mortality—because Jesus lives we shall live also!

Moreover, Stephen not only saw Jesus living, but he knew that Jesus saw *him* and sympathized with him! Is not that the meaning of the attitude which the Lord assumed? We are told that our Lord sits at the right hand of God, “expecting till His enemies are made His footstool,” and yet in the text He is not seen as *sitting*, but as *standing*. Why standing? One of the old fathers says it was as though the Lord Jesus stood up in horror at the deed which was being done—as though He were about to interpose to help His servant die, or to deliver him out of their hands. He stands up, actively *sympathizing* with His suffering witness.

Well, Beloved, this is just what we see in Heaven. The Man of Sorrows is alive and sympathizes with His people still! Though raised to the Throne of Glory, He is not forgetful of our shame and sorrow. Think not, O child of earth that the Son of Man has forgotten what temptation means and is now a stranger to human weakness and infirmity! “In all your affliction He is afflicted.” He deeply sympathizes with every one of His tried Brothers and Sisters, and in His measure feels afresh what every member bears.

Suppose not that He is an unthoughtful, uncaring spectator of your trials, child of God! Christ has risen from His Throne to assist you! He stands at this moment, in the hour of your extremity, ready to help you. He will send you comfort when you need it, and He will see that your strength shall be to your day. What a sight was this for the dying Stephen! Jesus is living and living with the same love in His heart which He showed on earth—with the same tender sympathy which He manifested among the twelve when He lingered among the sons of men. The brightest point

in the vision was this—Stephen saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. That was the point in dispute.

The Jews said the Nazarene was an impostor. “No,” said Stephen, “there He is! He stands at the right hand of God.” To Stephen’s mind the point was settled by what he saw. This was the main thing—the only thing, indeed, that Stephen cared for—he craved to have his Lord exalted and he saw Him exalted! The people rage! The rulers take counsel together, but yonder is the King upon the holy hill of God! Beyond a doubt He is a reigning monarch, and to Stephen’s heart this was all he wished.

If any fear had been felt by Stephen, it was not for himself—it was for the Church. He thought, “These wolves tear me first, but what will become of the rest of the sheep? How will any escape from their fangs?” He looked up and there stood the Shepherd looking down upon the wolves, and saying to His dearly-purchased sheep, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” That seems to me to be the grandest part of the vision—Christ *living*, Christ *loving*, and Christ REIGNING—the triumphant Savior at the right hand of God!

My Brothers and Sisters, this doctrine has been to my own soul the only one which has cheered me in times of extreme deep depression of spirit. As I have told you before, so I tell you now—I have known what it is to be brought so low in heart that no promise of God’s Word gave me a ray of light—nor a single doctrine afforded me a gleam of comfort. And yet, so often as I have come across this text, “Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name,” I have always found a flood of joy bursting into my soul, for I have said, “Well, it is of no consequence what may become of *me* if my name is cast out as evil, and if I myself am left in darkness. If pains should multiply, if sorrows should increase beyond number, it does not matter—I will not lift up a finger so long as my Lord Jesus is exalted.”

I believe that every genuine Christian heart that loves the Savior feels just that. Like the dying soldier in the hour of battle who is cheered with the thought, “The general is safe. The victory is on our side. My blood is well spent, my life well lost, to win the victory.” Let Christ reign and I will make no bargain with God as to myself! Let Jesus be King the whole world over—I care for nothing else! Let Him wear the crown! Let the pleasure of the Lord prosper in His hands! Let His covenant purposes be fulfilled! Let His elect be saved! Let the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, why, what matters it even though ten thousand of us should go pining through the valley of the shadow of death? Our lives and deaths would all be well spent to earn so great a reward as to see Jesus glorified! I would like to put this telescope, then, to the eye of every sorrowing Christian here, because having had so sweet an influence upon my own heart, surely it might comfort theirs.

Dear Friend, you are troubled this morning. You are cast down. You do not prosper as you could wish in heavenly things. Well, but *Christ* is not troubled. *He* is not cast down! And the great fight, after all, goes rightly enough. God’s great purposes are subserved. Christ is glorified! Here are two or three pearls for you—gaze upon them, and prize them. First, re-

member that your exalted Savior is exalted to intercede for *you*. If He has power, He uses it in prayer for *you*. Christ has no merit which He does not plead for *you*.

Jesus has received no reward in consequence of His death which He will withhold from *you*. Dear to the Father He is, but He uses that influence on *your* behalf. Joseph said to the butler, "Speak for me when it shall be well with you." But the butler forgot him. It is well with Jesus today, and, depend upon it, it is well with *you*, also, for the Well-Beloved cannot forget you! And as He always has the Father's ear, He will pray the Father for you and whatever you need shall surely be given you.

Remember, too, that Christ has this power not only to intercede for you, but to prepare a place for you. Christian, Christ is a king of boundless wealth and He desires to use the wealth of His royal treasury to furnish that mansion of yours most richly—so as to make it worthy of the Giver who shall bestow it upon you! Moreover, Jesus is in Heaven as your representative. You are virtually in Heaven at this very moment in God's esteem. Your Representative is there. My Captain is in Heaven, why should I fear? How can God give Heaven to the head, and Hell to the foot? As sure as Christ is there, every one of those who are virtually united to Him shall be there also!

Only prove that Christ is in Heaven and you have proven that every Believer must be there, too! Christ's body cannot be mangled. You cannot cut the spiritual body of Jesus into pieces and throw one limb of it into Hell, while the head goes up to Heaven. Because He lives, we shall live also! And it is His will that where He is, there should also His people be. Jesus is in Heaven full of power—there to intercede, to represent, to prepare—and that far-reaching power darts its rays down to earth. The keys of Providence swing at the belt of Christ!

Believe it, Christian—nothing occurs here without the permit or the decree of your Savior who loved you and gave Himself for you. Does the enemy rage? Jesus will put a bit between his jaws and turn him back. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise You: the remainder of wrath shall You restrain." Your Lord Jesus Christ has all power in Heaven and in earth—and all this power He will exert to bring every one, even the weakest of His children, into His bosom. Blessed be the sweet love of God which has given us an Omnipotent Shepherd to watch over us by night and by day! His head is crowned because He has conquered all His foes.

Surely, we may see in that crown of victory the indication that no foe shall ever be able to conquer us! I wish that I could bring out to you the sweetness of the thought of Jesus glorified as I have enjoyed it in my own heart. It charms me to think, sometimes, that as surely as sin, death, and Hell are under the feet of the Son of Man, so surely shall these very feet of mine be set upon the dragon's neck. If I am in Christ, as certainly as Jesus is a conqueror, so shall I be *more* than a conqueror through Him that has loved me!

What sweeter sight could Stephen see than this, when the enemy was at his worst, still Christ was unconquered! And Stephen could read in that the fact that Stephen would be unconquered, too! The stones that

felled and crushed him would not destroy him! The voice of his blood would cry from the ground and the spiritual Stephen would become the victor over the hosts of error! The Truth would spring out of the dust and blossom like a sweet flower, and God would be glorified when His servant was slain!

Thus I have indicated to you the delightful vision which can give us comfort. Lord, open our eyes to see it!

**III.** Finally, THE COMFORT ITSELF is worth a moment's consideration. We do not find that the appearance of Jesus in the heavens stopped the stones. When the Son of Man came into the furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the fire did not burn the three holy children, but on this occasion, though the Son of Man was there, the fire *did* burn Stephen.

Stephen's life is not spared. He dies as certainly as if Jesus had *not* been there. That is the plan of the present dispensation. The Lord Jesus does not come to us to forbid our suffering, nor to remove our griefs, but He sustains us under them. We beseech the Lord thrice that this or that may depart from us. It does not depart—that is not the general way with God—but we get the answer, "My strength is sufficient for you. My strength shall be perfect in weakness." It was so with Stephen.

The stones fell. They beat about his head. They stopped his eloquent tongue. They dashed into his heaving lungs. They bruised his tender heart. There lay his mangled corpse—an object of love and of lamentation to the saints that were at Jerusalem. The love of Christ had not preserved the flesh. And who ought to expect it? We have heard it said, "If Christ died for His people, how is it that they die?" Such questioners forget that the people of God *must* die *because* Jesus died! The death of the flesh is no bad thing, but a blessing! It behooves us to tread in the Savior's steps that we also may die unto the flesh, but be quickened in the Spirit.

The death of Stephen we do not look upon as a calamity. The death of the flesh was but a necessary fellowship with the crucified Redeemer, for Stephen did not die as to his spirit—that enjoyed immortality which the rugged masses of rock which were heaved upon him could not injure. Stephen's glorious comfort was in being sustained within, though not shielded from without—in being preserved as to his inner man, though the outer man was bruised and battered. This is the comfort you and I may expect.

Through the darts we must go and they must stick in our flesh—but they shall not poison the blood of our *soul*. Beneath the storm of hail we must stand and yet no hailstones shall be able to strike our heart to injure it. Through the furnace we must go and the smell of fire must pass upon us—but we shall come out of the flaming heat uninjured by the blazing fire. 'Tis ours to suffer and yet to conquer, to die and yet to live, to be buried and yet to rise again! How sweetly is Stephen's triumph pictured in those last words, "He fell asleep." This is the life as well as the death of a Christian!

When the world has been most in arms against a Believer it is wonderful how God has given sleep to His beloved. How the saint has rested with

perfect composure in the sight of his enemies and his cup has run over in the time of drought! Calmly on the bosom of his God he has laid his head and left his troubles for his God to bear. This shall be the death of the Christian. Let his death be as painful as that of Stephen's, it shall be quite as composed. He shall shut his eyes to earth and open them to Heaven!

His body shall but sleep in that royal sepulcher where Christ Himself once reposed, to be awakened by that heavenly trumpeter who shall bring the tidings of resurrection to the sleeping myriads of the saints! Courage, Brothers and Sisters, because the Holy Spirit dwells in us and because Christ up yonder is triumphant for us! Let our tribulations abound—our consolations also shall abound by Jesus Christ—and we shall be more than conquerors through Him that has loved us!

I wish you all had a share in these precious things. If you had, it would not matter how badly I spoke of them—they would charm your souls. But if you do not understand them, I pray that you may. May the Spirit of the Lord open your eyes to see the power of the Spirit and the glory of Christ! And may you and I before long see Him face to face in Paradise. Amen.

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# STEPHEN AND SAUL

## NO. 2948

A SERMON  
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***“And cast him out of the city, and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul.”***  
***Acts 7:58.***

THE Holy Spirit does not tell us much about the deaths of saints at any time and He says very little about the deaths of the martyrs. He gives us much more about Stephen—the first of them—than about any other. A few words are made to suffice for the death of James, the brother of John. As to the deaths of Peter and Paul, they are incidentally mentioned as yet to be, but we have no account of them whatever. I suppose there was no need and the Holy Spirit never gives us superfluous information. There were hundreds of years to come in which martyrologies might be written and the Lord has taken care that there should be eye-witnesses with ready pens to record the deaths of martyrs. Hence we have many volumes and, especially in our own country, the renowned *Acts and Monuments* of John Foxe which record how, through seas of blood, the martyrs swam to their crowns! The noble army of martyrs has never been without a chronicler and there was no need that the Holy Spirit should give us the details of the deaths of the witnesses for Christ because we should have plenty in another form.

And it is noteworthy that in this one, which is the fullest we have, there is nothing said about the sufferings of Stephen. Have you not had your feelings harrowed by descriptions of the burnings in the reign of Queen Mary—how the wood was slowly lighted. How, sometimes, the martyrs actually cried out, “For pity’s sake, give us more fire!” And how they writhed in agony and yet cried out, “None but Jesus”? Such details may be very proper, but I think that they minister to our sentiment rather than to our edification. The Holy Spirit takes a different line and tells of the triumph of the martyr, of the light which shone upon his face, of the vision which he beheld, which cheered his spirit, and of the blessed calm which came over him as Jesus rose up, rebuked the winds and waves that gathered around his boat, so that the martyr entered into the Port of Peace in a perfect calm. I believe that every incident which is recorded is intended for our profit—but it is not always profitable to have sensational descriptions which upsets one’s feelings. There is something better than that, namely, to teach us the true *source of strength* and to guide us to a Heavenly calm, come what may.

However, in this instance, the Holy Spirit was pleased to direct the pen of Luke to record that the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. According to the Jewish Law, the witnesses were bound to be the first throwers of the stones. They were, in fact, the leading executioners, for they gave evidence against the accused and on their witness, he was condemned to death. They had to take the responsibility of his death and to throw the first stones. In order to do this, they took off their long flowing robes and, casting them down, they left them in the charge of one who would appear to have been much delighted with the death of Stephen, as he had probably given his vote against him in the Sanhedrin and was looking on to see that the dreadful murder was fully accomplished. Now, why is it recorded that these witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of the young man whose name was Saul? It was not to gratify our curiosity, but it was doubtless for some good reason—so let us try to find out why it is recorded and learn some lessons from it—God helping us.

**I.** And, first, does not the Holy Spirit here suggest to us A VERY NOTEWORTHY CONTRAST?

Here are two men—*Stephen and Saul*—both in Heaven now. I wonder how they felt when they first met there? What joy they must both have had—Stephen to see Saul and Saul to see Stephen! I suppose it is incompatible with the Heavenly state for Saul to have any apologies to make, but, certainly, if they could have been indulged in there, he might have made them most lovingly and tenderly. The joy of meeting there must have been exceedingly great. Look at the two men—the one about to die and the other taking care of the clothes of the executioners. Let us do them justice.

They were both sincere men. There was no hypocrisy about Stephen. You could see that the words that he spoke came warm from his heart. Neither was there any hypocrisy about Saul. He really thought that he was doing God's service in what he did. He was quite as sincere, in his own way, as was the martyr who was about to die. What is more, they were both thoroughly earnest men. It was not in the nature of Stephen to quench his convictions, or to silence his testimony. Neither was it in the nature of Saul to keep quiet when he thought that a miserable imposter ought to be crushed out of existence. He is all on fire from the first moment when we meet him to the last record we have concerning him. He had a zeal for God, though not according to knowledge and, as he sat there, and took care of the executioners' garments, he felt in his conscience perfectly satisfied that what he was doing was for the glory of God. Sometimes we cannot understand how this could be, yet I do not doubt that many who have persecuted the saints of God, have done it ignorantly in unbelief and it has not struck them that they were really rebelling against the Most High and fighting against the Lord, Himself. It is very difficult to estimate the amount of darkness that may come over the human conscience and to imagine how blind a man may become, or how fully he may put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—but certain it is that an unrenewed heart may become as darkened that while we are

going posthaste to Hell, we may imagine that we are making good headway towards Heaven! These two men, Stephen and Saul, were unlike one another in many respects, but they were alike in this sense—that they were both sincere and both thoroughgoing in their sincerity.

But, now observe the difference between them. *Look first at Saul, a man wrapped up in self-righteousness.* He will tell you that he has kept the Commandments from his youth up. If you gave him time, he would, perhaps, tell you that by descent he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews—that as touching the Law, he was blameless—that he belonged to the strictest sect of his religion and was a Pharisee. If you began to charge him with sin, you would see the fire flame from his eyes as he declared that concerning the righteousness which was by the Law of God, he was without fault. If any man was accepted before God, he felt that he was. And there he sat, in all the pride of self-righteousness, assisting at the murder of a truly righteous man. Had you spoken to Stephen, you would have found a man of quite another class. *The martyr's only hope was in the Crucified Christ of Calvary.* That which gladdened him was not a sight of himself, but a sight of his exalted Lord. He drew his comfort, not from what he had done, but from the finished work of Him who was, at that moment, standing at the right hand of the Father.

What a difference there was between those two men! Perhaps there may be two such persons here, sitting very near each other—the one self-righteous and self-reliant, depending only upon his own good works—the other humbly looking away from self and trusting only to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Of you two, I would sooner be you who is looking to Christ, even though you are to be executed tonight, than I would be you, Sir, wrapped up in the robes of your fancied self-righteousness, even though you are honored and respected by all mankind!

Look again at Saul and you will see *a man Ritualistic to the utmost extent—a formalist of the deepest dye.* He is a man who highly esteems everything that has to do with the Temple, the priesthood and the Law. You will find that his phylacteries are exceedingly broad and if you speak to him about the sacred roll of the Old Testament, you will find that he can debate and discuss with you upon every letter of it, for he has a great attachment to the letter. He is a man entirely taken up by the externals of religion—the shell is everything to him. But now look at Stephen and you will see *a man who has put external matters altogether on one side.* That last speech of his shows that it is so. He has not despised the Temple, but he has said of it, “However the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands.” He has not despised the chosen people, Israel, but he has spoken of them as “stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears.” He has not despised the outward forms of religion so far as they were ordained of God, but he has shown that, in themselves, they were useless because even when they were in the full tide of their glory, they did not change men’s hearts, for many of them remained idolaters and murmurers in the wilderness. Stephen is the spiritual man and Saul is the formal man.

Both these classes may be represented here and I would have you see to which of them you belong because it is the *spiritual worshipper whom God seeks*. It is the spiritual worshipper who is God's friend—the formalist is no friend of the King of Heaven, though he may seem to be so! He fights for the letter of the Word but, in despising its inner meaning, he has despised the very essence of it! He fights for rites and ceremonies but, in neglecting the inward and spiritual Grace, he has neglected the vital matter and he remains as much a foe of God and of His Christ as was this young man named Saul!

The great difference between Stephen and Saul, however, lies in this—*Stephen is defending the cause of Christ at the cost of his own life and Saul is opposing him with all his might*. Even in a congregation like the present, there may not be many, yet there may be some who are opposing the Gospel. There may be some here who, although they would not stone Believers, yet would make a jest of them—perhaps they have been making merry today over those Christian Brothers [Moody and Sankey] who have of late been prominent in the matter of revivals—some foolish jest they have perpetrated about them—and done their best to lower them in the esteem of their fellows. Ah, dear Friends, beware what you are doing, for the Lord of Hosts says concerning His people, “He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye.” Nothing brings the color into a man's cheek sooner than any ill-treatment of his children! And if any of you want to provoke God to speedy and sudden judgment against you, you have only to join in treating, in a cruel manner, those who are really His children. May God keep all of us from such a shameful sin as that!

The contrast mentioned in our text is a very painful one and though we see it illustrated every day, it is none the less painful. We ought to look at it with weeping eyes, praying that the young man named Saul may yet be converted to God. “But,” says one, “there are none of us who would be like Saul.” No, you would not stone the saints, but perhaps those who do so would be permitted to lay their clothes at your feet. You do not invent the jest against the saints but, perhaps, you repeat it and laugh at it—and give approval to those who use it.

There are many persons who are keepers of the clothes of open sinners. For instance, I believe that very often a merely moral man may exert a very detrimental influence upon sinners because they will say, “Look at So-and-So! He is not a Christian, yet he is a man of good repute,” and so they are led to believe that they may stay where he stays—out of Christ! O dear Friends, may there be nothing about your walk and conversation which can be used to oppose the Gospel of Jesus Christ! But there will be unless you are wholly on His side, for He, Himself, said, “He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathers not with Me scatters abroad.” If you are not on the side of Christ you are on the side of His enemies, for this is a fight which admits of no neutrality. And if you cannot feel that you would, like Stephen, defend the cause of Christ, then I fear you only lack the opportunity and the circumstances, if not to stone Stephen, yet, at least, to let those who do the dreadful deed lay their clothes at your feet! The contrast recorded in

our text is a very vivid one. I wish I could depict the equally vivid one between unconverted persons and Christians, for there is a contrast between them, a contrast which will come to this one day—there will be a great gulf fixed between them, across which there will be no passage. At the Last Great Day, the righteous shall be upon the right hand of the Judge and the wicked on His left hand and Christ, Himself, shall stand between them, so that the division shall last as long as Christ Himself shall live!

**II.** Now, secondly, our text affords us A REMARKABLE INTRODUCTION OF A PERSON TO TRUE RELIGION.

Perhaps there may be someone here whom you know who has never yet come into contact with real, vital godliness, and you are very anxious that he should do so. I am equally anxious that he should and I think it ought to be your earnest endeavor that not only he, but all who are like he should, somewhere or other, come into contact with real religion. Now, as far as we see in the Bible, this is Saul's first introduction to anything like real Christianity. We have not his name, before this verse, in the Acts of the Apostles, so here, for the first time, he steps forward into the arena of conflict—"a young man, whose name was Saul." Was he favorably impressed at once with Christ and His people? Certainly not, but quite the reverse! The impression made upon him was that of intense hatred and enmity towards Jesus of Nazareth and all His followers.

But perhaps he saw a bad specimen of Christianity. Perhaps he listened to a very poor sermon that misrepresented the Gospel. Perhaps he never saw any sign of the working of the Spirit. On the contrary, Saul's introduction to Christianity, in the person of Stephen, was of the most favorable kind. His own heart, however, was so desperately prejudiced against Christ that we find him no sooner brought into contact with Christianity than he becomes the keeper of the clothes of those who stoned the servant of the Lord!

Notice, then, what his introduction was. *He saw a Christian of the noblest type*—a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. And he saw him at his best, for his face shone like the face of an angel. I wish that when men of the world look upon us, they could see such Christians with shining faces. Perhaps, dear Friend, the person about whom you are concerned, may have taken a prejudice against true religion through the faults of Believers, but that was not the case with Saul. I suppose that all the Christians that he had ever met with in Jerusalem—for it was the golden age of Christianity—were of the very best type, as Stephen was. And yet, though he looked into that face which was burning with the light of Grace and glory, he hated that face and gnashed his teeth against the man whose glorious, calm demeanor ought at once to have won him.

And then *he listened to a noble discourse*. It was a discourse specially fitted to the Jews. They always liked to hear the history of their nation—their national pride was gratified by it. In later days, when Paul had to address them, he gave them a summary of their history very similar to this of Stephen, and wisely so. It was the best and most suitable

discourse that could be given, yet the only result produced upon Saul and others was that they ran upon the preacher to stone him and put him to death! Now, dear Friends, if you have brought some relative or friend to listen to the minister and the sermon seems to you to be most suitable and admirable, do not be surprised if, instead of seeing any good result come from it, you find, on the contrary, the provocation of the whole nature of the casual hearer and a stirring up of rebellion in his heart! Think it no new thing and no strange trial, for this was the case with the young man named Saul when he was introduced to a Christian with a shining countenance, and to a ministry which was in all points admirable! Yet, for all that, he was the more *hardened* in his enmity against the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

But the young man named Saul saw something else. *He saw a Christian die a triumphant death* and many have been converted by such a spectacle as that! There have been some who could ridicule the life and ministry of a Christian, but the dying speech—the bright and lustrous glance of the closing eyes—the triumphant hymn of the departing saint—these have been irresistible arguments and they have been compelled to yield to them. But it was not so with Saul, for we read after Stephen was put to death of, “Saul, yet breathing out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.” Even that spectacle which might have convinced an infidel, convinced not this young man whose name was Saul! And our first introduction of the Gospel to our friends may not at first end as hopefully as we could have wished and expected, yet we ought not to be discouraged, for Saul did become a Christian after all. It was no proof that he never would be converted that, at first, he grew more hardened. It was no evidence that the Gospel would not conquer his heart that at first, his heart shut all its gates against Jesus Christ. We have a proverb which reminds us that, “Rome was not built in a day,” and we cannot always expect the new Jerusalem to be built in men’s hearts in a single hour! There are some who are struck down at once, as Saul was afterwards, but there are others, against whose strong fortress the battering ram of the Truth of God must come with all its might year after year—and it is only when God strikes the effectual blow of Divine Grace that, at last, they yield, subdued by Almighty Love!

At any rate, whether they yield or not, your duty is clear. Bring them to Christ! Bring them under the sound of the Gospel! Do all that you can for their salvation, so that, if they perish, when the funeral knell startles your ears, you will be able to say to yourself, “Whether he is lost or saved, I am not responsible. I am clear of his blood, for I told him the way of salvation, I pleaded with him for God and I pleaded with God for him. I persuaded him to go with me and listen to the preaching of the Word—and if he has rejected it, and trampled it underfoot, I cannot help it, though I would have helped it if I could. I must leave his fate in the hands of God.” I think this case of Saul is a very encouraging one to any of you who are seeking to win sinners to the Savior. Did a man swear at you when you spoke to him about his soul? Well, there is sometimes more hope for a man who has enough grit in him to denounce us, than of

one who seems to agree with all that we say! He says, "Yes, Sir. Yes, Sir. Very good, Sir." And then he passes it all off. Perhaps it shows that there is a bigger soul in the man even when he becomes a persecutor than when he simply waves his hand and says, "Go your way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for you." A downright opposition may only prove that there is good soil where we may sow the good Seed of the Kingdom of God.

**III.** In the third place, I think our text is AN INSTANCE OF THE SECURITY OF THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION.

Do not be frightened at that expression! I am not a believer in that Apostolic succession which is supposed to come by the laying of human hands upon human heads, but I believe that there has always been, in the Church of God, a succession of faithful men so that when one has died, another has been called to take his place. And I believe that it will always be so until Christ Himself shall come. *What a dreadful thing it was for the Church to lose Stephen!* She had many useful men in her ranks, but Stephen seemed, just then, to come to the front—he had made a stir all over Jerusalem. Though especially appointed to look after the poor, there never was a deacon who was more thoroughly in the front rank of the Church. He was worthy—I was going to say—to be an Apostle, for his holiness and daring. He convinced many of the Truth of the Gospel of Christ. If he had been ill, his Brothers and Sisters would have prayed that his life might be preserved and if they had known that he was going to be put to death, they would have said, "It is better that we should die than that Stephen should. We cannot afford to lose him." It is a calamity for the Church of Christ when her best men, whether ministers or deacons, are called Home, yet dear Friends, it often is the case that God takes His servants Home just when they are most useful. When would you have Him take them Home? When they are least useful? When they are little or no good, here, would you let the Lord have them? That is not very generous on your part! The Lord is entitled to the very best. Some are getting ripe for Glory, so it is but natural that the Master should take the ripest of them. You need not be astonished, therefore, when the most useful people are taken to Heaven.

But now, look, Stephen is going Home. Who will take Stephen's place? Do you not see him? The witnesses have laid their clothes at his feet and no doubt Stephen's mantle was among them! So, as surely as Elijah left his mantle to Elisha, *the mantle of Stephen was lying at the feet of Saul.* He did not put it on at once, but he did put it on afterwards. And oftentimes, when men ask, "What shall we do when Mr. So-and-So has gone?" The Lord will send a man who does just as well as Mr. So-and-So has done! I have often been asked, "What is to be done with the Tabernacle, and the College, and the Orphanage when you are gone?" Dear me, the Lord got on very well before I was born and I am sure He will when I am dead. That question never troubles me. Did you ever sit down and think, "What will my wife do when I am gone?" You do not like to think of it? Then do not think of it, for it is no business of yours! The

successor of any man whom God makes useful will be found in due course. He may be at present among the haters of the Gospel! He may be among those who are railing at the Cross of Christ! Where was the great successor of John Huss found? Why, he is over there in a German monastery. What? A monk? Yes, a monk who goes crawling up the stairs of the *Santa Scala* at Rome, trying to get merit enough to save his father, mother and himself—and wishing he could always be there accumulating merit! Yes, Martin Luther was the man to follow Huss and God raised him up in due time!

The saints in Jerusalem did not know where Stephen's successor was, but God saw him among Stephen's enemies and He brought him out and Saul was a mightier Apostle than Stephen could ever have been! The Church lost Stephen, but she gained Saul—and that was a very good exchange for, though nothing may be said that would be derogatory to such a high-souled man as Stephen was, yet the Church of Christ has never had a servant who, taking him for all in all, has been so useful to her as the famous Apostle Paul who was once that young man named Saul! How much we owe, through Divine Grace, to his Epistles for their clear teaching of spiritual Doctrines! No other Apostle, though each one was excellent in his own way, ever had so clear a Revelation of, or so clearly taught, those grand Doctrines of Grace which are the very backbone of the Gospel of Jesus! And who else ever labored as he did? He says himself—and he was always modest—"I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the Grace of God which was with me." When Stephen was taken away, it was a great mercy that he was succeeded by one who even surpassed himself!

And, my dear Friends, at this very time, we need not be asking, "What shall we do without So-and-So?" God has enough servants somewhere or other, so we need not say, "Would that He would raise up more evangelists!" He has already spied a man out in Chicago and, without going so far as that, He could find one in any part of London, or in any hamlet or village in the country, wherever He chose to look for him! The Lord is never short of men to serve Him—

***"Remember that Omnipotence has servants everywhere"—***

and out of the ranks of Satan's army He can take the boldest champion of evil, arrest him by Almighty Grace and lay upon him the charge to become a leader to the hosts of the living God! Never despair, and never doubt, nor let even a desponding thought concerning Christ's cause flit across your mind! They tell us that dark days are coming—that is quite true, but the Sun of Righteousness will never be eclipsed! They tell us that the powers of evil will grow stronger and stronger. Suppose they do—the Almighty will never grow weak. We will fall back upon the Omnipotence and All-Sufficiency of Jehovah and then we shall know what it is not to feel any distrust or fear concerning the present or the future of the Church of the living God!

So you see, in the case of Stephen and Saul, we have a clear instance of the certainty of true Apostolic succession.

**IV.** Now, next, and briefly, our text seems to me to be A GRACIOUS MEMORIAL OF REPENTED SIN.

Saul became Paul and there is a great deal of good recorded of him under the name of Paul. But the Holy Spirit has caused this fact to be remembered, “The witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul.” Then does God write down the sins of His people before they are converted? Yes, He does, and in this case He writes it down in the Book of books, so that, wherever the Bible goes, there goes the information that Saul of Tarsus was once a persecutor! When we read of Rahab, we are told that she was “the harlot.” Why is this memorial kept of Saul’s sins before conversion? It was meant to keep Paul humble—and it always did that. You notice how very sorrowfully he always speaks about this matter. He says that he was not meet to be called an Apostle because he persecuted the Church of God. Once, in speaking to the Lord, he said, “And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I, also, was standing by and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.” He never forgot that and it always made him walk humbly before God. He wrote to Timothy, “I was a blasphemer and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy.”

Do not try, Beloved, to forget your old sins. Let them always be before you to keep you humble. I have heard of a certain high ecclesiastic who had been a fisherman. And while he was rising in the world he used to hang up his net that he might be reminded that he had once been a fisherman. At last, the Pope made him a cardinal and no one ever saw his net after that. They said that he had caught what he had fished for, so he put his net away. You and I had better always keep our nets in sight to remind us of what we once were. Look at the pit from where you were dug, and when God gives you any special mercy, say to yourself, “What a miracle of Grace is this, for I was among the most undeserving of all.”

This sin of Paul’s was always on his mind and so it continually increased his love. He was like the woman who loved much because she had had much forgiven—like the debtor who, although he owed the most, was most grateful because his lord had freely forgiven him all. Who was as zealous as Paul? He counted all things but loss for the Glory of God and surely that was because he felt himself to be a debtor beyond all others to the Grace which had washed away the scarlet sin of murder from his guilty soul!

And, again, dear Friends, this sin of Paul’s was recorded in the Bible and retained in his memory because it kept him to the Doctrines of Grace. I have generally noticed that those professors who were always so very good, and had nothing very marked about their conversion, have gone off to that form of doctrine which I do not find in the Scriptures. But those of us who know how base we were before our conversion feel that there is only one kind of Doctrine in which we can believe, and that is the Doctrine of Sovereign Grace. It would take a great deal to grind me

down into a belief in free will because it is contrary to my whole experience. I know this, if the Lord had not first loved me, I never would have loved Him. And if there is any good thing in men whatever, it must have been implanted there by the Holy Spirit. If salvation is of works, then I can never have it—and if it is the reward of natural goodness, then I shall never have it. I feel that it must be of Grace, and of Grace alone. No doubt, the recollection of his sin helped to make Paul what he was—the grand Evangelical preacher—the man who brought out the glorious Doctrine of God’s electing love—the man who, beyond all others, proclaimed the Doctrine that salvation is of Grace and Grace alone, and that God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. It would have been incompatible with the experience of the Apostle to preach anything else and, therefore, was the remembrance of his sin kept before him that he might always make known those precious Truths of God!

And, perhaps, dear Brothers and Sisters, this sin of Paul is recorded that we might always be hopeful about other people. You know, from the moment he was converted to the moment he died, he was always a persecuted man. His life was divided into two periods—first he was persecutor and then he was persecuted. When he had been driven from city to city and many times stoned, how he must have thought of Stephen and the stones that fell on him! When he had been hated of all men for Christ’s sake, he might well have despaired of the Gospel ever spreading had he not said, “Ah, but as it converted me, it can convert others. Did I not take care of the clothes of those who stoned Stephen—those rebels who took the pearls that fell from his lips and trod them underfoot like swine?” This would encourage him to stand before the cruel Nero and to tell him the Gospel of Jesus, for He who could convert a Saul could convert a Nero if He willed to do it. You never find Paul drawing back or flinching, but he went preaching almost to the ends of the earth, feeling himself to be a debtor both to Jew and Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond and free because, he said, “I obtained mercy, that in me, first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.” Oh, yes! it is good for you to remember what you used to be, for you will have hope for other people when you remember that!

**V.** Our text, in the fifth place, is AN INSTANCE OF THE OVERRULING OF GOD.

If you look very carefully at it and look long enough, it will appear not altogether a bad thing that Saul should be there taking care of the clothes of the murderers of Stephen. Possibly you cannot, at first, see how any good can come out of it, but there was never a bad thing out of which God could not bring good. Even the death of Christ, which was the culmination of human sin, was the crowning point of Divine Love. *If Saul had not been there, Stephen would not have prayed for him.* Augustine says, in a sentence which is always quoted in every commentary on the Acts that I have seen, “If Stephen had not prayed, Paul had never preached.” But Stephen’s prayer, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,”

was such a comprehensive plea for his murderers that I can well conceive of his fixing his tearful gaze upon that young man named Saul and in his thoughts including him in that petition and beseeching the Lord not to lay it to his charge! And the Lord did not lay it to his charge “because,” Paul said, “I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”

I believe it was a good thing for Saul to be there and I have sometimes thought, when I have heard a man swear in the street, “That is an awful thing, but if he had not done it, I would probably not have prayed for him.” I always make it a rule to pray for a man when I hear him swear, so, in that way God may bring good out of evil. Take care, all of you who love the Lord, whenever you hear or see anybody doing that which is wrong, to always pray—for this is the way we are to be “the salt of the earth.” The salt is always to be put where the rottenness begins. This is the way in which we are to be “the light of the world.” The candles are to be brought when the darkness comes out—you do not need them till the sun has gone and the darkness has come. So, when you perceive the darkness, light your candles! When you perceive the putrefaction, scatter the salt by bringing the sinner before God in prayer!

But there is also something more than this. *If Saul had not been there, he would have missed the benefit of Stephen’s discourse.* And Stephen’s sermon is the text from which Paul preached all his life. If you examine it carefully, you will find that Stephen’s speech is the root out of which, through the blessing of the Spirit of God, Paul’s theology grows. Stephen gives him the clue of all that argument in the Epistle to the Romans about Sarah and Hagar. And all that discussion about father Abraham being justified by faith is there in Stephen’s speech. And the Epistle to the Hebrews is another plant that grows out of the seed which Stephen sowed in Saul’s mind. There are several phrases which are identical. I think that the reason why we have the speech of Stephen recorded so fully is that Paul traveled with Luke, who wrote the Acts of the Apostles, and Paul told Luke what Stephen had said, for it seems to have gone right into his soul and to have stuck there! It must have been so, for it molded all his Epistles and you can trace the influence of Stephen in every parchment upon which Paul put his pen. It may sometimes happen that men who are opposed to the Word of God may actually be influenced by a man at whom they sneered. That may be the very man at whose feet they humble themselves. Perhaps, after he is dead and gone, that man’s piety may color the whole life of a young man who now hates him. You cannot tell, but this I know—that out of many an evil thing God has often brought great good—as He did in this case, both through the prayer and through the preaching of holy Stephen!

Whenever you think that an unconverted man has formed some plot to allure you into sin, have so much of the Holy Spirit about you that instead of his overcoming you, you will overcome him! Have you never heard of the soldier who reported that he had taken a prisoner? The officer said, “Bring him along, then.” He said, “I cannot.” “Why not?” “Because he is dragging me the other way,” replied the soldier. He had

not taken a prisoner—he had become a prisoner himself! And many a Christian, instead of doing good to the world, is being led away captive by the world. Let it not be so with you. Make them turn to you, but do not turn to them. It is well, in the firmness of faith, to draw them towards the Savior, but may it never happen that their evil example shall master your good and their revelry shall overcome your piety. God fill us with the Holy Spirit and with faith so that we may, like Stephen, be the means of transforming Saul, the persecutor, into Paul, the Apostle!

I leave this subject with you, only asking you to pray for any whom you see to be distinguished for sin, or infidelity, or heresy. Pray God to save them! The more mischief they are doing, the more earnestly you ought to pray for them, for it is very likely that if they were converted, the more good would they do. I read a strange speech of John Bunyan's once, with which I did not wholly agree, though there was some truth in it. He said that he had great hope for the next generation because the young men that he met with were so intensely wicked and he thought that if God, by His Grace, changed them, they would make grand saints. So, when you meet with intensely wicked men, pray God to make grand saints of them! They are the raw material, ready to His hands for Him to work upon. The very obstinacy and rebellion of their nature shows that when Divine Grace comes into them, they will make the most outspoken Christians. Therefore, pray for such and may God hear your prayer, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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

# THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS NO. 2644

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 15, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 25, 1882.

*“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said this, He gave up the ghost.”  
Luke 23:46.*

*“Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O LORD God of Truth.”  
Psalm 31:5.*

*“And they stoned Stephen, as he was calling upon God and asking, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”  
Acts 7:59.*

THIS morning, dear Friends, I spoke upon the first recorded words of our Lord Jesus [Sermon #1666, Volume 28—*The First Recorded Words of Jesus*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] when He said to His mother and to Joseph, “How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” Now, by the help of the blessed Spirit, we will consider the last words of our Lord Jesus before He gave up the ghost. And with them we will examine two other passages in which similar expressions are used.

The words, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit,” if we judge them to be the last which our Savior uttered before His death, ought to be coupled with those other words, “It is finished,” which some have thought were actually the last He used. I think it was not so, but, anyway, these utterances must have followed each other very quickly and we may blend them together. And then we shall see how very similar they are to His first words as we explained them this morning. There is the cry, “It is finished,” which you may read in connection with our Authorized Version—“Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” That business was all finished—He had been about it all His life and now that He had come to the end of His days, there was nothing left undone—and He could say to His Father, “I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.”

Then if you take the other utterance of our Lord on the Cross, “Father, into your hands I commend My spirit,” see how well it agrees with the other reading of our morning text, “Did you not know that I must be in My Father’s house?” Jesus is putting Himself into the Father’s hands because He had always desired to be there, in the Father’s house with the Father. And now He is committing His spirit, as a sacred trust, into the

Father's hands that He may depart to be with the Father, to abide in His house, and go no more out forever.

Christ's life is all of a piece, just as the alpha and the omega are letters of the same alphabet. You do not find Him one thing at the first, another thing afterwards, and a third thing still later—He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." There is a wondrous similarity about everything that Christ said and did. You never need write the name, "Jesus," under any of His sayings as you have to put the names of human writers under their sayings, for there is no mistaking any sentence that He has uttered!

If there is anything recorded as having been done by Christ, a believing child can judge whether it is authentic or not. Those miserable false gospels that were brought out did very little, if any mischief, because nobody with any true spiritual discernment was ever duped into believing them to be genuine! It is possible to manufacture a spurious coin which will, for a time, pass for a good one, but it is not possible to make even a passable imitation of what Jesus Christ has said and done! Everything about Christ is like Himself—there is a Christ-likeness about it which cannot be mistaken! This morning, for instance, when I preached about the Holy Child Jesus, I am sure you must have felt that there was never another child as He was. And in His death He was as unique as in His birth, childhood and life. There was never another who died as He did and there was never another who lived altogether as He did. Our Lord Jesus Christ stands by Himself! Some of us try to imitate Him, but how feebly do we follow in His steps! The Christ of God still stands by Himself and He has no rival!

I have already intimated to you that I am going to have three texts for my sermon, but when I have spoken upon all three of them, you will see that they are so much alike that I might have been content with one of them.

**I.** I invite you first to consider OUR SAVIOR'S WORDS JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit."

Here observe, first, *how Christ lives and passes away in the atmosphere of the Word of God.* Christ was a grand original thinker and He might always have given us words of His own. He never lacked suitable language, for, "never man spoke like this Man." Yet you must have noticed how continually He quoted Scripture—the great majority of His expressions may be traced to the Old Testament. Even where they are not exact quotations, His words drop into Scriptural shape and form! You can see that the Bible has been His one Book. He is evidently familiar with it from the first page to the last and not with its letter, only, but with the innermost soul of its most secret sense and, therefore, when dying, it seemed but natural for Him to use a passage from a Psalm of David as His expiring words. In His death, He was not driven beyond the power of quiet thought—He was not unconscious, He did not die of weakness—He was strong even while He was dying! It is true that He said, "I thirst," but, after He had been a little refreshed, He cried with a loud voice, as only a strong man could, "It is finished!" And now, before He bows His head in the silence of death, He utters His final words, "Fa-

ther, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” Our Lord might, I say again, have made an original speech as His dying declaration. His mind was clear, calm, and undisturbed—in fact, He was perfectly happy, for He had said, “It is finished!” So His sufferings were over and He was already beginning to enjoy a taste of the sweets of victory. Yet, with all that clearness of mind, freshness of intellect and fluency of words that might have been possible to Him, He did not invent a new sentence, but He went to the Book of Psalms and took from the Holy Spirit this expression, “Into Your hands I commend My spirit.”

How instructive to us is this great Truth of God that the Incarnate Word lived on the Inspired Word! It was food to Him, as it is to us and, Brothers and Sisters, if Christ thus lived upon the Word of God, should not you and I do the same? He, in some respects, did not need this Book as much as we do. The Spirit of God rested upon Him without measure, yet He loved the Scripture and He went to it, studied it and used its expressions continually. Oh, that you and I might get into the very heart of the Word of God and get that Word into ourselves! As I have seen the silkworm eat into the leaf and consume it, so ought we to do with the Word of the Lord—not crawl over its surface, but eat right into it till we have taken it into our inmost parts! It is idle to merely let the eyes glance over the Words, or to remember the poetical expressions, or the historic facts—but it is blessed to eat into the very soul of the Bible until, at last, you come to talk in Scriptural language and your very style is fashioned upon Scripture models—and, what is still better, your spirit is flavored with the words of the Lord!

I would quote John Bunyan as an instance of what I mean. Read anything of his and you will see that it is almost like reading the Bible itself. He had studied our Authorized Version, which will never be bettered, as I judge, till Christ shall come. He had read it till his very soul was saturated with Scripture and though his writings are charmingly full of poetry, yet he cannot give us his *Pilgrim’s Progress*—that sweetest of all prose poems—without continually making us feel and say, “Why, this man is a living Bible!” Prick him anywhere—his blood is Bibline—the very essence of the Bible flows from him! He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his very soul is full of the Word of God. I commend His example to you, Beloved and, still more, the example of our Lord Jesus! If the Spirit of God is in you, He will make you love the Word of God and, if any of you imagine that the Spirit of God will lead you to dispense with the Bible, you are under the influence of another spirit which is not the Spirit of God at all! I trust that the Holy Spirit will endear to you every page of this Divine Record so that you will feed upon it and, afterwards, speak it out to others. I think it is well worthy of your constant remembrance that, even in death, our blessed Master showed the ruling passion of His spirit so that His last words were a quotation from Scripture.

Now notice, secondly, *that our Lord, in the moment of His death, recognized a personal God.* “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” God is to some men an unknown God. “There may be a God,” so they say, but they get no nearer the truth than that. “All things are God,” says another. “We cannot be sure that there is a God,” say others, “and, there-

fore, it is no use our pretending to believe in Him and so to be, possibly, influenced by a supposition." Some people say, "Oh, certainly, there is a God, but He is very far off! He does not come near to us and we cannot imagine that He will interfere in our affairs." Ah, but our blessed Lord Jesus Christ believed in no such impersonal, pantheistic, dreamy, far-off God, but in One to whom He said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." His language shows that He realized the Personality of God as much as I would recognize the personality of a banker if I said to him, "Sir, I commit that money into your hands." I know that I should not say such a thing as that to a mere dummy, or to an abstract something or nothing—but I would say it to a living man and I would say it only to a living man.

So, Beloved, men do not commit their souls into the keeping of impalpable nothings! They do not, in death, smile as they resign themselves to the infinite unknown, the cloudy "Father of everything," who may be nothing or everything. No, no, we only trust what we know! And so Jesus knew the Father, and knew Him to be a real Person having hands—and into those hands He commended His departing spirit. I am not now speaking materially, mark you, as though God had hands like ours, but He is an actual Being, who has powers of action, who is able to deal with men as He pleases and who is willing to take possession of their spirits and to protect them forever and ever. Jesus speaks like one who believed that and I pray that, both in life and in death, you and I may always deal with God in the same way. We have far too much fiction in religion—and a religion of fiction will bring only fictitious comfort in the dying hour. Come to solid facts! Is God as real to you as you are to yourself? Come now, do you speak with Him, "as a man speaks unto his friend"? Can you trust Him and rely upon Him as you trust and rely upon the partner of your bosom? If your God is unreal, your religion is unreal! If your God is a dream, your hope will be a dream and woe be unto you when you shall wake up out of it!

It was not so that Jesus trusted. "Father," He said, "into Your hands I commend My spirit."

But, thirdly, here is a still better point. Observe how *Jesus Christ here brings out the Fatherhood of God*. The Psalm from which He quoted did not say, "Father." David did not get as far as that in words, though in *spirit* he often did. But Jesus had the right to alter the Psalmist's words. He can improve on Scripture, though you and I cannot. He did not say, "O God, into Your hands I commend My spirit." He said, "Father." Oh, that sweet word! That was the gem of our thought, this morning, that Jesus said, "Did you not know that I must be at My Father's—that I must be in My Father's house!" Oh, yes, the Holy Child knew that He was especially and, in a peculiar sense, the Son of the Highest, and therefore He said, "My Father." And, in dying, His expiring heart was buoyed up and comforted with the thought that God was His Father. It was because He said that God was His Father that they put Him to death, yet He still stood to it even in His dying hour and said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit"!

What a blessed thing it is for us, also, my Brothers and Sisters, to die conscious that we are children of God! Oh, how sweet, in life and in death, to feel in our soul the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba, Father"! In such a case as that—

***"It is not death to die."***

Quoting the Savior's words, "It is finished," and relying upon His Father and our Father, we may go even into the jaws of death without the "quivering lips" of which we sang just now. Joyful, with all the strength we have, our lips may confidently sing, challenging death and the grave to silence our ever-rising and swelling music! O my Father, my Father, if I am in your hands, I may die without fear!

There is another thought, however, which is perhaps the best one of all. From this passage we learn that our *Divine Lord cheerfully rendered up His soul to His Father when the time had come for Him to die*. "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." None of us can, with strict propriety, use these words. When we come to die, we may perhaps utter them and God will accept them—these were the very death-words of Polycarp, Bernard, Luther, Melancthon, Jerome of Prague, John Huss and an almost endless list of saints—"Into Your hands I commend my spirit." The Old Testament rendering of the passage, or else our Lord's version of it, has been turned into a Latin prayer and commonly used among Romanists almost as a *charm*—they have repeated the Latin words when dying, or, if they were unable to do so, the priest repeated the words for them, attaching a sort of magical power to that particular formula! But, in the sense in which our Savior uttered these words, we cannot, any of us, fully use them. We can commit or commend our spirit to God, but yet, Brothers and Sisters, remember that unless the Lord comes first, we *must die*—and dying is *not* an *act* on our part. We have to be passive in the process because it is no longer in our power to retain our life. I suppose that if a man could have such control of his life, it might be questionable when he would surrender it because suicide is a crime and no man can be required to kill himself. God does not demand such action as that at any man's hands and, in a certain sense, that is what would happen whenever a man yielded himself to death.

But there was no necessity for our blessed Lord and Master to die except the necessity which He had taken upon Himself in becoming the Substitute for His people! There was no necessity for His death even at the last moment upon the Cross, for, as I have reminded you, He cried with a loud voice when natural weakness would have compelled Him to whisper or to sigh. But His life was strong within Him—if He had willed to do so, He could have unloosed the nails and come down into the midst of the crowd that stood mocking Him! He died of His own free will, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." A man may righteously surrender his life for the good of his country and for the safety of others. There have frequently been opportunities for men to do this and there have been brave fellows who have worthily done it. But all those men would have had to die at some time or other. They were only slightly anticipating the payment of the debt of nature. But, in our Lord's case, He was rendering up to the Father the spirit which He might have kept if

He had chosen to do so. “No man takes it from Me,” He said concerning His life. “I lay it down of Myself.”

And there is here a cheerful *willingness* to yield up His spirit into His Father’s hands! It is rather remarkable that none of the Evangelists describe our Lord as *dying*. He did die, but they all speak of Him as giving up the ghost—surrendering to God His spirit. You and I passively die, but He actively yielded up His spirit to His Father. In His case, death *was an act* and He performed that act from the glorious motive of redeeming us from death and Hell! So, in this sense, Christ stands alone in His death.

But, oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, if we cannot render up our spirit as He did, yet, when our life is taken from us, let us be perfectly ready to give it up! May God bring us into such a state of mind and heart that there shall be no struggling to keep our life, but a sweet willingness to let it be just as God would have it—a yielding up of everything into His hands, feeling sure that, in the world of spirits, our soul shall be quite safe in the Father’s hands and that, until the Resurrection Day, the life-germ of the body will be securely in His keeping, and certain that when the trumpet shall sound, spirit, soul and body—that trinity of our manhood—shall be reunited in the absolute perfection of our being to behold the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off! When God calls us to die, it will be a sweet way of dying if we can, like our Lord, pass away with a text of Scripture upon our lips, with a personal God ready to receive us, with that God recognized distinctly as our Father and so die joyously, resigning our will entirely to the sweet will of the ever-blessed One, and saying, “It is the Lord.” “My Father.” “Let Him do as seems good to Him.”

**II.** My second text is in the 31<sup>st</sup> Psalm, at the 5<sup>th</sup> verse. And it is evidently the passage which our Savior had in His mind just then “Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth.” It seems to me that **THESE ARE WORDS TO BE USED IN LIFE**, for this Psalm is not so much concerning the Believer’s death as concerning his life.

Is it not very amazing, dear Friends, that the words which Jesus uttered on the Cross you may still continue to use? You may catch up their echo and not only when you come to die, but tonight, tomorrow morning and as long as you are alive, you may still repeat the text the Master quoted, and say, “Into Your hands I commit my spirit.”

That is to say, first, *let us cheerfully entrust our souls to God* and feel that they are quite safe in His hands. Our spirit is the noblest part of our being; our body is only the husk, our spirit is the living kernel, so let us put it into God’s keeping. Some of you have never yet done that, so I invite you to do it now. It is the act of faith which saves the soul, that act which a man performs when he says, “I trust myself to God as He reveals Himself in Christ Jesus. I cannot keep myself, but He can keep me and, by the precious blood of Christ He can cleanse me. So I just take my spirit and give it over into the great Father’s hands.” You never really live till you do that! All that comes before that act of full surrender is death! But when you have once trusted Christ, then you have truly begun to

live. And every day, as long as you live, take care that you repeat this process and cheerfully leave yourselves in God's hands without any reserve. That is to say, give yourself up to God—your body, to be healthy or to be sick, to be long-lived or to be suddenly cut off. Your soul and spirit, give them, also, up to God, to be made happy or to be made sad, just as He pleases. Give Your whole self up to Him and say to Him, "My Father, make me rich or make me poor, give me sight or make me blind. Let me have all my senses or take them away. Make me famous or leave me to be obscure. I give myself up to You—into Your hands I commit my spirit. I will no longer exercise my own choice, but You shall choose My inheritance for me. My times are in Your hands."

Now, dear children of God, are you always doing this? Have you *ever* done it? I am afraid that there are some, even among Christ's professing followers, who kick against God's will and even when they say to God, "Your will be done," they spoil it by adding, in their own mind, "and my will, too." They pray, "Lord, make my will Your will," instead of saying, "Make Your will my will." Let us each one pray this prayer every day, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." I like, at family prayer, to put myself and all that I have into God's hands in the morning—and then, at night, to just look between His hands and see how safe I have been. And then to say to Him, "Lord, shut me up again tonight! Take care of me all through the night watches. 'Into Your hands I commit my spirit.'"

Notice, dear Friends, that our second text has these words at the end of it—"You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth." Is not that a good reason for giving yourself up entirely to God? Christ has redeemed you and, therefore, you belong to Him. If I am a redeemed man and I ask God to take care of me, I am but asking the King to take care of one of His own jewels—a jewel that cost Him the blood of His heart!

And I may still more especially expect that He will do so, because of the title which is here given to Him—"You have redeemed me, *O Lord God of Truth.*" Would He be the God of Truth if He began with redemption and ended with destruction—if He began by giving His Son to die for us and then kept back other mercies which we daily need to bring us to Heaven? No, the gift of His Son is the pledge that He will save His people from their sins and bring them home to Glory—and He will do it. So, every day, go to Him with this declaration, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." No, not only every day, but all through the day! Does a horse run away with you? Then you cannot do better than say, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." And if the horse does not run away with you, you cannot do better than say the same words! Have you to go into a house where there is fever? I mean, is it your *duty* to go there? Then go saying, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." I would advise you to do this every time you walk down the street, or even while you sit in your own house.

Dr. Gill, my famous predecessor, spent very much time in his study and, one day, somebody said to him, "Well, at any rate, the studious man is safe from most of the accidents of life." It so happened that one morning, when the good man left his familiar armchair for a little while, there came a gale of wind that blew down a stack of chimneys which crashed

through the roof and fell right into the place where he would have been sitting if the Providence of God had not just then drawn him away! And he said, "I see that we need Divine Providence to care for us in our studies just as much as in the streets." "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." I have often noticed that if any of our friends get into accidents and troubles, it is usually when they are away for a holiday. It is a curious thing, but I have often remarked about it. They go out for their health and come home sick! They leave us with all their limbs whole and return to us crippled! Therefore we must pray God to take special care of friends in the country or by the sea—and we must commit ourselves to His hands wherever we may be. If we had to go into a leper colony, we would certainly ask God to protect us from the deadly leprosy. But we ought to equally seek the Lord's protection while dwelling in the healthiest place or in our own homes!

David said to the Lord, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." But let me beg you to add that word which our Lord inserted—"Father." David is often a good guide for us, but David's Lord is far better. And if we follow Him, we shall improve upon David. So, let us each say, "Father, Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." That is a sweet way of living every day—committing everything to our Heavenly Father's hands, for those hands can do His child no unkindness. "Father, I might not be able to trust Your angels, but I can trust You." The Psalmist does not say, "Into the hand of Providence I commit my spirit." Do you notice how men try to get rid of God by saying, "Providence did this," and, "Providence did that," and, "Providence did the other"? If you ask them, "What is Providence?"—they will probably reply, "Well, Providence is Providence." That is all they can say.

There is many a man who talks very confidently about reverencing nature, obeying the laws of nature, noting the powers of nature and so on. Step up to that eloquent lecturer and say to him, "Will you kindly explain to me what nature is?" He answers, "Why, nature—well, it is—nature." Just so, Sir, but, what is nature? And he says, "Well—well—it is nature." And that is all you will get out of him. Now, I believe in nature and I believe in Providence, but at the back of everything, I believe in God, and in the God who has hands—not in an idol that has no hands and can do nothing—but in the God to whom I can say, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." I rejoice that I am able to put myself there, for I feel absolutely safe in trusting myself to Your keeping." So live, Beloved, and you shall live safely, happily and you shall have hope in your life, and hope in your death!

**III.** My third text will not detain us many minutes. It is intended to explain to us THE USE OF OUR SAVIOR'S DYING WORDS FOR OURSELVES. Turn to the account of the death of Stephen, in the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts, at the 59<sup>th</sup> verse, and you will see, there, how far a man of God may dare to go in his last moments in quoting from David and from the Lord Jesus Christ. "And they stoned Stephen, as he was calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." So here is a text for us to use when we come to die—"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." I have explained to you that, strictly, we can hardly talk of yielding up our spirit,

but we may speak of Christ *receiving* it and say with Stephen, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

What does this prayer mean? I must just hurriedly give you two or three thoughts concerning it and so close my discourse. I think this prayer means that, *if we can die as Stephen did, we shall die with a certainty of immortality*. Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” He did not say, “I am afraid my poor spirit is going to die.” No, the spirit is something which still exists after death, something which Christ can receive and, therefore, Stephen asks Him to receive it! You and I are not going upstairs to die as if we were only like cats and dogs—we go up there to die like immortal beings who fall asleep on earth and open our eyes in Heaven! Then, at the sound of the archangel’s trumpet, our very body is to rise to dwell, again, with our spirit—we have not any question about this matter! I think I have told you what an infidel once said to a Christian man, “Some of you Christians have great fear in dying because you believe that there is another state to follow this one. I have not the slightest fear, for I believe that I shall be annihilated and, therefore, all fear of death is gone from me.” “Yes,” said the Christian, “and in that respect you seem to me to be on equal terms with that bull grazing over there, which, like yourself, is free from any fear of death. Pray, Sir, let me ask you a simple question. Have you any *hope*?” “Hope, Sir? *Hope*, Sir? No, I have no hope! Of course I have no hope, Sir.” “Ah, then!” replied the other, “despite the fears that sometimes come over feeble Believers, they have a hope which they would not and could not give up.” And that hope is that our spirit—even that spirit which we commit into Jesus Christ’s hands—shall be “forever with the Lord.”

The next thought is that, *to a man who can die as Stephen did, there is a certainty that Christ is near*—so near that the man speaks to Him and says, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” In Stephen’s case, the Lord Jesus was so near that the martyr could see Him, for he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” Many dying saints have borne a similar testimony. It is no strange thing for us to hear them say, before they die, that they could see within the pearly gates and they have told us this with such evident truthfulness, and with such rapture, or sometimes so calmly—in such a businesslike tone of voice—we were sure that they were neither deceived nor speaking falsehood. They spoke what they knew to be true, for Jesus was there with them! Yes, Beloved, before you can call your children around your deathbed, Jesus will already be there! And into His hands you may commit your spirit.

Moreover, *there is a certainty that we are quite safe in His hands*. Wherever else we are insecure, if we ask Him to receive our spirit, and He receives it, who can hurt us? Who can pluck us out of His hands? Awaken, Death and hail! Come forth, all you powers of darkness! What can you do when once a spirit is in the hands of the Omnipotent Redeemer? We will be safe there!

Then there is the other certainty, *that He is quite willing to take us into His hands*. Let us put ourselves into His hands now—and then we need not be ashamed to repeat the operation every day and we may be sure

that we shall not be rejected at the last. I have often told you of the good old woman who was dying and to whom someone said, "Are you not afraid to die?" "Oh, no," she replied, "there is nothing at all to fear. I have dipped my foot in the river of death every morning before I have had my breakfast, and I am not afraid to die now." You remember that dear saint who died in the night, and who had left written on a piece of paper by her bedside these lines which, before she fell asleep, she felt strong enough to pencil down?—

***"Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing,  
But gladly put off these garments of clay—  
To die in the Lord, is a Covenant blessing,  
Since Jesus to Glory thro' death led the way."***

It was well that she could say it—and may we be able to say the same whenever the Master calls us to go up higher! I want, dear Friends, that we should, all of us, have as much willingness to depart as if it were a matter of will with us! Blessed be God it is not left to our choice—it is not left to our will when we shall die. God has appointed that day and ten thousand devils cannot consign us to the grave before our time! We shall not die till God decrees it—

***"Plagues and deaths around me fly,  
Till He please I cannot die!  
Not a single shaft can hit  
Till the God of love sees fit."***

But let us be just as willing to depart as if it were really a matter of choice, for, wisely, carefully, coolly consider that if it were left to us, we should none of us be wise if we did not choose to go! Apart from the coming of our Lord, the most miserable thing that I know of would be a suspicion that we might not die. Do you know what quaint old Rowland Hill used to say when he found himself getting very old? He said, "Surely they must be forgetting me up there." And every now and then, when some dear old saint was dying, he would say, "When you get to Heaven, give my love to John Berridge, and John Bunyan and ever so many more of the good Johns, and tell them I hope they will see poor old Rowley up there before long." Well, there was common sense in that wishing to get Home, longing to be with God. To be with Christ is far better than to be here!

Sobriety itself would make us choose to die! Well, then, do not let us run back and become utterly unwilling and struggle and strive and fret and fume over it. When I hear of Believers who do not like to talk about death, I am afraid concerning them. It is greatly wise to be familiar with our resting place. When I went, recently, to the cemetery at Norwood, to lay the body of our dear Brother Perkins there for a little while, I felt that it was a healthy thing for me to stand at the grave's brink and to walk amid that forest of memorials of the dead, for this is where I, too, must go. You living men, come and view the ground where you must shortly lie and, as it must be so, let us who are Believers welcome it!

But, what if you are not Believers? Ah, that is another matter altogether! If you have not believed in Christ, you may well be afraid even to rest on the seat where you are sitting! I wonder that the earth itself does not say, "O God, I will not hold this wretched sinner up any longer! Let

me open my mouth and swallow him!” All nature must hate the man who hates God! Surely, all things must loathe to minister to the life of a man who does not live unto God. Oh that you would seek the Lord and trust Christ and find eternal life! If you have done so, do not be afraid to go forth to live, or to die, just as God pleases.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JOHN 15:1-8.**

**Verse 1.** *I am the true vine.* Now we know where to find the true Church. It is to be found only in Christ and in those who are joined to Him in mystical but real union. “I am the true vine.”

**1.** *And My Father is the vinedresser.* Now we know who is the true Guardian of the Church. Not the so-called “holy father” at Rome, but that Father above, who is the true Guardian, Ruler, Keeper, Preserver, Purifier, Vinedresser of the one Church, the vine!

**2.** *Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.* There are many such branches, in Christ’s visible Church which are not fruit-bearing branches and, consequently, are not partakers of the sap of life and Grace which flows into the branches that are vitally joined to the central stem. These fruitless branches are to be taken away.

**2.** *And every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* There is some work, then, for the knife upon *all* the branches—cutting off for those that are fruitless—cutting for those that are bearing some fruit that they may bring forth yet more.

**3.** *Now you are clean [purged] through the word which I have spoken unto you.* The Word is often the knife with which the great Vinedresser prunes the vine. And, Brothers and Sisters, if we were more willing to feel the edge of the Word, and to let it cut away even something that may be very dear to us, we would not need so much pruning by affliction. It is because that first knife does not always produce the desired result that another sharp tool is used by which we are effectually pruned.

**4.** *Abide in Me, and I in you.* “Do not merely find a temporary shelter in Me, as a ship runs into harbor in stormy weather and then comes out again when the gale is over, but cast anchor in Me, as the vessel does when it reaches its desired haven. Be not as branches that are tied on and so can be taken off, but be livingly joined to Me. ‘Abide in Me.’”

**4.** *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abides in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me.* You must bear fruit, or else be cast away, but you cannot bear any fruit except by real union and constant communion with Jesus Christ your Lord!

**5.** *I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing.* Not merely will you do very little, but you can do nothing at all if you are severed from Christ! You are absolutely and entirely dependent upon Christ, both for your life and for your fruit-bearing. Do we not wish to have it so, Beloved? It is the incipient principle of apostasy when a man wishes to be independent of Christ in any degree—when he says, “Give me the portion of goods that falls to me that I may have something in

hand, some spending money of my own.” No, you must, from day to day, from hour to hour and even from moment to moment, derive life, light, love, everything that is good from Christ! What a blessing that it is so!

6. *If a man abides not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.* There is a sad future in store for tares, according to another parable, but, somehow, there is a much sadder lot reserved for those that were, in some sense, branches of the vine—those who made a profession of faith in Christ, though they were never vitally united to Him. Those who, for a while, did run well, yet were hindered. What was it that hindered them that they should not obey the Truth of God? Oh, it is sad, indeed, that any should have had any sort of connection with that Divine Stem and yet should be cast into the fire!

7. *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.* Do not think that all men can pray alike effectually, for it is not so. There are some whom God will hear and some whom God will not hear. And there are some even of His own children whom He will hear in things absolutely vital and essential, to whom He never gave carte blanche after this fashion. “You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” No, if you will not hear God’s words, He will not hear yours! And if His words do not abide in you, your words shall not have power with Him. They may be directed to Heaven, but the Lord will not listen to them so as to have regard to them. Oh, it needs very tender walking for one who would be mighty in prayer! You shall find that those who have had their will at the Throne of Grace are men who have done God’s will in other places—it must be so. The greatest favorite at court will have a double portion of the jealousy of his monarch, and he must be especially careful that he orders his steps aright, or else the king will not continue to favor him as he was known to do. There is a sacred discipline in Christ’s house, a part of which consists in this, that, as our obedience to our God declines, so will our power in prayer decrease at the same time.

8. *Herein is My Father glorified, that he bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples.* If we are His true disciples, we also shall bring forth much fruit.

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

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

# STEPHEN'S DEATH

## NO. 1175

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 24, 1874,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying,  
Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.  
And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this  
sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”  
Acts 7:59, 60.***

IT is of the greatest service to us all to be reminded that our life is but a vapor which appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Through forgetfulness of this, worldlings live at ease and Christians walk carelessly. Unless we watch for the Lord's coming, worldliness soon eats into our spirit as does a canker. If you have this world's riches, Believer, remember that this is not your rest—set not too great a store by its comforts. If, on the other hand, you dwell in straitness and are burdened with poverty, be not too much depressed, for these light afflictions are but for a moment and are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in us! Look upon the things that are as though they were not. Remember you are a part of a great procession which is always moving by—others come and go before your own eyes—you see them and they disappear. You, yourself, are moving onward to another and more real world.

“Tis greatly wise to talk of our last hours,” to give a rehearsal of our departure and to be prepared to stand before the great tribunal of the judgment. Our duty is to trim our lamps against the time when the Bridegroom comes. We are called upon to stand always ready, waiting for the appearing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, or else for the summons which shall tell us that the pitcher is broken at the fountain and the wheel broken at the cistern—that the body must return to the earth as it was and the spirit unto God who gave it.

This death scene of Stephen's may aid our meditations while, by the help of the Holy Spirit, we cast our minds forward to the time when we, also, must fall asleep. This is the only martyrdom which is recorded in the New Testament in detail—the Holy Spirit foreseeing that there would be martyrdoms enough before the Church's history would end—and that we should never lack memorials such as those with which Foxe's Martyrology and works of the like order supply us. It is equally remarkable that this is the only death scene in the New Testament which has been described at length, with the exception of our Lord's. Of course we are told of the deaths of other saints and facts relating to them are mentioned. But what they *said* when they died and how they felt in passing out of the world are left unrecorded, probably because the Holy Spirit knew that we should never lack for holy deathbeds and triumphant departures.

He well knew these would be everyday facts to the people of God. Perhaps, moreover, the Holy Spirit would have us gather from His silence that He would not have us attach so much importance to the *manner* of men's deaths as to the character of their lives. To live like Jesus most nearly concerns us—a triumphant death may be the crown, but a holy life is the head that must wear it. To obey our Lord's commands during our life is our most pressing business. We may leave the testimony of death to be given us in the same hour. We shall have dying Grace in dying moments, but at the present time our chief business is to obtain the Grace which will enable us to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

However, as we have this one case of Stephen given us at full length, we should prize it the more highly and study it the more carefully because it is the only one. Let us do so this morning. There are three things upon which I shall speak—*The general character of Stephen's death*. Secondly, *its most notable peculiarity*. And thirdly, *things desirable in reference to death suggested to us by Stephen's departure*.

**I.** Let us look at Stephen's death, and notice ITS GENERAL CHARACTER. It strikes us at once that *it happened in the very midst of his service*. He had been appointed an officer of the Church at Jerusalem, to see that the alms were distributed properly among the poor, especially among the Grecian widows. He discharged his duty to the satisfaction of the whole Church and thereby he did most useful service, for it gave the Apostles opportunity to give themselves wholly to their true work, namely, that of preaching and prayer. It is no small matter to be able to bear a burden for another if he is thereby set free for more eminent service than we could, ourselves, perform.

If it is so that I cannot preach myself, yet if I can take away from one who does preach certain cares which burden him—if I thus enable him to preach the more and the better—I am virtually preaching myself. The care which Stephen exercised over the poor tended, also, to prevent division, and this was a result of no mean order. But, not content with being a deacon, Stephen began to minister in holy things as a speaker of the Word, and that with great power, for he was full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. He stands forth on the pages of Church history, for the time being, as quite a leading spirit. So much so, indeed, that the enemies of the Gospel recognized his prominent usefulness and made him the object of their most fierce opposition, for they generally rage most against those who are doing most good.

Stephen stood in the front rank of the Lord's host and yet he was taken away! "A mystery," some say. "A great privilege," say I. My Brothers and Sisters, who desires to be removed at any other time? Is it not well to die in harness while yet you are useful? Who wants to linger till he becomes a burden rather than a help? If we are called to depart in the middle of service we must submit to it thankfully and may even wish to have it said of us, he did—

***"His body with his charge lay down,  
And ceased at once to work and live."***

*He was removed in the very prime of his usefulness, just when many were being converted by his ministry. A time when, through his faith, miracles were being worked on all sides. A time when he seemed, indeed, to be necessary to the Church!*

And is not this well? Well, first, that God should teach His people how much He can do by a man whom He chooses. Well, next, that He should show them that He is not dependent upon any man, but can do His work even without the most choice laborer in His vineyard! If our life can teach one lesson—and when that is taught—if our *death* can teach another, it is well to live and well to die! And it is far more desirable than to tarry long and take one's flight in the dreary winter of declining influence. Let me be reaped, if I may venture on a choice, when my ministry shall be like the wheat in Pharaoh's dream—with seven ears rank and good—and not in a time when the east wind has shriveled me into barrenness. If God is glorified by our removal, is it not well? And may He not be more than ordinarily glorified when He lays us aside in order to show His Church that He can do without His servants, or can raise up others in their place? Happy is that messenger whose absence as well as his presence fulfils his Master's will!

But *Stephen's death was painful and attended with much that flesh and blood would dread*. He died not surrounded by weeping friends, but by enemies who gnashed their teeth! No holy hymn made glad his death chamber—the shouts and outcries of a maddened throng rang in his ears! No downy pillow for him, but the hard and cruel rocks. Battered and bruised by a whirlwind of stones he laid down to sleep and woke up in the bosom of his Lord! Now, Brothers and Sisters, this is all the more for our comfort, because if he died in perfect peace, no, in joy and triumph, how much more may *we* hope to depart in peace? Since we shall not have these grim attendants upon our departing hours, may we not hope that we shall be sustained and buoyed up by the Presence of our Lord and Master, even as Stephen was, and Divine Grace will be made perfect in our weakness?

Every circumstance tells on our side by way of comfort. If he slept amidst a storm of stones, how may we hope to fall asleep right peacefully, in the same faith in Jesus, when the saints are gathered around our bed to bid us farewell? More particularly, however, I want to call your attention to the fact that *Stephen's departing moments were calm, peaceful, confident, joyous*. He never flinched while he was addressing that infuriated audience! He told them the plain Truth of God, with as much quiet deliberation as if he had been gratifying them with a pleasing discourse. When they grew angry he was not afraid. His lips did not quiver. He did not retract or soften down a single expression, but cut them to the heart with even more fidelity! With the courage of a man of God, his face was set as a flint. Knowing that he was now preaching his last sermon, he used the sharp two-edged sword of the Word of God, piercing into their very bones.

He cared little how they frowned. He was not abashed when they gnashed their teeth. He was as calm as the opened Heaven above him and continued though they hurried him out of the city. When they had

dragged him outside the gate and stripped off their clothes to carry out his execution, he did not let fall a single timorous word or trembling cry. He stood up and committed his soul to God with calmness. And when the first murderous stones felled him to the earth he rose to his knees, still not to ask for pity, nor to utter a cowardly cry, but to plead with his Lord for mercy upon his assailants! Then, closing his eyes like a child tired out with the sport of a long summer's day, he drops asleep as on his mother's lap—"he fell asleep."

Believe, then, O Christian, that if you abide in Christ, the same will be the case with you! You shall be undisturbed at the premonitions of decay. When the physician shakes his head, your heart shall not fail! When friends look sad, you will not share their sorrow! We wept when we were born though all around us smiled—so shall we smile when we die while all around us weep. The dying Christian is often the only calm and composed person in all the group which fills the chamber from which he ascends to Heaven. Talking of what he enjoys and expects, he glides gently into Glory! Why should we expect it to be otherwise? Stephen's God is our God! Stephen's faith we already possess in its germ and we may have it in the same degree! The Holy Spirit dwells in us even as He did in Stephen—and if He puts not forth the same energy—what hinders Him but our unbelief? Getting more faith we shall enjoy the same tranquil repose of spirit when our appointed hour shall come. Brethren, let us not fear death, but descend Jordan's shelving bank without the slightest dismay!

Some other points about Stephen's departure I beg you to notice—points relating to the state of his mind. *His mind was in a very elevated condition.* Here, let us first notice *his intense sympathy with God.* All through that long speech of his you see that his soul is taken up with his God and the treatment which He had received from Israel. He does not speak against his countrymen from any ill will, but he seems to take them into very little consideration. His God absorbs all his thoughts. He tells how his God had sent Joseph, but his brothers persecuted him. His God had sent Moses, but they rebelled against him. His God had now sent Jesus and they had been His betrayers and murderers. He had pity upon them in his heart, that is clearly seen in his dying prayer for them, but still, his main feeling is sympathy with God in the rebellions which He had endured from the ungodly.

Surely this is the mind which possesses the saints in Heaven. I see, as I read Stephen's speech, that he regarded impenitent sinners from the standpoint of the saints above, who will be so taken up in sympathy with God and the righteousness of His government, that the doom of the finally rebellious will cause them no pain. The triumph of right over willful wrong, of holiness over the foulest and most wanton sin, of justice over the ingratitude which made light of redeeming love, will clear the soul of all emotion but that which rejoices in every act of the Most High because it is and must be right. I know how easily this remark may be misrepresented, still it is true, and let it stand.

Notice, too, how *Stephen's mind clung only to that which is purely spiritual.* All ritualism was clean gone from him. I dare say at one time

Stephen felt a great reverence for the Temple. The first Jewish Christians still continued to feel a measure of that awe of the Temple which, as Jews, they had formerly indulged. But Stephen says, "How is it the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands? As says the Prophet, Heaven is My Throne and earth is My footstool: what house will you build Me? says the Lord; or what is the place of My rest?" It is noteworthy how the saints, when they are near to die, make very little of what others make a great deal of.

What is ritual to a dying man?—a man with his eyes opened, looking into the future and about to meet his God? Sacraments are poor supports in the dying hour. Priestcraft, what is it? The reed has snapped beneath the weight of a burdened conscience and the tremendous realities of death and judgment. The peculiar form of worship which a man contended for in health—and the little specialties of doctrines which he made much of before—will seem little in comparison with the great *spiritual* essentials, when the soul is approaching the Presence Chamber of the Eternal! The saint in death is growingly spiritual, for he is nearing the land of spirits and that City of which John said, "I saw no temple there." Brethren, it is a grand thing to grow in spiritual religion till you break the eggshell of form and shake it off—for the outward fashion of ceremonies and even of simplicities is too often to men what the eggshell is to the living bird—but when the soul awakens into the highest forms of life, we chip and break that shell and leave our former bondage.

Stephen came right away from those superstitious reverences which still cast their blight over many Christians and worshipped God, who is a *Spirit*, in spirit and in truth! It is most clear *that he rose beyond all fear of men*. They grin at him, they howl at him, but what matters that to him? He will be put to a blasphemer's death outside the city by the hands of cruel men—but that daunts him not. His face glows with unspeakable joy! He looks not like a man hurried to his execution, but as one on the way to a wedding! He looks like an immortal angel rather than a man condemned to die! Ah, Brothers and Sisters—so will it be with all the faithful!

Today we fear man, who is but a worm. Today we are so weak as to be swayed by the estimation of our fellows and we listen to kindly voices which counsel us to speak with bated breath upon certain points, lest we grieve this one or that. But the fitter we are for Heaven the more we scorn all compromise and feel that for Truth, for God, for Christ, we must speak out even if we die—for who are we that we should be afraid of a man that shall die and the son of man that is but a worm? It is a blessed thing if this shall be growingly our condition! At the same time *Stephen was free from all cares*. He was a deacon, but he does not say, "What will those poor people do? How will the widows fare? Who will care for the orphans?" He does not even say, "What will the Apostles do, now that I can no longer take the labor from off their shoulders?" Not a word of it!

He sees Heaven opened and thinks little of the Church below, love it though he does with all his heart! He trusts the Church Militant with her Captain—he is called to the Church Triumphant! He hears the trumpet sound, "Up and away," and lo, he answers to the summons! Happy men

who can thus cast off their cares and enter into rest! Why should it not be thus with us? Why, like Martha, do we allow our much serving to encumber us? Our Lord managed His Church well enough before we were born! He will not be at a loss because He has called us Home and, therefore, we need not trouble ourselves as though we were all-important and the Church would pine for lack of us!

At the same time, *Stephen had no resentments*. That was a sweet prayer of his, "Lay not this sin to their charge." Just as Daniel before Belshazzar saw the scale and saw Belshazzar weighed in it and found wanting, so Stephen saw the balances of justice, and this murder of his, like a great weight, about to be placed in the scale against the raging Jews. And he cried, "Lord, cast not this sin into the balance." He could not say, as the Savior did, "They know not what they do," for they *did* know and had been so angered by his speech that they stopped their ears to hear no more. But he pleads for them as far as truth would permit him while breathing out his soul. Every child of God ought to lay aside all resentments at once, or rather he should never have any! We are to carry in our hearts no remembrance of ills, but to live everyday freely forgiving, as we are everyday freely forgiven. And as we get nearer to Heaven there must be growing love to those who hate us, for so shall we prove that we have been made ready for the skies.

To close up this description of his death, *Stephen died like a conqueror*. His name was *Stephanos*, or *crown*, and truly that day he not only received a crown, but he *became* the crown of the Church as her first martyr. *He* was the conqueror, not his enemies! They stoned his *body*, but his *soul* had vanquished them. It was not in their power to move him. His quiet look defied their fury. He went home to his God to hear it said, "Servant of God, well done," and in nothing had his foes despoiled him on the way there! He was more than a conqueror through Him that loved Him. These are some of the characteristics of Stephen's departure. I trust that in our measure they may be ours. God grant them to us and we will give Him all the Glory.

**II.** I Now call your attention to a very interesting point—THE MOST NOTABLE PECULIARITY OF STEPHEN'S DEATH. It was notable for this one point—that it was full of Jesus—and full of Jesus in four ways. Jesus was *seen, invoked, trusted* and *imitated*. First, *the Lord Jesus was seen*. The martyr looked up steadfastly into Heaven and saw the Glory of God—and Jesus standing on the right hand of God! At first he was probably in the council hall of the Sanhedrim, but the vision seemed to divide the roof, to roll away the firmament—and set open the gates of Heaven so that into its innermost chambers the anointed eye was able to gaze.

It is said he saw *the Son of Man*. Now this is the only place in Scripture where Jesus is called the Son of Man by any one but Himself. He frequently called Himself the Son of Man. That was, indeed, a common name for Himself, but His disciples did not call Him so. Perhaps the Glory of the rejected Messiah as Man was the peculiar thought which was to be conveyed to Stephen's mind, to assure him that as the despised Lord had, at length, triumphed, so, also, should His persecuted servant. At all times it

is a gladsome sight to see the representative Man exalted to the Throne of God, but it was peculiarly suitable for this occasion, for the Lord Himself had warned His enemies, "Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power." He had spoken those words to the very men who now heard Stephen bear witness that it was even so!

Stephen saw his Lord *standing*. Now our Lord is generally described as *sitting*, but it was as if the sympathizing Lord had risen up to draw near to His suffering servant, eager both to sustain him and to receive him when the conflict was over. Jesus rose from the Throne to gaze upon Himself suffering, again, in the person of one of His beloved members. The place occupied by the Lord was at the "right hand of God." Stephen distinctly saw the ineffable brightness of Eternal Glory which no human eye can see until strengthened by superior Grace—and amid that Glory he saw the Son of Man in the place of love, power and honor, worshipped and adored!

Now, when we come to die, dear Friends, we may not, perhaps, expect with these eyes to see what Stephen saw—but faith has a grand *realizing* power. The fact that Jesus is enthroned is always the same and as long as we are sure that He is at the right hand of God, it little matters whether we see Him with our natural eyes, for faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things *not* seen. Brothers and Sisters, if your faith shall be strong when you come to die, as doubtless it will be, you will have a sight and sense of Jesus in His Manhood at the right hand of God—and this will effectually take away from you all fear of death—for you will feel, "If the Man, Christ is there, I, being already represented by Him, shall *also* be there! I shall rise from the dead! I shall sit at the right hand of the Father! His eternal power and Godhead will raise me up to be where He is, for has He not said—"I will that they, also, whom You have given Me be with Me where I am"?"

I will, however, venture further. I am convinced, from my own observation, that not to a few, but to many dying saints, something more is given than the realizations of faith. Much more frequently than we suppose, supernatural glimpses of the Divine Splendor are vouchsafed to the saints in the hour of their departure. I have heard persons comparatively uninstructed, and certainly unimaginative, speak of what they have seen in their last hour in such a way that I am certain they never borrowed the expressions from books, but must have seen what they described. There has been a freshness about their descriptions which has convinced me they *did* see what they assured me they beheld. And, moreover, the joy which has resulted from it—the acquiescence in the Divine will, the patience with which they have borne suffering—have gone far to prove that they were not under the influence of an idle imagination, but were really enabled to look within the veil!

The flesh in its weakness becomes, if I may so say, a rarefied medium! The mists are blown away, the obscuring veil grows thinner, disease makes tears in it and through the thin places and the tears the heavenly Glory shines! Oh, how little will a man fear death, or care about pain, if he expects to breathe out his soul on a better Pisgah than Moses ever climbed! Well did we sing just now—I am sure I sang it with all my heart—

**“Oh, if my Lord would come and meet,  
My soul would stretch her wings in haste,  
Fly fearless through Death's iron gate,  
Nor fear the terror as she passed.”**

Now this model departure, which is given in Scripture as a type of Christian deaths, has this for its ensign, that Christ was *visible*. And such shall be the character of our departure, if through faith we are one with Jesus. Therefore, let us not fear.

Next, notice that *Jesus was invoked*, for that is the meaning of the text. “They stoned Stephen, calling upon God,” or invoking, “and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Dying Christians are not troubled with questions as to the Deity of Christ. Dear Friends, Unitarianism may do to live with, but it will not do to *die* with, at least not for us. At such a time we need an almighty and Divine Savior! We need, “God over all, blessed forever” to come to our rescue in the solemn article. So Stephen called upon Jesus and worshipped Him. He makes no mention of any other intercessor. O martyr of Christ, why did you not cry, “Ave Maria! Blessed Virgin, succor me!”? Why did you not pray to St. Michael and all angels? Ah, no! The abomination of saint and angel worship had not been invented in his day—and if it had been he would have scorned it as one of the foul devices of Hell! There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. He invoked Christ and no one else. Neither do we find him saying a word as to his good works, alms deeds, sermons and miracles. No, he invoked the Lord Jesus and leaned wholly on Him!

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, it is well to live and to die resting wholly upon Jesus! If you lie down tonight and quietly think of your departure and inquire whether you are ready to die, you will not feel at your ease till your heart stands at the foot of the Cross, looking up and viewing the flowing of the Savior's precious blood, believing humbly that He made your peace with God. There is no right living, or joyful dying, except in invoking Christ. What did Stephen do next? *He trusted Jesus* and confided in Him only, for we find him saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” He felt that his spirit was about to leave the body to fly into the unknown world. Perhaps a shiver came over him of natural awe at the great mystery, even as it comes over us when we think of being disrobed of the familiar garment of our body. But he placed his unclothed spirit in the hands of Jesus and his fear and care were over.

Look, he has quite done with it, now! He prays no more for himself, but intercedes for his enemies! And then he closes his eyes and falls asleep. This is the simple and sublime art of dying. Once more we take our guilty soul and place it in the dear pierced hands of Him who is able to keep it. And then we feel assured that all is safe. The day's work is done, the doors are fastened, the watchman guards the streets. Come, let us fall asleep. With Jesus seen, invoked and trusted, it is sweet to die. Notice, once again, that in Stephen we see *Jesus imitated*. The death of Stephen is a reproduction of the death of Jesus. Let us hope that ours will be the same.

It was so, even in little circumstances. Jesus died outside the gate, so did Stephen. Jesus died praying, so did Stephen. Jesus died saying, “Fa-

ther, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” Stephen cannot approach God absolutely, but he approaches Him through the Mediator, and he says, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Christ dies pleading for His murderers, so does Stephen—“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Now, if our death shall be a reproduction of the death of Jesus, why need we fear? It has, up to now, been sweet to be made like He and it will still be sweet. Even to suffer with Him has been delightful—surely it will be joyful to die with Him! We are willing to sleep in Jesus’ bed and lie as He did in the bosom of the earth, to arise in His likeness at the Resurrection.

Thus you see, dear Brethren, that Stephen’s death was radiant with the glow of his Lord’s brightness. Christ was glorified and reflected in him. None could question whose image and superscription he bore. If our lives shall be of that order, our deaths, also, shall be of the like character. Let your life be looking unto Jesus, pleading with Jesus, trusting in Jesus, copying Jesus—and then your departing moments will be attended by visions of Jesus and reproductions of His dying behavior! As you have been with Him in the trials of life, He will be with you in the closing scenes of death. Happy are they whose deathbed Jesus makes, and who sleep in Jesus, to be brought with Him when He returns to take the kingdom!

**III.** From Stephen’s departure we gather something as to THE KIND OF DEATH WHICH WE MAY WISELY DESIRE. First, it is very desirable that *our death should be of the same sort of our life*. Stephen was full of faith and of the Holy Spirit in life—and so was he full of the Holy Spirit in death. Stephen was bold, brave, calm and composed in life—he is the same amid the falling stones. It is very sad when the reported account of a man’s death does not fit in with his life. I am afraid that many funeral sermons have done great mischief by their flattery, for persons have very naturally said, “This is very strange. I never knew that the departed person was a saint until I heard this account of his end. Really, when I hear these wonderful things about him—well, I should not have thought it.”

No, it will not do to have no character for piety but that which is hurriedly run up in a few days of sickness and death. It is ill to die with a jerk, getting, as it were, upon another line of rails all on a sudden. It is better to glide from one degree of Divine Grace to another—and so to Glory. We ought to die daily—die every morning before we go down to breakfast—that is to say, we should rehearse it all so that when we come to die it will be no new thing to us. Death may be the fringe or border of life, but it should be made out of the same piece. A life of clay is not to be joined to a death of gold. We cannot hope to dine with the world and sup with God. We ought to dwell in the house of the Lord every day.

Again, it is most desirable that *death should be the perfecting of our whole career*, the putting of the cornerstone upon the edifice, so that when nothing else is needed to complete the man’s labors, he falls asleep. Dear Brothers and Sisters, is it so with you? Suppose you were to die this morning in the pew would your life be a complete life, or would it be like a broken column snapped off in the center? Why, there are some, who even in their business lives, have left many necessary things undone. For instance, they have not made their wills, yet, and will cause much sorrow to

wife and children through their neglect. Some Christian people do not keep their worldly affairs in proper order, but are lax, disorderly and slovenly, so that if they were to die, there would be many things of which they would feel loathe to die.

Mr. Whitfield used to say when he went to bed at night, "I have not left even a pair of gloves out of their place: if I die tonight, all my affairs, for time and eternity, are in order." That is the best way to live—so that, let death come when it may, at midnight, cockcrowing, or midday—it will be a desirable *finis* to a book of which *we* have written the last line. We will have finished our course and served our generation—our falling asleep is the fit conclusion of the matter. May our death not be one of a kind which needs flurry and hot haste to make the man ready. There are people in the world who, if they were going off by train and knew of it a month beforehand, would be all in a fever an hour before they started! Though they know the time the train leaves, they cannot arrive a few minutes before by any means, but rush in just as the bell rings and leap into a carriage just at the time the train leaves.

Some die in that fashion, as if they had so much to do and were in such a hurry—and besides, had so little Grace that they could be only saved so as by fire. When worldly Christians die, there is a deal to be done to pack up and get ready for departing. But a true Christian stands with his loins girded. He knows he has to travel. He does not know exactly when, but he stands with his staff in his hand! He knows the Bridegroom is soon coming and he, therefore, keeps his lamp well trimmed. That is the way to live and the way to die! May the Holy Spirit put us in such a condition that the Angel of Death may not summon us unawares, or catch us by surprise! Then will going home be nothing out of the common way, but a simple matter.

Bengel, the famous commentator, did not wish to die in a spiritual parade, with a sensational scene, but to pass away like a person called out to the street door from the midst of business. His prayer was granted. He was revising the proof sheets of his works almost to the moment when he felt the death stroke. Is not this well? Equally desirable was the end of the Venerable Bede, who died as he completed his translation of the Gospel of John. "Write quickly," he said, "for it is time for me to return to Him who made me." "Dear master," said the pupil, "one sentence is still lacking." "Write quickly," said the venerable man. The young man soon added, "It is finished," and Bede replied, "You have well said, all is now finished," and he fell asleep.

So would I desire to depart! So might every Christian desire! We would make no stir from our daily holiness. We would change our place but not our *service*—having waited on our Lord at this end of the room—we are called up higher and we go! It must be a dreadful thing for a professing Christian to die full of regrets for work neglected and opportunities wasted. It is sad to have to say, "I must leave my Sunday school class before I have earnestly warned those dear children to flee from the wrath to come." It would be wretched for me to go home, today, and say, "I have preached my last sermon, but it was not earnest, nor calculated either to

glorify God or benefit my fellow men." Can the end of a wasted life be other than unhappy? Will it not be sorrowful to be called away with work undone and purposes unfulfilled?

O my Brothers and Sisters, do not live so as to make it hard to die! It must also be a sad thing to be taken away unwillingly, plucked like an unripe fruit from the tree. The unripe apple holds fast to its place and so do many hold hard to their riches and cleave so fondly to worldly things that it needs a sharp pull to separate them from the world. The ripe fruit adheres but lightly—and when a gentle hand comes to take it, it yields itself freely, as if willing to be gathered—like an apple of gold into a basket of silver. God make you unworldly and forbid that you should cleave so resolutely to things below as to make death a violence and departure a terror! Brethren, we would not wish to die so that it should be a matter of question, especially to ourselves, to which place we are going—and yet you will die in that way if you live in that way.

If you have no assurance of salvation, do you expect it to come to you on your dying bed? Why, my dear Friend, when the pain increases and the brain becomes weary, you are very likely to suffer depression and, therefore, you need strong faith to begin with for your own comfort! Would you like friends to go out of your death chamber saying, "We hope he is saved, but we stand in doubt concerning him"? Your life should prevent that! Holy Mr. Whitfield, when someone observed, "I should like to hear your dying testimony," said, "No, I shall, in all probability bear no dying testimony." "Why not?" said the other. "Because I am bearing testimony everyday while I live and there will be the less need of it when I die." That seraphic saint preached up to the last afternoon and then went upstairs to bed, and died. There was no need for anyone to ask, "What did he say when he was dying?" Ah, no! They knew what he said when he was *living*—and that was a great deal better! Let your testimony in life be such that, whether you speak or not in your last moments, there shall be no question about whose you were nor whom you served.

In conclusion, one would desire to die so that *even our death should be useful*. I feel persuaded that Stephen's death had a great deal to do with Saul's conversion. Have you ever observed the evident influence of Stephen upon Paul? Augustine says, "If Stephen had never prayed, Saul had never preached." I do not say that the death of Stephen *converted* Saul—far from it—that change was worked by a Divine interposition when Saul was on the road to Damascus. But what he saw in Stephen's martyrdom had made the soil ready to receive the good seed. Saul, in later life, seems to me to be always taking his text from Stephen's sermon.

Read that sermon through at home and see if it is not so. Stephen spoke about the Covenant of Circumcision and that was a very favorite topic with Paul. When Paul stood at Athens on Mars' Hill and addressed the Areopagites he said to them, "God that made Heaven and earth dwells not in temples made with hands"—almost the *identical* words which Stephen had quoted—and surely the remembrance of Stephen before the Sanhedrim must have rushed over the Apostle's mind at the time. There is yet another passage—and indeed I might carry on the parallel a very long

way—where Stephen used the expression, “They received the Law by the disposition of angels,” an idea peculiar to Paul. Paul is the child of Stephen. Stephen dying is the seed out of which Paul springs up. What a privilege so to die that a phoenix may rise out of our ashes!

If we have been useful, ourselves, up to the measure of a moderate ability, we may, as we die, call forth greater workers than ourselves. Our expiring spark may kindle the Divine light in some flaming beacon which, far across the seas, shall scatter the beams of Gospel light! And why not? God grant that we may, both in life and in death, serve Him well. I would that even in our ashes might live our former lives—that being dead we yet may speak! It was a happy thought of an earnest Divine who asked that when he was dead he might be placed in his coffin where all his congregation might come and see him—and that on his bosom should be placed a paper bearing this exhortation, “Remember the words which I have spoken to you, being yet present with you.” Yes, we will go on telling of Jesus and winning souls in life and death, if God so helps us! Beloved Believers, love the souls of men and pray God to save them!

As for you who are not saved yourselves, I implore you think of what your condition will be when you come to die. Or, if a seared conscience should cause you to die in peace, think what you will do at the Judgment, when that conscience will become tender. What will you do when the lips of the dear Redeemer shall say, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell”?—

***“You Sinners, seek His Grace,  
Whose wrath you cannot bear!  
Look to the dying Savior’s face,  
And find salvation there.”***

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 5:9-15; 7.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—855, 829, 853.**

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# ALL AT IT NO. 2044

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING,  
SEPTEMBER 16, 1888,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.”  
Acts 8:4, 5.***

***“Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.”  
Acts 8:35.***

“THEY that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word.” God intended that His Church should be scattered over the world. There was a tendency in our humanity at first to remain together. Hence the first gray fathers endeavored to build a central tower, around which the race should rally. But God confounded their language and scattered them from Babel, that they might people all the world. Jerusalem was at first the central point of Christianity. The Church there was highly favored with its twelve Apostles and a multitude of minor lights. And the tendency would have been to keep the center strong.

I have often heard the argument, “Do not have too many out-stations, keep up a strong central force.” But God’s plan was that the holy force should be distributed—the holy seed must be sown. To do this the Lord made use of the rough hand of persecution. The disciples could not stay in Jerusalem—Saul made them run for their lives, or, if they did not, he shut them up in prison. And prisons in those days were so foul and noisome as to be the vestibules of the grave.

One went this way and one went the other way. And the faithful were scattered. In every Church where there is really the power of the Spirit of God, the Lord will cause it to be spread abroad, more or less. He never means that a Church should be like a nut shut up in a shell. Nor like ointment enclosed in a box. The precious perfume of the Gospel must be poured forth to sweeten the air. Just now we have little of that form of persecution which drives men from home. But godly people are scattered through the necessity of earning a livelihood. Sometimes we regret that certain young men should have to go a distance. But should we regret it?

We lament that certain families must migrate to the colonies. Does not the Lord by this means sow the good seed widely? It is very pleasant to be comfortably settled under an edifying ministry but the Lord has need of some of His servants in places where there is no light. In many ways the great Head of the Church scatters His servants abroad. But they ought of themselves to scatter voluntarily. Every Christian should say, “Where can I do the most good?” and if he can do more good anywhere beneath the sun than in the land of his birth, he is bound to go there, if he can. God

will have us scattered. And if we will not go afield willingly, He may use Providential necessity as the forcible means of our dispersion.

The Lord's design is not the scattering in itself but scattering for a purpose. He intended that, being scattered, the saints of Jerusalem should go everywhere preaching the Word. Upon this I am going to speak at this time.

I would call your attention to the translation in the Revised Version, where Philip is said to have "proclaimed" the Word. The word "proclaim" is not quite so subject to the modern sense which has spoiled the word "preach." "Preach" has come to be a sort of official term for delivering a set discourse—whereas Gospel preaching is talking, discoursing and telling of the Gospel in any way, we are to make known the Word of the Lord.

**I.** In handling my subject, I shall call your attention, first, to THE UNIVERSALITY OR THE WORK OF EVANGELIZING.

Of course I mean its universality among Believers. "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." They. That is, all the scattered. There does not appear to have been any exception. You thought it would have read, "Then the Apostles went everywhere preaching the word." They were the people who did *not* go at all. For the twelve remained at headquarters as yet. But the rest went everywhere preaching the Word. Generals may have to stand still in the center of the battle to direct the forces. But in this battle all the common soldiers marched to the fight. This was to be a soldiers' battle. And of that sort all the battles of the Cross ought to be.

Observe then, first, that in this there were no professional distinctions. It is not said that the ministers, being scattered abroad, went everywhere proclaiming the Word. But the whole of the scattered. Scarcely anything has been more injurious to the kingdom of Christ than the distinction between clergy and laity. No such distinction was ever laid down by the Spirit of God. "You are God's inheritance"—all God's saints are God's inheritance. And we should regard ourselves as such. "You are a royal priesthood." "He has made us unto our God kings and priests." As in Heaven there is no temple because it is all temple, so in the Church of God there is no priesthood because it is all priesthood.

We have among ourselves a distinction between ministers and others. But you are all to minister. There are many ministries of one form and another—and though God gives to His Church Apostles, teachers, pastors, Evangelists, and the like, yet not by way of setting up a professional caste of men, who are to do the work for God while others sit still. I have before used the following parable—In olden times a certain host had conquered wherever they went forward in one mass. But it came to pass that they thought themselves so exceeding strong that they said, "Let not every man go to war. Let us choose a few and make this few into a select standing army."

They picked out their champions and sent them to the war. These continued the conflict with difficulty. Many of them fell in the fight. No provinces were added to the kingdom and things were at a standstill. They had followed a fatal policy. The true method was for the whole of them to march to battle. This is the true and only policy of Christianity—all Chris-

tians soldiers of the Cross and all on active service. Every converted man is to teach what he knows. All those who have drunk of the Living Water are to become fountains out of which shall flow rivers of Living Water.

We shall never get back to the grand old times of conquest until we get back to the old method of "all at it." In proportion as we come, in any one Church, to individual service—nobody dreaming of doing his work by proxy but each one serving God for himself—in that proportion, under the blessing of God, we shall come back to the old success.

Observe, next, that there were no professional exceptions. Philip is mentioned as going down to Samaria to preach. But Philip was originally set apart to attend to the distribution of the alms of the Church. It is good for every man to attend to his own special office. But where that office ceases to be needful, let him get to that work which is common and constant. The time had come when there was no need for the deacon to sit in the vestry, for the poor people were all scattered. What does the deacon do? As the work to which he was appointed has come to an end, he keeps to the work for which every Christian is appointed and he proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

No one of us, then, can be exempted from the work of spreading the Gospel because we are engaged in some other work. Good as it is, though it may be very intimately connected with the kingdom of Christ, yet it does not exonerate us from the work of endeavoring to bring sinners to Christ in some way or other. Stephen, the deacon, began first to bear testimony. And when he died, Philip, the next on the roll, stepped into his place. One soldier falls and another steps forward. All are to proclaim the Word and no one is exempted by another form of service, Oh, that the Lord's people everywhere would note this!

Observe that there were no educational or literary exceptions. It is thought nowadays that a man must not try to proclaim the Gospel unless he has had a good education. To try and preach Christ and yet to commit grammatical blunders is looked upon as a grave offense. People are mightily offended at the idea of the Gospel being properly preached by an uneducated man. This I believe to be a very injurious mistake. There is nothing whatsoever in the whole compass of Scripture to excuse any mouth from speaking for Jesus when the heart is really acquainted with His salvation. We are not all called to "preach," in the new sense of the term, but we are all called to make Jesus known if we know Him.

Has the Gospel ever been spread to any extent by men of high literary power? Look through the whole line of history and see if it is so. Have the men of splendid eloquence been remarkable for winning souls? I could quote names that stand first in the roll of oratory, which are low down in the roll of soul-winners. Those whom God has most honored have been men who, whatever their gifts, have consecrated themselves to God and have earnestly declared the great Truths of God's Word. Men who have been terribly in earnest and have faithfully described man's ruin by sin and God's remedy of Divine Grace—men who have warned sinners to escape from the wrath to come by believing in the Lord Jesus—these have been useful.

If they had great gifts, they were no detriment to them. If they had few talents, this did not disqualify them. It has pleased God to use the base things of this world, and things that are despised for the accomplishment of His great purposes of love. Paul declared that he proclaimed the Gospel, “not with wisdom of words.” He feared what might happen if he used worldly rhetoric, and therefore, he refused the wisdom of words. We have need to do so now with emphasis. Let us trust in the Divine energy of the Holy Spirit and speak the Truth in reliance upon His might, whether we can speak fluently with Apollos, or are slow of speech, like Moses.

I say, then, to you, my dear Friend, who unhappily may be lacking in education, do not therefore stop your testimony to our Lord. Rescue the perishing. What if you are not a great theologian? If you understand the plan of salvation you are sufficiently instructed to be a good witness for your Lord. Oh, that the Holy Spirit may make you such! A blacksmith can shoe a horse, though he has never studied astronomy. He might be none the worse smith if he were familiar with the stars. But I fail to see that he would be much the better as a smith. Warn men to escape from the wrath to come and believe in Jesus—and you can do this just as well though no science has puzzled you.

As there were no exceptions on account of educational defects, so were there no exclusions on account of sex. Men and women were to spread abroad the knowledge of Jesus. We read that, “As for Saul, he made havoc of the Church, entering into every house and haling men and women committing them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad” (and these must have been men and woman) “went everywhere preaching the Word.” There are many ways in which women can fittingly proclaim the Word of the Lord and in some of these they can proclaim it more efficiently than men.

There are minds that will be attracted by the tender, plaintive, winning manner in which the sister in Christ expresses herself. A Christian mother—what a minister is she to her family! A Christian woman in single life—in the family circle, or even in domestic service—what may she not accomplish, if her heart is warm with love to her Savior? We cannot say to the women, “Go home, there is nothing for you to do in the service of the Lord.” Far from it, we entreat Martha and Mary, Lydia and Dorcas and all the elect sisterhood, young and old, rich and poor, to instruct others as God instructs them. Young men and maidens, old men and matrons, yes—and boys and girls who love the Lord—should speak well of Jesus and make known His salvation from day to day.

You see, dear Fiends, how the Lord gave to all His people the holy work of making Jesus known to men. How well they carried it out! Within a hundred years after the death of our Lord, His name had been made known to all the known world. But I do not know how many years it will take to make Christ known at the rate of our present movement. A few men are set apart for missionaries and directed with complicated machinery and good people feel easy about the heathen. I find no fault with what is done. My fault is that we are not doing a hundred times as much in ways more spontaneous.

If the Church of God should once wake up, it will be as the sea when it returns to its strength after a long ebb. The Lord send it—send it now! But He will only bless the world in His own way. And one of His conditions is that the whole Church should move. We must come back to the primitive custom—every Christian must be a herald of the Cross.

**II.** Secondly, having asked you to notice the universality of the work, will you please to notice THE NATURALNESS OF IT. That word “therefore,” at the commencement of the fourth verse, says a great deal to me. “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word”—as if it followed as a sort of natural consequence, that being scattered they went everywhere preaching the Word. Does not this show us that they could not think of following any other course?

They that were scattered might have said, “Clearly our duty is to hold our tongues. We have got into great trouble at Jerusalem because we preached Christ. We must now look to our own safety and the comfort of our families. And in these foreign countries we had better live godly lives and go to Heaven on the sly, but we need not again expose ourselves to the dangers of persecution.” They did not thus argue. It is not said, “Therefore they that were scattered abroad slunk away and held their tongues.” No, they never thought of that.

We do not find that they even said, “This Gospel of ours is evidently not in accord with the spirit of the age. The scribes and Pharisees all differ from us and we must endeavor to win them by altering our tone.” They did not dream of cutting off the angles of the Truth of God, nor of inserting pleasant fragments of popular thought to please the powers that be. But they set forth “the Word” in its pure simplicity and the Cross of Christ, which is an offense to so many. They never said, “The old Gospel did very well when Jesus was here. But you see He has gone and circumstances alter cases and alter gospels and we had better adapt our teaching to the period.”

They did not so, because of the fear of the Lord. They did not endeavor to mend the Gospel but they went everywhere proclaiming it. They preached the Word as they received it. They set forth the kingdom as their King had revealed it. Ah, dear Friends, if you are true to the Lord Jesus Christ you have to spread the Gospel somehow and it must be the old, old Gospel. You must not dare to think of denying the light to those around you. Would you leave men to perish for lack of knowledge? Dare you have their blood on your garments?

These persecuted ones “went everywhere preaching the Word.” Why was it so natural for them to do it? Their obligations pressed upon them. They each one of them said, “I have been saved and I must see others saved. I am bound to tell of the blood of Jesus and its power to wash away sin. The curses of the ages will fall upon me and the wails of lost souls will come up into my ears as long as I exist, if I do not make known the Gospel.”

Brethren, God’s way of saving the unconverted is through His Church. And if the Church neglects its work, who is to do it? Our Lord means to bring in the rest of His chosen through those who are already called. But if these stand aside and are untrue to their calling, how is the work to be

done? I know the work is of God alone—still He uses instruments. If you do not tell the Gospel, you are leaving your fellow men to perish. Yonder is the wreck and you are not sending out a life-boat! Yonder are souls starving and you give them no bread!

Well, if you are resolved to be thus inhuman, at least know what you are doing. You that are taking no share in this great work of spreading the Gospel are willfully allowing men to go down to Hell and their blood will be required at your hands. These first Believers dared not incur such guilt, and therefore, away they went, preaching the Word.

I think, too, that their wonderment compelled them. They had seen the man Christ Jesus and they had communed with Him. They had beheld His Godhead in His miracles and they had adored Him. They had seen Him nailed to the Cross. They had, many of them, beheld Him alive after He was risen from the dead, and they could not help telling so great a marvel. Here was God come down among men. Here was the Redeemer of men suffering to the death to rescue men from eternal ruin. And they could not help telling abroad this miracle of love. They were like children, who, when they hear a bit of startling news, must tell it. Good men that they were, their wonderment and their joy were equal and they could not hold their peace.

When ancient Believers were shut up in prison, they began to sing the Gospel until the prisoners heard them. They had something to sing about and they must sing it. If they took them out of the temple by force, behold, the moment the prison doors were opened, they were found standing in the same place telling the same story. If you and I felt that blessed amazement which we ought to feel when we think of Free Grace and dying love, silence would be impossible.

The principal reason for their constant proclamation of Jesus was that they were in a fine state of spiritual health. They went everywhere preaching the Word when scattered abroad because they had proclaimed it when at home. You will never make a missionary of the person who does no good at home. If you do not seek souls in your own street, you will not do so in Hindustan. If you are of no use in Whitechapel, you will be of no use in the Congo. He that will not serve the Lord in the Sunday school at home, will not win children to Christ in China. Distance lends no real enchantment to Christian service. You who do nothing now, are not fit for the war, for you are in sad health.

The Lord give you spiritual health and vigor, and then you will want no pressing but you will cry at once, "Here am I, send me!" O my Friends, go at once to your families, to your workshops and declare the name of Jesus! Oh, for more spiritual life! This is the root of the matter. If we were living more fully in the power of the Holy Spirit our witness would be borne without constraint. It would be as natural to us to spread the Gospel as to breathe. We should be under holy impulses which would demand our witness-bearing. If we could not speak the Word of the Lord, it would be as fire in our bones. We should become weary with withholding. Lord, give us more and more this spiritual life!

Surely, also, the times must have urged them onward with hurried step as messengers for Christ. For Jerusalem was soon to be destroyed. This

made them quick in their movements, that the last warning might come to all their countrymen. You know what the times are now! I am no Prophet. But as we read, week by week, the appalling crimes that are chronicled by the press—if ever Christian men should be in earnest they should be in earnest now. All the signs of the times arouse us to look for the coming of our Lord. No token tends to quiet us but all to awaken us.

We must work at double quick rate. And if anyone among us has done nothing at all, it is time for him, as a good servant, to gird up his loins to work and to watch, “for in such an hour as he thinks not the Son of Man comes.” I have been praying all the while that I have been speaking this morning—yes, praying more than preaching—that God may distinctly lay His hand on every Brother and Sister in this place and constrain you to proclaim this Gospel of Jesus in every place to which you can go.

**III.** Thirdly, carefully notice THE JOYFULNESS OF THIS WORK. “They were scattered abroad.” But as “they went everywhere preaching the Word,” the calamity became a blessing. Their work took the sting out of their banishment. The housewife had to leave her comfortable little home and tramp to a strange country—the man of business had to sell his stock and quit his position. Those were hard times beyond question. Fancy that happening to us! What distress would spread over this congregation if you had to run for your lives!

But then they said to themselves, “It is all right. As we live to spread abroad the knowledge of Jesus, we shall do this wherever we go. Our flight shall be a mission.” This changed the aspect of affairs. By the persecution they received express marching orders to quit home and take to foreign service. Was not this a comfort? For myself, I always like to know the Lord’s will clearly. Suspense kills me. If I have any question about what my course should be, I am worried more than I can tell. Even distress is a relief when it shuts you up to one course.

Persecution became both a direction as to their course and an occasion for getting to work. As they must go elsewhere, they would talk of salvation by faith in Jesus to the people among whom they might be called to sojourn and so tell the story of redemption to people who were totally ignorant of it. This made them feel it was a good thing after all that they were scattered abroad. Dear Friends, if your heart is set on a purpose and there comes a crash which spoils your comfort, you hardly lament it if it promotes your chief design in life.

If you are possessed with the idea that you, as a Christian, must live only to serve Christ and to win souls, then anything which happens, however painful, will be welcomed if it places you in a better position for your holy life work. That is the place in which you can serve the Lord better. So that the tried people of God at Jerusalem must have felt devoutly comforted as they saw that God was helping them to answer the great purpose of their lives and was pushing them forward by pushing them out.

Their exile would be a help in gaining attention. For when they came to a place, the people would enquire, “Why are these Jews coming here?” And the answer would be, that they had been forced from home because they believed in one Jesus, who was called Christ, who had died for men, so that by faith in Him they might be saved. For love of this Savior they

had been driven from their native land. The people may not have thought them wise, but doubtless they would be interested in their story and thus made aware of their faith. Curiosity would ask of yonder Jewess, "How came you to be here, Naomi?" And Naomi would tell the story of the crucified Savior.

"And you, Benjamin, what drove you from Palestine?" He, too, would have to narrate the life and death of the Nazarene and so Jesus would be made known. Persecution thus opened men's minds to enquire and served the purpose of advertising the Gospel. Thus the Lord set up pulpits for His servants wherever they went and provided congregations for them. What Satan intended for evil, the Lord turned for good. What better could have happened than for all these holy men and women to be driven abroad to disseminate the ever blessed Word?

This, as they thought of it, made them bear their exile without repining. An all-absorbing purpose turned sorrow into joy. I cannot conceive of anything so calculated to reconcile them to their banishment as the prospect of glorifying God the more. The martyr spirit is just the spirit of witness-bearing overcoming all love of self and even care for life.

Moreover, as they told the story and it made their own hearts glow with holy fire, their spirits were refreshed and their souls made glad. Jesus seemed still to be near them—yes, He was with them. They found the surest remedy for their grief in His sacred fellowship—no, the grief itself became *gladness*! If you want to get rid of low spirits, preach the Gospel. To take Christ's yoke is to find rest unto your souls. If you are in the very dust, go and tell a weary one of salvation by Jesus—you will thus raise yourself, even if your message is rejected. Here is a balm, which, while it heals the wound to which it is applied, also perfumes the hand which applies it. The exiles were made to feel at home when they saw God working with them in Greece and Rome, even as He had done in Jerusalem.

I may add that, if they were led to see that they were now made like their Lord in suffering, they would have comfort in that fact. If they now remembered what He said concerning the grain of wheat, which must be cast into the ground and die, or it could not bring forth fruit, they would now feel that they were having fellowship with Him in His sufferings. This was enough to make them a happy body of men and women. They were scattered but not saddened. Theirs was not the scattering of a retreat but of an advance all along the line. And so it yielded them joy and not distress. I entreat you, try active service as a solace for sorrow.

**IV.** Notice, fourthly, THE SUPREMACY OF THIS WORK. "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." I suppose they did something for a living. I do not know what their handicrafts might be. But each one had a calling and followed it industriously. We are not told what they did. It is incidentally mentioned, further on in history, that the Apostle Paul made tents—but you never read anywhere in the Bible that Paul went everywhere tent making. He did make tents but that was not his vocation—his business was to save souls. He made tents in order that he might not be indebted to the people. But winning souls was Paul's business.

The scattered did not go abroad for the purpose of trade. They did not say, "We will go to such a place, because there we can make the best profits." They chose their way with the one purpose of spreading the Gospel. To preach Christ was their one vocation which, like Aaron's rod, swallowed up all other rods. Proclaiming Christ was their one purpose, passion and profession—all else might go. I wonder how many Christian people here could have their biographies condensed into this line, "He lived to make Christ known."

Might it not be said of one, he lived to open a shop and then to open a second? Or of another, he lived to save a good deal of money and take shares in limited liability companies? Or of a third, he lived to paint a great picture? Or of a fourth, he was best known for his genial hospitality? Of many a minister it might be said—he lived to preach splendid sermons and to gain credit for fine oratory. What of all these? If it can be said of a man, "He lived to glorify Christ," then his life is a life. Every Christian man ought so to live. Oh that my memorial might be—"He preached Christ crucified"!

You fall short of your design in life if Jesus is not as much your object as He is your confidence. Make your tents, sell your goods, paint your pictures if you will—but do all this in order that you may fulfill your higher and truer life—for which you were bought with blood and quickened by the Spirit of God.

We note the supremacy of this work, not only because it swallowed up all their trades but because it obliterated all trace of caste. See Philip. He is a Jew but he goes to Samaria. "Philip, what made you go to Samaria? Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." Brethren, when it comes to preaching Christ, we have dealings with everybody—Jews, Turks, infidels, cannibals. The Jew goes to Samaria for Christ and the Samaritans accept the Messiah of the Jews. Later Philip is called down south to journey along a desert way and there he meets an Ethiopian, probably a black man.

Ah well, white men were not particularly anxious for the company of Ethiopians but Philip gets up into his chariot and rides with him. Black and white make a fine mixture when the book of the Prophet Isaiah lies between them. What a beautiful picture this would make! Philip and the eunuch riding together reading of the Lord Jesus in the Hebrew Prophets. All the paltry differences of sect, politics, nationalities and races go to the winds as soon as we are possessed with a desire to win souls.

"Oh but the poor are so dirty!" Let us show them how they can be cleansed. "But the slum is so foul!" Yet for the love of Jesus we will enter it to carry His saving health among the people. What is more, we shall not only be willing to work for the poor and fallen, but we shall work *with* them. You, a person of taste and culture, will join hands with the illiterate worker and while you are half amused at his blunders, you will be charmed by his zeal. You will not despise him but you may even feel humbled as you see how, with less knowledge than yourself, he often shows more spiritual wisdom and energy. You will take a brotherly pride in such a man.

Caste is gone when Christ is come. Oh, that we might feel the supremacy of holy service and more! At Christ's side, the known sinners must be saved! Heaven must be filled! And before these necessities everything else must be as nothing. Are you not of this mind—do you feel this way?

See, also, the supremacy of their purpose in the fact that they were willing to be at the beck and call of the Holy Spirit and to go anywhere. Philip was getting on splendidly at Samaria and the Church grew under his care. Surely he ought to stop there, he is evidently the man for the place! But he does not stop there. Philip has a call, not to a larger Church but to the road through the desert and away he goes to talk to *one person*. The genuine soul-winner has his inward directions and he follows the guidance of the Spirit of God. Here, there, anywhere, everywhere he goes, where the hope of conversions tempts him.

When a sportsman goes out after game, he does not know which way he will go, neither does he bind himself in that matter. If he is stalking deer, he may have to go up the mountain side, or down the glen, across the burn, or away among the heather. Where his sport leads him, he follows. And so it is with the genuine soul-winner—he leaves himself free to follow his one object. He does not know where he is going but he does know what he is going after. He lays himself out for the winning of souls for Jesus. On the railway he speaks to anyone who happens to be put in the same carriage. Or in the shop he looks out for opportunities to impress a customer. He sows beside all waters and in all soils. He carries his gun at half-cock, ready to take aim at once. That is the man whom God is likely to bless.

Note yet one thing more—the supremacy of this work was seen in the fact that these good people were quite willing to submit. Philip has done a great work at Samaria but he sends for the Apostles Peter and John to come down from Jerusalem. Some few earnest workers have been impatient of discipline but the best of them are the most orderly people in the world. Some Brethren are just as ready to obey Church authority as if they were the least of all saints, instead of being the most successful of the Brotherhood.

It is not well when our Philips are too big to work in connection with the mother-Church. I have never found them so. The idle are troublesome. The laborious are loving. Philip turns into nobody just as readily as before he had been everybody. Peter and John come upon the scene and seem, as it were, to run away with his laurels. But Philip makes no complaint, for in fact there were no laurels for any of them. All the glory was given to Jesus. Whether it were Philip, or Peter, or John, the Lord, alone, was magnified. Blessed is that man who knows how to subside. Oh, that there were thousands of workers of this kind willing to come to the front and lead the way and just as willing to step aside, if thereby the cause might advance!

**V.** Thus have I brought this matter before you and I shall now beg you to observe THE SPECIALTY OF THIS WORK. I have shown you its universality, its naturalness, its joyfulness and its supremacy. And now we will dwell upon its specialty. Philip is set before us as a specimen of those who

were scattered abroad. A sample shows the whole. What did Philip make prominent? "Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them." That is all he had to preach—he preached the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ. But when Philip had to instruct an educated nobleman, did he dwell on the same subject as that which he brought before common Samaritans?

Read the thirty-fifth verse. "Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus." Here we have the same subject as before—to the Samaritans—Christ. To the Ethiopian—Jesus. See, then, what we have to do. We have to tell over and over again what we know so well—that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself—not imputing their trespasses unto them. The Savior lived here a life of holy obedience and then died, "the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God." We preach that this Jesus made atonement for sin so that whosoever believes in Him has eternal life and shall never come into condemnation.

We declare that Jesus rose again and that this new life He bestows on those who trust Him. We proclaim that He has gone into Heaven to take possession of the inheritance for His people and to plead for them before the Throne. And that those who are in Him shall one day be with Him and behold His Glory. In a word, we preach Jesus as the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.

This is the old, old story. It is a very simple story but the telling of it will save people. Keep to that Gospel. Many have lost faith in it. It is hoped that people will now be saved by new socialistic arrangements, by moral precepts, by amusements, by societies and what not. Let the Church of God be glad when anything is done which helps temperance, purity, freedom and so forth. But her one business is to preach CHRIST. Stick to this, my Brethren. If all the shoemakers in London were to take to making bracelets for the Queen, she would be badly decorated.

But where should we be? Let the cobblers stick to their lasts. You that are sent to preach Christ, if you take to doing something else and become philosophical, socialistic, philanthropic and all that, what is to become of the spiritual nature of men? Keep to your work. Go and preach Christ to the people. I have not lost faith in the old Gospel. No—my confidence in it grows as I see the speedy failure of all the quackeries of succeeding years. The methods of the modern school are a bottle of smoke.

Christ crucified is the only remedy for sin. Keep to the Gospel of "believe and live." "Whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life." If this Gospel does not uplift the race, nothing will. This is the only medicine which the great Physician has given to us to administer to sin-sick souls. Keep to it. "There is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." We want no advance, we dream of no improvement upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In closing, I would call your attention to two little words in the fifth verse. "Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ," allow me to put the next two words in capitals—"UNTO THEM." Read the thirty-fifth verse. "Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture and preached UNTO HIM Jesus."

Somebody said to Mr. Moody—"How are we to get at the masses?" He replied, "Go for them." The expression is forcible, "Go for them." Go for them in the name of Christ. Go right at them. Do not only preach Christ but preach Christ unto them. Preach Jesus to the individual man. It is the work of the Church of God, as much as lies in us, to bring Christ home to the people's knowledge, thought, belief, conscience and heart. Preach it unto them. If I stand here and preach *before* you, what is the good of it?

But if I preach UNTO YOU, there is practical use in it. When you go out of this place, I pray you will look for a man or a woman and speak unto him, or unto her, Jesus the Christ. Come to close dealings. I fear that some of you fathers have not yet prayed with your boys and some of you mothers have not yet taken your girls apart and talked with them about eternal things. Have you? You say, "I am so retiring." Then retire and pray. But love your children enough to speak to them of Jesus.

You sisters, have you spoken to your brothers about Jesus? Have some of you wives yet spoken to your ungodly husbands about the Christ? This is the point. If we will each one speak for our Lord, we shall see results that will perfectly astound us. If, during the next few months, this Church would fully wake up and if every member would feel, "I have something to do and I must do it," we should then see a glorious harvest.

When my Brethren Fullerton and Smith hold special services in this place, as they will do in the beginning of November, you will help to get in the people and to crowd the place. And when they preach, you will pray and watch and look up the enquirers and we shall have great times. If you will go after people at their houses and give them your own personal testimony in loving earnestness, the Holy Spirit will bless you. Oh, may God arouse us to this! I say again, I have not preached this morning half so much as I have prayed. For every word that I have spoken I have prayed two words silently to God.

Oh, that the Lord would hear me and bless us in an unusual degree! If the Lord will fill you with His Spirit, the opening of yonder front doors and your going out will be like the bursting of a bomb-shell in London. If you are all in earnest, your existence will be like the shining of the sun in the heavens. Oh, how I long that God may be glorified! For His Truth's sake I have been "abundantly filled with reproach." But I would gladly accept a sevenfold baptism of it so that his kingdom would come. May the Lord make bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the people! Amen and Amen.

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# GREAT JOY IN THE CITY

## NO. 2352

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 18, 1894.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 22, 1888.**

***“And there was great joy in that city.”  
Acts 8:8.***

“Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them,” and the result of his preaching was that “there was great joy in that city.” He had a very speedy and very remarkable success. He scarcely opened his mouth without gaining attention and had not long proclaimed his message before people willingly received it and many were converted to Christ, so that, “there was great joy in that city.”

What was the explanation of this wonderful blessing? Something had been done, years before, to prepare the way for Philip. There had come to that region a weary Man who sat on the well at Sychar and spoke to Samaria's daughter concerning the Living Water! And she had heard, believed and been saved. And she, fallen woman as she had been, had gone back to the city to tell the men that she had met the Messiah, which is called Christ. In all probability, the work done by our Lord at Sychar had affected the whole district, so that, when Philip went to the city of Samaria, he found there a people prepared of the Lord. Jesus sowed the seed—Philip came and reaped the harvest!

Learn, therefore, that no good work for God is ever lost. If you have labored in a village or town and have seen no great success, someone else may see it. If you have prayed especially for the salvation of any person and labored to win that one for Christ, and yet have not brought that soul to a decision, someone else may do it. We are workers *together*, as well as workers *together with God*—and what one man begins, another may finish! Paul plants. Apollos waters. Someone else may come in to gather the increase—and if God gets the Glory, what matters it to you what part you have had in it? If your Lord and Master was satisfied with sowing the good Seed of the Kingdom, leaving Philip to reap the harvest, can you not be satisfied if you are called to do work that will not yield an immediate return?

Often, during my winter's holiday, year after year, I have seen the carts coming down towards the breakwater at Mentone, bringing huge masses of stone, weighing many tons, which were thrown into the sea. For a long time, I saw no result whatever of this effort. Tremendous blocks of stone were cast into the sea and covered by the waters. Yet I felt persuaded that something was being done out of sight, though nothing was visible to the eyes. After a while, the piles of stone began to show above the surface of

the water and then we saw that the great foundation-work had been done. Now that the structure is nearly finished and they begin to square up, and put everything in order, we say, "how quickly the work goes on!" Yes, but it really went on just as quickly when we could not see anything of it! Those thousands of tons of stone were not lost—they all went to make the underwater foundation—and whatever is built upon it, afterwards, is not to have the credit of usefulness any more than that which lay down deep at the bottom of the sea.

Some of us may have to work on for years and never see any result of our toil. Let us not faint for a moment, nor be disheartened—some other person may come, by-and-by, and all men's mouths may be filled with wonderment at the great work that he does! And yet, after all, He who reads history aright, even the great God who writes it, will know that this man who seems to be so successful owes much of his usefulness to the work of other persons who labored before him. We cannot tell how much the Master's own service prepared the way for Philip's success when he went down to Samaria.

And I believe that, in this great London, we shall see better and brighter days than these, because of all the work that has been done here in years gone by. Do not tell me that the preaching at Paul's Cross by men who became martyrs for the faith were lost efforts! I do not believe that those declarations of the Word of God in Smithfield, by men who were burnt, there, for their fidelity to Christ, will ever be lost! Let us not imagine that the glorious testimony for Christ of the long succession of Puritan preachers, who occupied yonder Churches across the water, will ever be lost! Neither shall it be that the witnessing in later times of John Newton, Romaine, Whitefield and the other faithful preachers of the Gospel shall be in vain, and that all they did shall be lost! No, London may be, at this time, far from what we want it to be, but, as surely as the labors of the Christ were not lost, so the Seed sown by those who came and labored for Him, and have now gone to their reward, shall spring up and bring forth fruit on some happier and sunnier day than this! When, perhaps, some of us shall sleep with our fathers, there shall come a day when there shall be great joy in this city as the direct result of our service for our Lord. In Cromwell's time, if you had walked down Cheapside at a certain hour of the morning, it is said that you would have seen every blind down because in every house there was family prayer. And at that hour, every morning, you might have gone from window to window and have heard the singing of a Psalm at almost every merchant's house in the city. It is not so, now, but it may be so again! Let us have faith in that Seed which lies still in the ground—it only needs someone to turn it up and it shall germinate and grow to the praise and Glory of God!

That is a long preface, you will say, for me to have. Well, put up with it for once and let us now come to the text, "There was great joy in that city."

**I.** And, first, it was A JOY BORN OF A GREAT SORROW. Usually, that is the best kind of joy. Joys of that sort are like Jabez who was more honorable than his brethren—and his mother called his name Jabez, that is, *sorrowful*, because she bore him with sorrow. The good which comes to us

through that which is apparently an evil is usually the best of all good things.

Now, the great sorrow out of which this joy in Samaria came was this. There had been *persecution* in Jerusalem, terrible persecution. Saul and other enemies of the Truth of God were making havoc in the Church. Good men were taken to prison, excellent Christian Sisters were shut up in jail as evildoers. Some were cruelly treated—numbers were put to death. Thank God, we do not know, in the real sense, what persecution is, for they cannot do much to us, nowadays, except expose us to the trial of cruel mockery, and there is not much in that to hurt us. But in Jerusalem the Church of God had to bear fierce persecution. Yet it was that *persecution* that made the disciples go abroad, everywhere preaching the Word!

The second sorrow that they had was *scattering*, for it is a great grief to people who have lived together in holy fellowship to be divided, for families to be broken up, for good men who used to meet at the same place for prayer, to be able, no more, to see one another's faces. Men naturally cling to their homes, but those good folk had to flee from their homes and go wherever they could, to escape from the edge of the sword. But it was through this scattering that the blessing reached Samaria.

Worse than that, *death* itself came into the Church at Jerusalem. Besides others who were put to death, Stephen, the first martyr, fell a victim to the persecutors' rage. He was a good man and true, a worthy leader of the host of God. He died a dreadful death, but through the scattering that followed his death, Philip was made to go down to Samaria and so, "There was great joy in that city." Sometimes, dear Friends, it is a blessing to a Church to have a great trial. I am persuaded that it is a good thing for some men to have to encounter a great difficulty. I confess that I owe almost everything to the forge, the fire, the file and the hammer. How little good we get out of our sweets—and how much we extract from our bitters! This Church at Jerusalem, by sore travail, became the mother of the saints in Samaria, and it was not without hard trials and dire struggles that she became useful to others.

I want this Church, at this time, to feel that it is called upon by God to awaken itself before any great and overwhelming trial comes. Let us begin to feel for the vast city in which we dwell—and if any of you are under the pressure of the present distress, or if you are tried by the loss of some dear one at home—just as these trials worked on the whole Church at Jerusalem, so let them work, in their measure, upon you, stirring you up to seek the souls of men and to bring others to know and love our Lord Jesus Christ! Oh, that there were such a heart in the thousands of our Church members that everyone desired the conversion of his neighbor! Oh, that we began to feel an inward anguish for those about us who are perishing through sheer indifference—perishing while the glorious Gospel is proclaimed so near to them! Oh, that the great sorrow that some of us have had to bear of late might become the mother of a great joy to many others! It was so in Philip's day—there was much joy in Samaria because there had been much grief in Jerusalem.

**II.** But now, secondly, IT WAS A JOY OCCASIONED BY ONE MAN'S PREACHING—"there was great joy in that city." It was one man's preach-

ing that caused it. Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ—and the great joy was the result of his preaching.

Notice who it was that preached—it was *Philip*. Now Philip was a Jew and he might have said—perhaps he *did* say—that he was a very unlikely person to succeed in Samaria, for the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans—and the Samaritans did not care to have any dealings with the Jews. They were nations remarkably like one another and yet strongly antagonistic to one another. They could not stand each other and yet, you see, it was the preaching of a Jew that was blessed to the people of Samaria! Never say again, dear Friend, “I must not go there. I am not a proper person for that place.” How do you know? The most unlikely person in the esteem of men may be the very person who is the special choice of God. Jew or no Jew, Philip is sent to preach the Gospel and to preach it to every creature and, therefore, he goes to Samaria! It must have seemed strange to him that this door of utterance was opened to him, that he was welcomed by the Samaritans who were so hostile to the Jews. I say again, dear Friends, never let us keep back from trying to do good anywhere, and everywhere—and never let any one of us say of any people, “I could not speak to them.” Why not? Go, and try. “They are too cultured,” says one. Cultured people are often impressed by natural, wild bird notes. “Oh, they are too ignorant,” says another. It may be *your* ignorance that makes you think so, but do not, because you have been better educated than they, be so proud as to disdain to speak to them, for if so, it will prove that you are not very well educated, yet, and need a great deal more of the right kind of training. “Oh, but I know that my profession and my trade, and so on, are against me!” Never mind what is against you—go and do your duty—and God will bless you.

The next thing about Philip was that he was not a regular minister. He was one of the seven deacons chosen by the Apostles and by the Church at Jerusalem to look after the poor members, that the Apostles might be able to give their whole attention to the ministry of the Word and to prayer. Yes, but then anybody may preach the Gospel, anybody who can preach ought to preach! And instead of its being the business of a few select gentlemen to go and preach the Gospel, is it not written, “Let him that hears, say, Come”? All you who have heard the Gospel should endeavor to tell it to others! And the question of every Christian man should not be, “May I preach the Gospel?”—That you may certainly do—but, “*Can* I preach the Gospel? Have I such power of preaching it that anybody will listen to me? If nobody will listen, it is clear that it is of no use for me to preach. But if I can so speak that others will hear. If I have the gifts, I am bound to use them, and I ought to try to see whether I have the gifts, or not, for, perhaps I have them and do not know it.” It was Philip, the deacon, whose preaching brought joy to this city! Therefore, preach away, my Brothers! Speak in the name of God as best you can on behalf of the Lord Jesus, for in these days there are many who are speaking against Him. This is an additional reason why no tongue that can speak a word for Him should remain silent.

But we are also told that this deacon, Philip, was a man of excellent character. When the deacons were to be chosen, the Apostles said to the

members of the Church at Jerusalem, "Look out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." Philip was one of the seven and, therefore, we know that he was a man of sterling character. That is very essential to the preaching that will make a city glad. He was also a man full of the Holy Spirit and that is the *chief* qualification for a preacher of the Gospel. All the learning in the world is not worth a penny to a man unless he is filled with the Holy Spirit! When the Spirit of God rests upon any man, He enables the preacher to speak with the power that reaches the heart and the conscience. Without that power, nothing can be done—therefore seek it, my Brothers. When you try to labor for God, do it in the power of the Holy Spirit.

But really, I do not care to say much more about who the preacher in Samaria was because that does not signify much. I wish that people did not so often take notice of *who* the *preacher* is—the principal question is, *What is preached?*

What did Philip preach? We are not left in doubt about this matter, for we are told that, "Philip went down to the city of Samaria and *preached Christ* to them." Yes, that is the preaching that brings great joy to a city! "He preached Christ to them." He told them that Jesus of Nazareth, who was born at Bethlehem, and who died on Calvary, is the Son of God, the Messiah, the Sent One! That Jesus is, Himself, both God and Man, and that He has come here as a messenger of peace from God to man.

Philip preached Christ to them as the one Sacrifice for sin, telling them that Jesus died, the Just for the unjust, to bring them to God. He preached to them of the great Substitution of Christ for sinners and of all the grief He bore in the place of guilty men—and he bade them believe in this Christ that they might obtain the pardon of all their sins, full justification in the sight of God and power to become the children of God! He preached Christ, also, as their Sanctifier, telling them that Jesus could change their natures, take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, so that they would love that which once they hated, and hate what once they loved. Philip preached Jesus Christ of Nazareth as the great Heart-Changer, the true Moral Reformer, the Man who turns things upside down and puts evil where it ought to be—under men's feet—and implants His Grace as a reigning power for holiness within their souls. Thus he preached Christ to them. He did not preach up what they could *do*—he preached what *Christ had done*—and he bade them come and accept the work of Christ, all finished and complete! He bade them quit all other confidences and come and confide in the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not so much try to preach them *to* Christ, as to preach Christ *to them*—and there is a distinction between these two things, though the great end in preaching Christ to a sinner is also to preach the sinner to Christ.

Beloved Friends, I delight to preach to you all the doctrines which I find in God's Word, but I desire always to preach the Person of Christ above the doctrine—the doctrine is but the chair in which Christ sits as a Prophet to instruct us. Christ Himself is still alive! He has risen from the dead! He has gone into Heaven, but He is observant of all that is going on

here, below—He is making intercession for sinners and if you trust that living Savior, He will save you. Oh, that you would do so! This is the Gospel we have to preach to you, and this it is which, if it is received, will make you glad. It was this that caused great joy in the city of Samaria!

Thus, you see, it was a joy that was born of a great sorrow, and a joy produced by the preaching of one man. You have heard who he was and what he preached.

**III.** Now, thirdly, IT WAS A JOY WHICH HAD ABUNDANT CAUSE—“There was great joy in that city.”

First, there was joy in Samaria *because the Gospel was preached there*. If men did but know it, the greatest gift a city can have is to have the Gospel preached in it. Remember the old motto of the city of Glasgow, “Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the Word.” No city flourishes so well as that which has a clear, powerful Gospel bell ringing in the midst of it! It is a famishing city which has not the Bread of Life, but it is a flourishing city which has the Bread of Life freely dispensed from the pulpit every Sabbath by loving hands.

But there was still more joy in Samaria *because there were signs of blessing going with the Gospel*. Unclean spirits were driven out of those who had been possessed by them and lame and paralyzed persons were made to walk! We work no such miracles, now, in the physical world, but we work them in the *spiritual* realm—out of many men have we seen the evil spirits go as the cup of devils has been abandoned! Filthy blasphemy has been given up and their speech has been seasoned with salt! Fornication has been forsaken, uncleanness of life has been hated and left, theft and dishonesty of every kind have become detestable! We have seen these miracles worked again and again. We have some among us at this time to whom we might say, “And such were some of you, but you are washed.” The Gospel has washed, cleansed and changed them—and it is going to do the same for others, for Jesus Christ has come to cast unclean spirits out of those who are possessed by them, and to make some receive Divine strength who have, up to now, been palsied so far as any holy action is concerned—that they may, henceforth, run gladly in the ways of God and give up their whole lives to His service and Glory. Oh, that it might be so with many here, tonight! If it is so, there will be great joy in this city!

Once more, there was great joy in Samaria *because so many believed and were saved*. He that believes in Jesus Christ is saved! The *moment* that he believes, his nature is changed, his sins are forgiven and his heart is renewed. This great work is done in a moment, but it is never undone! The new life commences with the miraculous, regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and that miracle is of such a character that it continues to thrill throughout the entire man until, at last, he is brought safely to Heaven, made perfectly like the Lord Jesus Christ.

There was also great joy in Samaria *because of the changed lives of those who believed*. When a man is converted, he does not doubt the power of the Gospel that converted him. And when men see the changed lives of well-known sinners, they are made to believe that the Gospel that works such transformations must be true or, if they doubt it, they do so in the teeth of the most plain evidence. If our preaching does not turn

men from drunkenness to sobriety, from thieving to honesty, from unchastity to purity, then our Gospel is not worth a button! But if it does all this, then this shall be the evidence that it comes from God, seeing that in the world so sorely diseased by sin, it works the wondrous miracle of curing men of these deadly evils!

O my dear Friends, what a happy city Samaria was when it was full of men healed, saved, converted and rejoicing in Christ!

**IV.** And this is the point I am trying to reach in concluding my discourse. THIS IS THE JOY WHICH WE DESIRE TO SEE REPEATED IN LONDON—"There was great joy in that city."

We long to have this great joy in London! We want to see *desperate souls made happy*. My friend over yonder, who has been indulging dark thoughts about whether he can manage to live any longer—his hand almost feels for the fatal knife—live, poor Soul, live! There is hope, there is joy even for you! Jesus Christ is willing to forgive the chief of sinners! He is ready to renew the most debauched and depraved of men! He is able to make a saint of you! He can, at this moment, take the burden from your heart and commence a work in you which shall make you a totally new man! What do you say to this? If you can believe in Jesus, there will begin to be joy in this city, for there will be joy in your heart! I remember the day when I despaired of finding salvation, when I could not think that my sin would ever be forgiven, but that voice, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," was a word of life and love to my soul! And I would repeat it, tonight, to those in this audience who are in the depths of despair. Do not give yourself up—God has not given you up! Do not sign your own death warrant—God has not signed it. "Come unto Me," says Christ, "all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Were you, poor sinful woman, almost hiding away for very shame? Come along with you! Remember what Luke wrote concerning Christ, "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him," and He preached to them the blessed Word of Life! Oh, hear it tonight! Believe in Him and live! And there will begin to be joy in this city when despairing souls are made happy by a holy confidence in Christ!

Well, then, dear Friends, suppose, also, that some *sinful men and women should be changed in character*—what joy there will be in this city! The man who used to swear and curse, goes home like a lamb. What a joy for his wife as well as for himself! The man who was known to the police—better known than one might like to be—suppose that he should become known as much for his integrity and uprightness as he has been for his wrong-doing? What a change for him and what a change for all around him! It is amazing what an amount of misery some men cause to others. O you wretched creatures, it is a marvel that God Almighty should let you live at all when you beat your wives and blast your children's lives almost from the day of their birth with your drunkenness and blasphemy! But if the Lord comes and changes you, and you give up the drink, and you become Christians, truly following Christ, what joy there will be in this city!

Why, there are some men whom I have known, whose wives would hardly recognize them if they became kind and spoke tenderly to them! If they were to bring home all their wages on Saturday night, the wife would

say, "Whatever has come over Charlie? I cannot imagine what has caused such a change as this." And if, instead of a word and a blow, or a blow without a word, such a man were to become gentle, kind and amiable—ah, well, it would not matter that you had lived in one room, it would not matter that you had but scanty wages—all that would soon be altered! But even if it were not immediately changed, there would come rays of sunlight through that dirty window and the house, itself, would speedily become clean and bright! And when there is a happy father and a happy mother, there would soon be happy children! Yes, there is joy in a city when such a change as this is worked in men and women who have gone far into sin.

Now you suppose that I am speaking only to the poor, but I am doing nothing of the kind! Why, there are some men who are rolling in riches, yet they are grumpy, stingy and quarrelling with everybody in the house—from the youngest servant right up to the wife! They make everybody unhappy by their wicked ways. The Lord have mercy upon you poor rich people who do not know what you want, but are always wanting something or other! May God give you new hearts and right spirits—and teach you the sacred art of living according to the law of love! When you once get that word, "love," thoroughly worked into your nature, and into your lives, there will be joy in your house and, as houses make up a city, by-and-by, this wondrous work of Grace will make great joy in this city! The practical effect of Christianity is happiness, therefore let it be spread abroad everywhere! Let men begin to think about one another and care for one another and minister to one another's comfort and, before long, the sure result of the Gospel, faithfully preached, and cheerfully accepted, and lovingly manifested, will be great joy in the city!

Oh, but what great joy there is because of *the heavenly hopes which true religion creates within the soul!* The man who is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has many joys even now, for—

***"'Tis religion that can give  
Sweetest pleasures while we live,"***

but he has much more bliss in reversion, for it is also true that—

***"'Tis religion must supply  
Solid comfort when we die.  
After death its joys will be  
Lasting as eternity.  
Be the living God my Friend,  
Then my bliss shall never end."***

What a number of Christian people there are who are very poor and, what is worse, perhaps, very sick and often suffering great pain. But they say to themselves, "It is not for long. We shall soon see the face of the Well-Beloved." I do not suppose that there is a man in London suffering more than our dear brother and deacon, William Olney. His pain is such that if I were in his place, I would prefer death to life, yet, if there is a happy man anywhere, he is to be found down the New Kent Road! If there is one Brother whom I envy more than another—I do not think I envy anybody—it is that one man. Even in the midst of his pain, he is always peaceful, always joyful, always as merry as a cricket because he is looking for the

coming of his Lord, abiding His will, and expecting to be with Him, soon, where He is!

Oh, dear People, if you do but get a good hope through Grace, that will make you rich, that will make you joyful, that will make you strong! I wish that you all had it—my very soul keeps longing within me that you might all be converted to God! *I cannot work that great miracle—it is only the Spirit of God who can do it, but He works in answer to prayer.* I wish that all God's people would silently breathe this prayer to Him, now, "Lord, save every sinner in this house! Bring every unconverted one to Your feet!" He can do it, you know. Only let us cry to Him, pleading His own promise, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them: I will increase them with men like a flock." So let us cry to Him, "Lord, save this people! Lord, save this people, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen."

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ACTS 8.**

Stephen had been stoned to death, but with his latest breath he prayed for his murderers. Then this chapter begins—

**Verse 1.** *And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles.* Saul, having tasted blood in the murder of Stephen, became more and more furious in his persecution of the Church of Christ at Jerusalem—and the Brothers and Sisters had to escape for their lives. They all did so, except the Apostles, who were specially cared for by Divine Providence.

**2.** *And devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentations over him.* As well they might, for his death was a serious loss to the Church. He was one of the best workers for Christ of that day and when he was thus put to death by the judicial murder of stoning, the devout men who were spared to mourn his loss "made great lamentation over him."

**3.** *As for Saul, he made havoc of the Church, entering every house and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.* At first, we can hardly believe that this was the very man who later became the greatest preacher of the Gospel and the most successful builder of the Church of Christ, but it was even so. He was always earnest in whatever he did. When he persecuted, he did it with all his might—and when he became converted he preached with all his might. He was a thorough-going man. I like these thorough-going men—they are worth saving! When they are converted, they bring great Glory to God. The next verse tells us one effect of the havoc worked by Saul—

**4.** *Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word.* They might have stayed at Jerusalem and made a comfortable and strong Church, there, if they had not been persecuted, but, being scattered abroad, they were like seed in every furrow of the field! "They went everywhere preaching the Word." Now, out of *this* Church, there is a continual drain of Brothers and Sisters who leave their native land to go

to distant colonies. Such are the pressing end of the times, that many have to go abroad. I charge you, wherever you go, carry the Holy Seed with you. Be yourselves a seed for Christ in every land!

**5-11.** *Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclear spirits, crying with loud voices, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that he, himself, was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, this man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because for a long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. And there are those in all ages who set up to be prophets—and who seek to draw men after them—of whom it is well to beware.*

**12-13.** *But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon, himself, believed, also. Simon believed after a certain style and fashion. He saw that there was a real power about Philip which he did not, himself, possess, and he was obliged to bow down before the manifest Presence of God.*

**13-17.** *And when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit: (for as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then laid they their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. That is to say, they received a share of those miraculous gifts which attended the introduction of the Gospel of Christ. It has therefore been supposed that certain superior persons should visit the churches and lay their hands upon people. So they should, if they have the power to bestow such a gift as Peter and John gave—but to lay empty hands on the heads of men and women is a vain ceremony! When the Apostles laid their hands on these converts in Samaria, they received the Holy Spirit.*

**18-26.** *And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the Apostles' hands, the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me, also, this power, that on whomever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit. But Peter said unto him, Your money perish with you because you have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter: for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this, your wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray you to the Lord for me, that none of these things which you have spoken come upon me. And they, when they had testified and preached the Word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the*

*Gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. And the angel of the Lord spoke unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goes down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.* Philip, who had been so useful to the multitude, must now be of service to a solitary individual! My dear Brothers, if you can gather a crowd of people together, preach the Gospel to them! But if you cannot do that, preach the Gospel to one person, if you can only reach one! It was a desert, but the angel of the Lord bade Philip go there.

**27.** *And he arose and went.* Not hesitating, but at once obeying. If the Lord should send you to the wilderness, depend upon it that He will send somebody else there for you to bless! Go, therefore, without fear.

**27, 28.** *And, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasury and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Isaiah the Prophet.* He was a devout man, a studious man, a Bible-reading man. We do not often find such persons in great authority under queens—but here was one.

**29-31.** *Then the Spirit said unto Philip, go near, and join yourself to this chariot. And Philip ran there to him and heard him read the Prophet Isaiah, and said, Do you understand what you are reading? And he said, how can I, unless someone should guide me? And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.* See how God honors the Christian ministry by making even His Word to be, in some respects, insufficient for some men! At any rate, they need that some living voice should come and guide them into the meaning of it. Oh, that He would bless our voice, tonight, that some who have gathered with us in this Tabernacle might be brought to understand the Scriptures through our guidance!

**32-35.** *The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before His shearer, so opened He not His mouth: in His humiliation His judgment was taken away: and who shall declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray you, of whom speaks the Prophet? Of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him, Jesus.* It seems that, wherever Philip went, he had but one subject. When he went down to the city of Samaria, he preached Christ to them, and now that he talks to this Ethiopian eunuch, he preaches Jesus to him.

**36, 37.** *And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what does hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* That is the great confession of faith that is to be made by all who have believed in Jesus!

**38, 39.** *And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.* The Holy Spirit will not permit us to depend too much upon men as our teachers. The Spirit of the Lord did not take away the Bible—that

was left for the eunuch. He only caught away Philip after the Evangelist had furnished the enquirer with the key with which he could open the Scriptures—then he could unlock the Word, himself. That he did so, if history is to be believed, is very clear. He went home to Ethiopia, perhaps to Abyssinia, and the people there heard the Gospel from him—and to this day there are some traces of our holy faith in that land!

**40.** *But Philip was found at Azotes: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.* We know quite well what “he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea,” although it is not mentioned here. Wherever he went, he had but one theme—“the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ.” So may it be with us wherever we go!

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—956, 531, 465, 538.**

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#### **TEXT UNION MOTTOES—**

***“Then they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another.”***  
***“Exhort one another daily.”***

The Text Union has been formed for the purpose of enrolling the names of those who adopt the “Text Bond.” Members forming the Union agree to commit to memory a passage of Scripture, daily, and whenever they meet friends, or fellow members, to greet them by repeating the daily portion, or by asking for the, “Text for today, please.” Thus, the golden links of memory will bind the Bible to the heart and the Word of God will be a bond of friendship to all who join the Union. In order that all may have the same Texts, it has been agreed to adopt those selected by Mrs. C. H. Spurgeon in *Spurgeon’s Illustrated Almanac*. It is also hoped that Members of the Union will endeavor to persuade many of their friends to join, so that the Word of God may be multiplied.

Card of Membership and Almanac for 1894 will be forwarded on the receipt of four halfpenny stamps (or, where the Almanac is already possessed, a Card of Membership, alone, for two half-penny stamps) by

**PASTOR C. H. SPURGEON,**  
“Haddon,”  
Dartmouth Row,  
Blackheath, London, S.E.

Already 1000 names have been received and we trust that this means of bringing to remembrance the Word of God will be largely adopted in the Church, the home, the school, and the workshop. Much blessing has been already experienced by those who have joined the Text Union.

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

# DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING? NO. 1792

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 11, 1884,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT EXETER HALL.**

*“And Philip ran there to him, and heard him read the Prophet Isaiah, and said, Do you understand what you are reading? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the Scripture which he read was this, “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before His shearer, so opened He not His mouth: In His humiliation His judgment was taken away: and who shall declare His generation, for His life is taken from the earth.”*  
**Acts 8:30-33.**

How this chamberlain of the Queen of Ethiopia came to be a proselyte we do not know. The book which he was so fond of reading may have been the means of leading him to worship the God of Abraham. Certainly it has answered that purpose thousands of times. At any rate, he followed the light he had, and though he had not yet come to the full glory of Christianity, it was more than probable that he would do so, because he was evidently prepared to follow truth wherever her flaming torch should lead the way. Oh, that there were more candor among men in these latter days and less of the prejudice which puts scales upon the eyes of the mind!

Be true to the Truth of God as it comes to you! If God gives you only common candlelight, make good use of it and He will trim your lamp till it shines like the sevenfold golden light of His holy place! Those who are willing to see God by the moon of Nature shall soon be illuminated by the sun of Revelation. Instead of complaining that you have no more light, make good use of what you have. Many groan over their inabilities and yet they have never gone to the end of their abilities—this is sheer hypocrisy!

Having become a proselyte to the faith of Israel, the eunuch made a long and perilous journey to Jerusalem. After he had enjoyed the solemn feast, he returned and, while he traveled along, he read the Word of God. The book of the Prophet Isaiah was the portion chosen for his meditation. Does it not strike you as being remarkable that he should be reading, at that moment, the best text that Philip could have selected? He had reached a portion of Scripture from which, without the slightest digression, the Evangelist preached to him Jesus as the slain Lamb, the willing Sacrifice for guilty men! The same conjunction of Providence and the Holy Spirit constantly occurs in conversions. What the man has read in the Bible, the preacher is often moved by the Spirit of God to declare from the

pulpit, for God has servants everywhere, and His secret directions are given out so that all these servants, though they are little aware of it, are led to work together for the same predestined end!

How often have the talks of young men by the wayside been reproduced by the preacher—and such amazing coincidences have struck their attention and been the means of impressing their hearts! God grant there may be something of that kind tonight—I know there will be! Into this hall years ago there strayed a wild young man. He heard me preach—he believed in Jesus—and he has long been an honored deacon of a suburban Church. Are there not other men here to whom the same salvation shall come?

This eminent nobleman is reading. That is a commendable occupation—reading is, in itself, somewhat of a hopeful sign. In these days we need hardly exhort young men to read. “Give attendance to reading,” said the wise Apostle Paul, and that was excellent advice for Timothy. Let all Christian men be *reading* men. But, then, Philip’s question contains these words, “what you are reading,” and that suggests a necessary enquiry. I am afraid much that is read nowadays had far better be left unread! Multitudes of books are fruits of an accursed tree—the tree of evil knowledge which is watered by the rivers of perdition! The fruits of this upas tree will yield no benefit to the minds that feed upon it, but much of solemn damage by perverting the judgment, or polluting the imagination. Souls have been ruined to all eternity by reading a vile book. Count it no trifle to have heard bad language, but count it a more serious evil to have read a bad book which has wounded your soul and left a scar upon your conscience.

The writer of an evil book is a deliberate poisoner, secretly pouring death into the wells from which men drink. The printers and publishers of such works are accomplices in the crime. Young men, you will read—who among us would wish you to do otherwise?—but take heed what you read! As one who has read more greedily than most men, all sorts of books, I bear my testimony that the best of reading is the reading of the best of books. The more we read the Bible and volumes that lead up to the understanding of it, the better for us. I do not like to see in a lending library all the works of fiction needing to be recovered two or three times over, while the books of sober fact and solid teaching—and the works that speak of eternal things have never been read—since they have not even been opened. I fear that this is the general, if not the *universal*, rule. “Do you understand what you are reading?” is a question I would hardly put until a man has made up his mind that he will not read mere rubbish and falsehood, but will with deep attention read that which is accurate, truthful, devout and ennobling. Read, but take heed what you read and then seek to understand what you read!

It was a very sharp-pointed question that Philip put to this gentleman. He made honest and earnest use of a rare opportunity for reaching one of the upper ten. We find it tolerably easy to put questions to a man who is poor, but how shall we approach the rich? We have sermons for the working-classes and it would be a fair and useful thing to have sermons for the House of Peers—and evangelistic addresses for the Commons! Are there any bigger sinners anywhere than you might find in those two chambers?

The rich are neither better nor worse than the poor—the various classes have bad and good in each of them—in much the same proportion. I am persuaded that there are noble lords and honorable gentlemen who would be all the better for a little teaching upon the things of the Kingdom of God. For instance, it might do many of them good to hear a plain sermon from, “You must be born again.”

Why is it that we are so apt to be plain-spoken with working men and not with their employers? I admire Philip for his outspokenness to the royal treasurer. This gentleman keeps a carriage! Look at his retinue and his brave display! He is a very important person and yet, Philip, who is nobody in particular—only a poor preacher of the Word of God—runs up to the chariot and solemnly asks, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Young men, never be irritated by plain questions from a servant of Christ, or else you will not be as noble as this Ethiopian chamberlain! And, young men, when you know the Lord, do not be ashamed, yourselves, to put important questions to other people. Bold enquiries often give less offense than the more polite and indirect address which timidity suggests.

I fear the world can seldom charge the Church with being too violent in its appeals. Look at what the ungodly will do to us. Where can you live in a street of London, especially in this part of town, without having night made hideous with their loud licentious songs and shouts? They *force* upon us their irreligion—may we not *introduce* our religion in return? If we go up to a man straight away and speak to him in the name of Christ, perhaps he will say, “You intrude.” Well, we are not the only people that intrude, for many intrude their filthy tongues upon us as we go down the streets! And they force their infidelity upon us in the daily prints. The world sets the fashion and if we follow its customs, it has no right to complain. When the wicked grow so delicate that they are afraid of hurting our feelings by their unbelieving speeches, we may take into consideration how we can go delicately, also.

Meanwhile, is there anything which a man of God has *not* a right to say if it is the Truth of God and if he is earnestly aiming at the salvation of his fellow men? This was the question, “*Do you understand what you are reading?*” Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, you and I have need to understand the Bible. I will suppose you read it—let me hope I am not mistaken—but when you read it, labor, above all things, to *understand* it! The Book was written to be understood. It is the Book which speaks to us about our lives (for the soul is the true life), and about the eternal bliss and the way to win it. It must be so written as to be understood, since it were a mockery for God to give us a Revelation which we could not comprehend! The Bible was meant to be understood and it benefits us in proportion as we get at the meaning of it.

The mere words of Scripture passing over the ears or before the eyes can do us little good. I heard a person say, once, concerning a great doctrine which I hold to be very plainly taught in Scripture, that he had read the Bible through—I think he said six times—on his *knees*, but he could not find that doctrine. I replied, “Brother, that is an awkward position in which to read the Bible. I would have sat upon a chair and studied the

pages in a natural and easy posture. Moreover, I would not have galloped through it at the rate at which you must have raced over the chapters. I would rather have read a little at a time and tried to understand it.”

“Do you understand what you are reading?” That is the question! “I read a chapter every morning,” says one. Quite right; keep that up, but, “Do you understand what you are reading?” “Well, I learn the daily text.” Yes, but, “Do you understand what you are reading?” That is the main point. The butterflies flit over the garden and nothing comes of their flitting—but look at the bees, how they dive into the bells of the flowers and come forth with their thighs laden with the pollen—and their stomachs filled with sweetest honey for their hives! This is the way to read the Bible—get into the flowers of Scripture, plunge into the inward meaning and suck out that secret sweetness which the Lord has put there for your spiritual nourishment!

A thoughtful book needs and deserves thoughtful reading. If it has taken its author a long time to write it and he has written it with much consideration, it is due to him that you give his work a careful perusal. If the thoughts of *men* deserve this, what shall I say of the supreme thoughts of *God* which He has written for us in this Book? Let us bend ourselves to the Book—let us ask for increased capacity and let us use what capacity we already possess to reach the inmost soul of the Word of God—that we may understand it and be fed! The Bible can be understood, I assure you. I will not say that any man here understands all of it. I do not believe there is any man *alive* that does. I could not, myself, believe in it if I could understand it *all*—for I would imagine that it came from my equal—and not from that supreme Master mind whose thoughts must be above our thoughts, even as the heavens are above the earth!

All that is right, all that is fundamental, all that is essential to our soul’s eternal good can be understood by the help of God if we desire to understand it. Digest the Word of God, I pray you. Be prepared to answer this question, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Desiring to press that matter upon you, I am going to speak upon three questions somewhat briefly. The first is, *What is most essential to be understood in this Book?* Secondly, *What is the test of a man’s understanding it?* And, lastly, *What can be done to obtain such a desirable understanding?*

**I. WHAT, THEN, IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO BE UNDERSTOOD IN THIS BOOK?** I do verily believe that it is contained in the passage which the eunuch was reading. It is a very singular passage. A section of the Bible begins at Isaiah 53 and goes onward through several chapters. I will read you a verse or two out of that part which the eunuch would soon have read had he continued to peruse the words of the Prophet. Already he had noted the words—“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” There was something for him, for he had gone astray and knew his lost estate.

Go on to chapter 54, verse 3, and read this—“You shall break forth on the right hand and on the left; and your seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.” He might have thought, “I am one of the Gentiles and, therefore, I am of the nations that shall be

possessed by the seed.” When he reached the 55<sup>th</sup> chapter, how his eyes would sparkle as he began to read, “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters”! And this, “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near.” Here, too, He would hear the voice of God inviting men to come to His Anointed and he would mark that promise, “Behold, you shall call a nation that you know not, and nations that knew not you shall run unto you because of the Lord your God.”

He would rejoice to see that the Ethiopians were included in those who knew not the Christ, but would, nevertheless, run to Him. I beg you to look at the 56<sup>th</sup> chapter and the third verse. I fancy the eunuch had read the portion before—it must have been a favorite passage with him, for it runs thus—“Neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus said the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep My Sabbaths, and choose the things that please Me, and take hold of My Covenant; even unto them will I give in My house, and within My walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters.” Was not that pointedly personal and full of consolation? I do not wonder that he liked to be found reading near such a choice promise, wherein he saw the tender compassion of the Lord for beings who are usually despised.

The passage from which Philip’s text was taken contains the most essential thing for every young man to know. Let him know and understand the sixth verse of the 53<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Isaiah. It begins with, “all,” and ends with, “all”—therefore carry it in your memories—“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” What is needed is that we first understand that we have *all* gone astray. He who does not know that he has gone astray will not care for the Shepherd who comes to fetch him back. A humbling, heart-breaking sense of our personal wanderings from the Lord is a main force by which the heavenly Father leads us to the Lord Jesus and His salvation!

I want every young person here to know and understand the Truth of God that *salvation is the gift of Divine mercy* to those who are guilty—and is *never* the reward of human merit. Christ did not come to save you because you are good, for you are *not* good. Nor because you have merit, for you have no merit. He would not have come to save you if you had possessed merit. Why should He? There would have been no need! I hear the doctor’s carriage rattling down the street at a great pace and I wonder where he is going. It never occurs to me that he is rushing to call upon a hale and hearty man! I am persuaded that he is hastening to see someone who is very ill—perhaps someone in dying circumstances—otherwise he would not drive so fast.

It is just so with Jesus Christ. When He is hurrying on the wings of the wind to rescue a child of man, I am sure that the soul He visits is sick with the malady of sin and that the Physician is making haste because the disease is developing into corruption and death. He came not “to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”—

***“Who rightly would his alms dispose  
Must give them to the poor.  
None but the wounded patient knows  
The comforts of a cure.”***

Jesus will not waste His Grace on those who are already good. "He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he has sent empty away." Oh, that you would also understand the second half of Isaiah's verse, "*The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all!*" There is more philosophy in that statement than in all the teachings of Aristotle! There is more truth worth knowing in that one sentence than in all the books of the Alexandrian Library! The Lord Jehovah lifted up the sin of man and *deliberately* laid it upon His dear Son! His Son, willingly bearing that load as our Substitute, went up to the Cross, and there He bore what was due for all that weight of sin—even the penalty of darkness, desertion and death! By bearing the punishment, He put away sin and hurled it into His own sepulcher—wherein it is buried forever.

Now, everyone who believes in Jesus may know that his sin was laid upon Christ, borne by Christ and put away by Christ. A thing cannot be in two places at one time. If my sin was laid on Christ, it is no longer laid on me. God cannot exact two penalties for the same offense—if He accepted Christ Jesus as my Substitute, then He cannot punish me! God's justice cannot twice demand the penalty—

***"First at my bleeding Surety's hand,  
And then again at mine."***

Such an exaction would be a strange confusion and destruction of both Love and Justice. Such injustice can never be! This is how you are to get rid of your sin. *You* cannot bear it, but Christ bore it! You are to accept Christ as your Sin-Bearer, and then you may know that your sins have gone, that the depths have covered them—that there is not one of them left.

I sometimes think if men did but understand this, they would be sure to accept the Lord Jesus. I heard of a minister in Edinburgh who went to visit one of his poor people. He heard that she was in deep poverty and, therefore, he went to take her help. When he came to her house, he could not make anybody hear, though he knocked loud and long. Seeing her some time after, he said, "Janet, I knocked at your door with help for you, but you did not hear me." "What time did you come, Sir?" she asked. "It was about twelve o'clock." "Oh," she said, "I did hear you, Sir, but I thought it was the man calling for the rent." Just so. Men hear the calls of Christ, but they are willfully deaf because they think He wants them to *do* something. But He does not want anything of you! He wants you to receive what *He* has *already done*. He comes laden with mercy, with His hands full of blessing, and He knocks at your door—you have only to open it and He will enter in and salvation will enter with Him. Say, "Come in, you unknown Traveler! What do You have in Your hands? I gladly accept what You bring."

Will not some young man, here, who has thought religion to be a hard exaction, change his mind, now that he understands that it is a bountiful *gift*? Salvation is a *gift*—a free gift of God! "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The Savior lifts sin from men to Himself and then makes an end of that sin, once and for all, by His death upon the Cross. Oh, hear this, you guilty ones—there is full salvation presented to you in the Word of God—salvation from every sort of evil! You shall be helped to

overcome every bad passion, to conquer every evil habit, to be masters of your own minds and lords of your own spirits. The Lord Jesus Christ, if you accept Him, will come into your heart and turn out His enemy and yours—and He will reign in you from this time forth and forever—until He has made you perfect and fit to dwell with Him in Glory! Oh, that you understood this vital point! “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all”!

**II. WHAT IS THE TEST OF A MAN’S UNDERSTANDING HIS BIBLE AND OF UNDERSTANDING THIS PASSAGE IN IT?** I answer that the test of a man’s understanding this important part of Scripture is that *Jesus Christ is everything to Him*, for Philip, who *did* understand it, when he explained it, preached unto the eunuch Jesus and nothing else. I try with all my might to preach my Lord Jesus Christ—and I love to meet with people who delight in this theme. Certain critics call upon us to preach something *fresh*. This, also, will I do, for I will preach Jesus—and He is always fresh—there is nothing stale in Him! He has forever the dew of His youth!

It may be said, “But new doctrines are brought out continually.” Yes, but they grow stale in a month! They are a poor kind of Covent Garden stuff and need to be carted away quickly, otherwise they decay. I have lived to see a score or more sorts of modern theology—they all come and go—but Jesus Christ remains the same yesterday, today and forever! If you have Jesus Christ, you have everything—top, bottom and middle as well! Have Christ and nothing else but Christ. You will not be safe if you rest without having a firm hold of Jesus, the Divine Savior.

“Well,” says one, “but what do you make of Socinians and Unitarians?” I come to the same conclusion about them as did an old Baptist minister who was greatly grieved to see a Socinian chapel erected opposite his own. One of his deacons said, “This is a dreadful thing—this opposition shop that has been opened on the other side of the road!” “I don’t call it opposition at all,” said the minister. The deacon exclaimed, “Why, they are Unitarians! They don’t preach the Godhead of Christ!” The old man said, “If you kept a baker’s shop and another man were to open an ironware business opposite you, that would not be opposition, for he would be in quite another line. Those who do not preach the Deity of Christ are in an altogether different business. If you want ironware, you may go to them, but if you want the Bread of Heaven, you must look to the Lord Jesus, the Son of the Highest.” So if you want to understand the Scripture, test yourself by this—Is Jesus Christ *everything* to you?—

**“You cannot be right in the rest  
Unless you think rightly of Him.”**

You understand the Scripture if you make everything of the Lord Jesus Christ—if you believe on Him with all your heart and then yield yourselves up to Him in His own way.

*Every young man, when he believes in Jesus, should give himself to Jesus, heart and soul, forever.* “That’s the kind of young man for my money, for He is O and O.” So spoke a certain person and when he was asked what that meant, he replied, “Out and out for Jesus Christ.” Such a man is precious in these days! Yes, precious as the gold of Ophir. Jesus was

out and out for us—He loved us and gave Himself for us—there should be no half-heartedness in our dealings with Him. If we have read Scripture aright, we have not received the kind of Christianity which sanctifies us on Sunday and enables us to be dishonest throughout the week! True saints have a religion that has entered into their very blood, changing their nature and permeating their being so that it is part and parcel of themselves. Practical Christianity is the only real Christianity! If your religion can be laid aside I would advise you to get rid of it, for a real Christian could no more lay aside his godliness than he could unscrew his head!

I like this eunuch for proposing that he should be baptized. He was not advised to do so, but he proposed it himself, and gave himself up to his Lord and Master to do the Lord's bidding at once—the Providence of God having provided water that he might, then and there, fulfill his Master's command. Young man and maidens, whichever way the Scripture bids you, dedicate yourself to God! Set to work about it and let it be done at once! Find out what is the Scriptural way and then follow it without delay, surrendering yourself wholly to the Lord—you have not read the Scriptures with understanding unless you do that.

The next thing is, if you have read the Scriptures with a clear understanding, *they have made you glad*, for this eunuch “went on his way rejoicing.” The man who gets up from reading his Bible and says, “I am a Believer in Jesus; what a solemn thing it is!” and then goes forth with a pious resolution that he will make everybody as *miserable* as he can all the day long, needs converting again! The faith of the Scriptures leads joy by the hand and chases away despair. When true religion comes, its tendency is to make us rejoice in the Lord *always*—and though we are not as happy as we ought to be—that is not the fault of our *faith*, but of our *unbelief*. Fair flowers of Paradise spring up where Faith plants her feet—but thistles grow where *doubt* abides. Our indigestion, or some other malady may depress us, but faith should make our songs abound even while we are traveling through the wilderness. Joys unspeakable may be ours before we—

**“Reach the heavenly fields,  
Or walk the golden streets.”**

You have not read your Bible so as to understand it to the fullest unless you have learned to be happy by a sweet resting in Jesus.

I think you have not understood the Bible unless *it makes you care about the salvation of others*, for this Ethiopian nobleman, when he got home, I have no doubt, spread the Gospel throughout his native land. He was, probably, the founder of the Abyssinian Church. If any young man reads this Book aright, he becomes large-hearted. He cannot hold his soul within the narrow bound of his ribs, but his great heart looks out to see where it can scatter benefits. If you can let another man be damned without an effort, I fear that such will be your own end! If you can be quiet when you believe your brother is on the brink of eternal ruin, I fear you are on the brink of ruin yourself. One of the holiest instincts born in a renewed man is that of longing to save others. Being saved, we wish to cooperate with the Savior in His gracious work. A missionary enthusiasm is

the natural result of a clear perception of the true state of matters in reference to the world which lies in the Wicked One. The heathen dies without hope—shall it always be so? Will no young man rescue the perishing? I put it to you from the deeps of my soul, will you not cry, “Here am I, send me!”?

You have read this Book so as to understand it, *if your message to others is what the message was to you*—Christ, Christ, Christ, Christ! You have nothing else to employ as the means of good except the salvation of Jesus—and there is nothing else worth telling. I heard of a congregation, the other day, that was so very small that hardly anyone came to listen to the preacher. Instead of blaming himself and preaching better, the minister said he thought he was not doing much good by sermons and Prayer Meetings and, therefore, he would found a club and if the fellows came in and played darts, that might do them good.

What a lot of that sort of thing is now being tried! We are going to convert souls on a new system—are we? Are we also to have a substitute for bread?—and healthier drink than pure water? We cannot save men by faith in Jesus Christ and so it seems we are going to try new dodges of our own? We shall reap small, scant sheaves from such wretched seed! If you can do good any way, do good any way you can—but to hope to ever bring sinners to holiness and Heaven by any teaching but that which begins and ends in Jesus Christ is a sheer delusion! No other name is given among men whereby they can be saved! If you have to deal with highly learned and educated people, nothing is so good for them as preaching Jesus Christ! And if the people are ignorant and degraded, nothing is better for them than the preaching of Jesus!

A young man said to another the other day, “I am going down to preach at So-and-So. What sort of people are they there? What kind of doctrine will suit them?” Having heard of the question, I gave this advice—“You preach Jesus Christ and that will suit them, I am sure. If they are learned people it will suit them. If they are ignorant it will suit them—God blessing it.” When the great Biblical critic, Bengel, was dying, he sent for a young theological student, to whom he said, “I am low in spirit. Say something good to cheer me.” “My dear Sir,” said the student, “I am so insignificant a person, what can I say to a great man like yourself?” “But if you are a student of theology,” said Bengel, “you ought to have a good word to say to a dying man. Pray, say it without fear.” “Well, Sir,” he said, “What can I say to you, but that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin”?

Bengel said, “Give me your hand, young man. That is the very word I need.” A simple Gospel text is the word which every man needs who is in fear of Divine wrath! And he may be sitting next to you at this moment, or he is in the same house of business with you and needs that you should tell him about Christ! Do that, and bless his soul. May you all understand the Scriptures in this way—and may God make you a great blessing to those around you.

**III.** Now in a few words I want to answer the question, WHAT CAN BE DONE TO OBTAIN SUCH A DESIRABLE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCRIPTURES? “I read the Bible,” says one, “and get a great deal puzzled over it.” Let me advise that when you read a passage in the Scriptures

which you do not understand, you should read it until you do. "I should have to read often." Well, that would not hurt you. "But suppose I never understand it?" Keep on reading it all the same. "Can passages of Scripture which we do not understand do us any good when we read them?" Yes. They gradually filter into our souls—by long considering them we get light out of them.

Here is a little boy whose father is an artisan and uses a great many technical terms when talking about his work. The boy is apprenticed to the trade and wants to know all about it and, therefore, he listens to his father. And when the day is over, he says to himself, "I heard my father say a great deal, but I do not understand much of it." "But you did understand a little of it?" "Oh, yes." To that little he is faithful and, day by day, he adds to his store of information, learning more by the help of that which he already knows. He hears his father talk, again, the next day, and still he does not understand much, but at last, by hearing the terms often and by meditating upon them, light breaks in and, at length, he can talk like his father, using the same words with understanding.

So I have found it. When I do not comprehend a chapter, I say—"This is probably comprehensible. I will, therefore, hear my great Father speak, even if I do not understand, at first, what He may say to me. And I will keep on hearing Him until at last I grasp His meaning." I fear we do not understand some passages because we have not read them often enough, nor thought upon them with full concentration of mind. Once or twice they pass before the mind and produce no impression—let us observe them, yet again, and then their effect will be deep and permanent. Do as the photographer does when he allows an object to be long before the camera until he obtains a well-defined picture. Let your mind dwell on a passage till at last it has photographed itself upon your soul by the Light of God.

The next bit of advice I would give is always read with a desire to understand—always have the pliers with you to crack the nuts, that you may feed upon their kernels. Some may say, when reading the Bible, "That may be a very blessed passage, but I don't, in the least, know what it means." Be not content to leave the text in that condition! Weep much because no man can open the book and loose its seven seals. Pray over the words and study them again and again, till, at last, you come at the essence of the text. Reading with that view, it is wonderful how soon you will obtain the understanding you seek!

Next, be sure to pray for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. If you want to understand a book and you find difficulties in it, do as I have done on several occasions with my contemporaries—write and ask them what they mean by their language. I have, in this way, obtained much valuable information. Can we do that with the Bible? Assuredly we can if we know how to pray! The Author of the Bible is never more pleased than when we go directly to Him to ask Him what He means! He puts Himself at the disposal of every earnest student, to open up by means known to Himself, those Scriptures which He has Himself dictated. "I consulted a learned commentator," says one. Very well. At the same time, to go to a commentator upon a book is not half as certain a mode of procedure as to

go to the author of the book! Seek instruction of the blessed Spirit by humble prayer!

Remember that you can also go to the Maker of your *mind* and He can open it to receive His Truth. Your mind is out of order and it is no wonder, considering its serious damage by the Fall and the atmosphere of sin which surrounds it in this present evil world. My mind, I know, is very likely to be in a disorderly state—it has, for 50 years, been always at work. And I think it must, by this time, be like an old clock that has grown rusty or dusty. I find my brain needs clearing out a bit and I believe that this is the case with you young men, too. You are either very busy, or else very careless—and the dust of care or neglect spreads over your brain. Who can set the brain right? The Creator who made the brain! The Holy Spirit has a wonderful power in clearing the intellect. You shall study for a month and make no headway—but you shall pray to God about a spiritual Truth—and it shall be clear to you in a minute! There are multitudes of instances in which men have turned dark problems over and over again in their minds and have never solved them by their own mental efforts. But one flash of Divine Light has made everything bright as noonday! Wait, then, upon the Author of the Bible, and then wait upon the Author of yourself, and say, “Lord, as You open the Scriptures, so open my understanding that I may perceive their meaning.”

I would earnestly entreat every man who desires to understand the Bible to consider at this moment the vital point of his natural condition and the way of salvation from it. You are lost, dear Friend. If you are an unconverted man you are still lost and you cannot save yourself—it is impossible! You may have heard the story of that philosopher who was once on the roof of a house, when suddenly behind him came a strong man with a huge whip and told him to jump down to the ground. Certain death would have been the result. The man was a lunatic. The philosopher perceived that terrible fact in a moment and so he very wisely said, “Well, you see, any fool can jump down. The grand thing would be to jump up! Let us go down and jump up.” They went down but they never jumped up, for the gentleman thus escaped.

Are there not some here who are jumping down? Some young men who are taking a desperate leap to one sin or another? Any fool can jump down! But if any of you are already down, I defy you to jump up! No, you need a greater power than your own before you can ascend the heights of holiness. If you have tried to jump up, I know, young man, you have fallen back in despair. Easy is the descent to Hell—the gravitation of our nature tends that way—but to retrace our steps—*that* is the work—that is the difficulty! Turn that over in your mind and say, “If there is salvation to be had, since I cannot work out my own rescue without Divine Grace, I will trust in Jesus.” Oh, that you would seek His Grace at once!

I tried to preach the Gospel just now. Let me again put it simply. A slave worded it thus, “*Christ die, me not die,*” and that is the Gospel! Christ dies that you may not die. Only trust Him and you are saved! When you are about it, dear young Friend, I beseech you to trust Christ out and out. A homely parable will illustrate what I mean. A father, it is said, had to go, one night, along the top of a rugged and very slippery precipice. His

two boys were with him and when he started, one boy said, "Father, I will take hold of your hand." He did so and it seemed a very wise thing to do. The other boy said, "Father, take hold of my hand," and, as it turned out, that was a much more prudent course, for the first youngster clung to his father's hand until he grew weary—and when they were in a very frightful place, he failed to hold on and down he went! But the other trudged along right merrily, for he was not dependent upon *his* hold of his father's hand—all depended upon the father's hold of him! Now come, young man, and begin as you mean to go on. Put yourself right into the hands of the Lord Jesus for Him to keep you!

When I was a lad I heard a preacher say that Christ gave to His sheep eternal life and that they would never perish, for He would keep them to the end. This charmed me. I longed to find this sure salvation. I thought within myself, "I know James So-and-So and, Tom So-and-So, who went up to London and who were about a year older than I, and they, within half-a-dozen years, were as far gone in vice as well could be. They were better boys when they were at school than I was and yet they went to the bad. I may go and do the same thing as they did unless I get this eternal salvation. I may lose my situation, or be found pilfering, or something of that sort, for I have as bad a heart as they have."

I looked upon salvation as a spiritual insurance which would guarantee my character. So I tried the promise and now, at the age of 50, I place myself under the care of the Lord Jesus as I did at the age of fifteen! He has kept me to this day and I believe He will never let me go, however long I may live. Oh, young man, give yourself up to those dear pierced hands wholly and heartily! Let your motto be, "Jesus only." Trust Christ a little and *yourself* a little and, like a man who plants one foot on the rock and the other on the quicksand, you will go down! Trust in Him alone and He will hold you fast! If Jesus does not save me, I shall be lost, for I cannot save myself. It is His business to save me, for both by name and office He is Jesus, the Savior—and I rest quite happily in Him. When we meet in Heaven we shall praise the Lord for making us understand what we read. God bless you all, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 8:26-40.  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—478, 483, 486.**

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# WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED? NO. 2737

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 28, 1901.

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

*“If you believe with all your heart, you may.”  
Acts 8:37.*

IT is not my practice to preach what people commonly call “baptizing sermons.” It is very seldom that I even mention the subject of Baptism in my preaching, for I find that many of my hearers learn the Scriptural teaching concerning it without much help from me. Of those who have come to unite with us in Church fellowship, a very large proportion consists of persons who have searched out the Truth of God upon this matter for themselves and could in no wise trace their alteration in sentiment to any remark of mine, but they had seen the ordinance clearly revealed in Holy Scripture. This is a method of arriving at the Truth which I greatly prefer to any instruction imparted by myself, for, in the case of people thus Divinely taught, I know that their faith will “not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” I refused, on one occasion, to go to Ireland when invited to do so by a Brother who gave, as the reason why he wished me to go, that by going there I should greatly increase the Baptist denomination. “No,” I said, “I would not go across the street, much less across the sea, merely to make people Baptists.” Wherever I may be, I endeavor, as in the sight of God, so to deal with men as to bring them to Christ, leaving the Spirit of God further to take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto them.

Yet I dare not be altogether silent concerning Believers' Baptism. If I would make full proof of my ministry and preach the whole Gospel as it is contained in the New Testament, I must proclaim the Truth of God with regard to that great ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He has, Himself, put in such an important position by coupling it with faith and salvation—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Still, let me assure you, dear Friends, that I do not introduce this topic in any controversial spirit, for that I would abhor—but only because I feel it to be “the burden of the Lord” that presses upon me and, as it is a part of God's Holy Word, I must preach thereon.

In the excellent and estimable Presbyterian Church, before the administration of the Lord's Supper, it is usual to have a sermon for the purpose of what is called “fencing the Table.” That fencing is a great part of the duty of the Christian minister in many other matters beside the

Communion. All Bible doctrines, all God's promises and both Christ's ordinances need to be fenced! In the fencing of the Lord's Table, the principal topic of the preacher is—Who are the fit subjects for the reception of the Lord's Supper? Who may draw near and partake of the symbolic bread and wine, and who may not approach?

Now, as the Communion Table should be fenced, so also should the Baptismal Pool, so should the promises of God and so should those great and glorious doctrines which are the essentials of our faith! And I believe that the only fence which is proper and Scriptural is that which is given in our text, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." If a man says to me, "May I reckon myself to be one of the elect?" I reply, "God certainly has an elect people, but you have no right to consider yourself as one of them unless you believe with all your heart." Then there is the Doctrine of Effectual Calling—and if anyone asks me if he is effectually called, I answer, "If you believe with all your heart, then you certainly have an interest in this glorious Doctrine of God's Grace." Then, with regard to the Doctrine of Redemption by the blood of Christ, which is the basis and foundation of all our hopes, I see no warrant for telling any man that he is redeemed until I can get him to give a full and satisfactory reply to this enquiry, "Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart?" It seems to me that the Doctrines of the Gospel have no truly comforting message to any man until he believes upon Christ with all his heart.

So also is it with the promises of God. They are rich, dainty, spiritual fare which He has spread upon the table of His banqueting house, but no one who does not believe in Christ with all his heart has any right to lay hold on the "exceedingly great and precious promises" which God has recorded for the comfort of His own people. I know that there are some loving and gracious invitations which are addressed to the sinner, and I thank God that it is so, but I also know that the sinner can never realize the sweetness of them until he believes in Jesus. I am sure that he cannot comply with the invitation except by believing with all his heart—and that he must be a stranger to the gracious promises and encouraging invitations until he comes and puts his trust in "Jesus only."

I am fully persuaded that it is the same with the ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord's Table is not, on any pretense, to be approached by those who do not believe in Him with all their heart. "Away, you profane!" should be the cry of the Christian minister when he is about to dispense the sacred emblems. Believer in Christ, you are heartily welcome! You have a right to come to the Table of your Lord if you believe in Him with all your heart. Whoever and whatever you may be, the only barrier which we can rightly set before you bears upon it this inscription, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." No, if you believe, there is no barrier, so come and welcome! We dare not set up before the Table of our Lord any barrier which God Himself has not put there, so we invite to it all who have believed in Jesus—but we solemnly warn all those who come and partake of this ordinance without faith in Christ—that they are eating and drinking condemnation unto themselves, not

discerning the Lord's body, for none have the right to approach His Table but those who, with a true heart, believe in Christ and in Him alone.

It is equally so with regard to the other ordinance of Believers' Baptism. Whatever opinions different men may hold concerning it, the Word of God *must* stand and it is our duty to preach all that is there revealed to us. One point that is very plain is that no one has a right to this ordinance until he is a Believer in Christ. I am astonished that any Christians should ever have imagined that this rule could be relaxed in any case, and it has often puzzled me that all Calvinists do not see that Baptism must belong to the people of God, and to them only. Do we not rightly teach that the Doctrines of Scripture are for the comfort and instruction of the Believer? That the promises of God are, as a rule, for the Believer? That, in fact, the whole plan of God's dispensation of Grace is on behalf of the Believer, and the Believer only? Then I cannot understand upon what ground any solitary exception should be made to the Divine Rule, and that it should be imagined that this solemn ordinance should be left open to all the world—not merely to all the intelligent inhabitants of the world, but also be left so open that even an unconscious infant might become the subject of it!

Not only is that a convincing argument with me, but, as I understand it, the whole Gospel of Christ is addressed to intelligent individuals. I cannot see anything that I could do to any purpose if I were called upon to preach to an unconscious person. The Gospel appeals to men's understanding and heart, but if their whole mental powers are in a dormant condition, I do not see what I, as a preacher, can do in such a case, or what bearing the Gospel itself has upon such people. I am amazed that an unconscious babe should be made the partaker of an ordinance which, according to the plain teaching of the Scriptures, requires the conscious acquiescence and complete heart-trust of the recipient! Very few, if any, would argue that infants ought to receive the Lord's Supper, but there is no more Scriptural warrant for bringing them to the one ordinance than there is for bringing them to the other!

The Church of England Catechism is quite right when it says that repentance and faith are required of persons to be baptized, but its practice is not in accordance with that Scriptural teaching. The godfather and godmother of the child, when they bring him to the font, promise, in his name, that he shall repent and believe, and that he shall renounce the devil and all his works—this is more than the child himself could promise to do, and more than I could promise to do! Or, if I did say so, I would be a liar to God and to my own soul, since it would be utterly impossible for me to fulfill such a promise! The theory of the State Church is that this promise of repentance and faith is like the paper money that we have in circulation. It is true that it is not the current coin of repentance and faith, nevertheless it is valid—the promise that the child shall repent and believe is sufficient! This seems to me to be a strange figment for any rational creature to endorse!

I will put the case thus—suppose that there is a king who has absolute dominion over his subjects—and suppose that there is a certain

work to be done. Say, the insertion of glass in a window which has been broken. Further, imagine that there are two workmen, to both of whom the king gives the command, "Set to work and mend that window." One of them says, "I will not." The other says, "I will," yet straightway hangs cobwebs over the broken places. It appears to me that there is not much difference in the disobedience in the two cases! And it is very much the same with those who positively refuse to obey what they know to be the plain commands of God's Word concerning Baptism—those who practically disobey those commands by substituting the sprinkling of babies for the immersion of Believers, and then bringing in the fiction of sponsorship to support their alteration of the Divine ordinance! To my mind, it is a vain attempt to evade compliance with a plain and simple command and is, therefore, worse than avowed disobedience would have been. I can understand the position of a man who does not, in his own conscience, feel that this is an ordinance which is limited to the Believer, but I cannot comprehend the consistency of one who says that repentance and faith are necessary before Baptism and who then takes the unconscious infant into his arms, sprinkles a few drops of water upon his brow and declares that he has become a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven! That seems to me to be not only the height of absurdity, but to be also a heinous sin in the sight of the Most High God.

I repeat what I have already said, that the fencing of both Christ's ordinances can be accomplished by the condition laid down in our text, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." I cannot thrust my Brothers and Sisters from the Lord's Table if they believe in Him with all their heart, nor can I keep back from Baptism any child who believes in Jesus with all his heart. But, on the other hand, though he is gray-headed and venerable—if he is not a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not my business, as a servant of the Lord, to alter my King's laws so as to please him, but, rather, to say to him, "Stand back until you are in a fit state to obey my Master's commands! You are not yet entitled to share the privileges that belong to God's family. Until you have believed in Jesus and are thus proved to be one of His children, I cannot admit you as a partaker of either of the ordinances which He has ordained."

Now I am going to practically carry out the teaching of the text by briefly and affectionately addressing our dear friends who are about to be baptized. The observance of this ordinance will awaken, in many of our minds, recollections of similar services in the past. It spreads to my remembrance a river in Cambridgeshire, with a great assembly of spectators on the banks, and a youth walking into the midst of the flowing stream and there giving himself up, spirit, soul, and body, to the service of his Master. It recalls to me the hour when I thus publicly avowed my allegiance to the King of kings and I can join with John Newton in saying to my dear Lord and Master—

***"Many days have passed since then,  
Many changes I have seen.  
Yet have been upheld till now  
Who could hold me up but Thou?"***

Perhaps others, who have thus “put on Christ,” may be cheered, and refreshed, and stirred up by the address I shall now give to those who will presently enter the Baptismal Pool.

**I.** In explaining the text, we will take it almost word by word and, first, dear Friends, note THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL FAITH—“If *you* believe with all your heart, you may” be baptized.

Have you believed in Christ for yourselves? It is useless for you to say that you are the sons of pious parents, the daughters of godly fathers and mothers. Unless you yourselves believe in Jesus, you will be cast down to Hell just as surely as will the ungodly descendants of wicked men and women! The faith of your parents may be blessed by God as the means by which you will be brought to Christ, but if you are not brought to Him, all the faith of others cannot avail for your salvation. Though you should have Abraham to be your father, and Sarah to be your mother, even then you could not be saved without your own personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. How apt are we, who occupy the family pew in the House of God, and who from our infancy have been brought up to hear the Word preached, to imagine that there is a kind of family holiness which may avail for us all and to believe that because our parents were Christians, we also are saved! Yet it is not so—there is no such thing as a Christian family, sufficient to include you at the Last Great Day, unless you who belong to it are yourselves Christians! And there is no such thing as a Christian nation unless the individuals who compose that nation are all Christians.

Men are always prone to talk of religion in the mass, but, Beloved, remember that you will have to enter Heaven one by one if you go there at all. “So then everyone of us shall give account of himself to God.” No eyes except your own will avail you in looking to the Cross, or in weeping over your sin. No other heart’s repentance can take the place of your own heart’s godly sorrow for sin. No lips but your own can breathe the penitential prayer on your behalf, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” You must be brought to feel your own need of a Savior. You must yourselves be enabled by the Holy Spirit to put your trust in Jesus, or else you will as surely be lost as if you had been born in a Hottentot hut, of parents who neither knew nor loved the Lord.

Personal religion is an essential prerequisite to admission into the Church of Christ, or to either of the ordinances which He has instituted. I shudder when I see men, who are not Christians, taking to themselves the promises that are addressed to Believers. I have heard a man say of a sermon, which was meant for the comfort of the children of God, “Oh, how sweet it was to me!” Whereas he was eating stolen sweets to which he had no right. “If *you* believe with all your heart,” you may suck the honey out of the promises. If you believe, you may walk to and fro in the spiritual Canaan, from Dan to Beersheba, for it is all your own. From the hilltops to the valleys’ utmost depths, all is yours. Yes, from the very center of Heaven to its circumference, or to its furthest limits, all is your own possession. But if you believe not, your pedigree avails you nothing! Your godly parentage shall not advantage you in the Last Great Day—no, nor

even now, for the wrath of God abides on you because you have not believed on His Son, Jesus Christ, whom He has sent into the world as the one and only Savior of sinners!

Put your hands to your hearts, then, my dear Brothers and Sisters, and search and see whether you do really believe for yourselves personally. Suppose the Ethiopian eunuch had said, “I do not, myself, believe in Jesus, but my father and mother did”? Philip would have replied, “Their faith cannot avail for you. Only if you believe with all your heart, you may be baptized.” Religion is a personal matter, the ordinances of Christ must be observed by Believers only according to their individual standing in Him. It is of no use for you to talk of your parents being in the Covenant of Grace—are *you* in the Covenant? Can you say, with David, “He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure”? “Do you believe on the Son of God?” For if you do not, then we cannot admit you to fellowship with His people, and we cannot permit you to be baptized in His name.

**II.** Note, next, THE GREAT PREREQUISITE FOR BAPTISM. “If you *believe* with all your heart, you may” be baptized.

So the question each one of you have to answer is this—Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? “Well,” says one, “I try to serve the Master as best I can.” I am glad to hear it, and if your service is the result of faith in Christ, I bless God for it—but if it is not based on faith and is not the fruit of faith—it is worthless. All the service of unbelieving men is but whitewashed sin. It may look like virtue, but it is only a base counterfeit, not the genuine coin. Again I put the question to you—Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?

“Well,” says another, “I accept all the Doctrines of Grace, beginning with predestination and ending with final perseverance. I am as orthodox a Believer as ever lived.” That is not all I want to know from you. Faith in Christ is not the reception of a dry, dead orthodoxy—to believe in Jesus is not simply to be a sixteen-ounces-to-the-pound Calvinist. Saving faith is not the mere reception of a creed or form of any kind. To believe is to trust and no man truly believes—in the New Testament meaning of the word—until he is brought to trust in Christ, alone, and takes his whole religion upon trust, relying not on what he sees, nor on what he is, but on what is revealed in God’s Word—not on what he is, or can be, or shall be, nor on what he does or can do, nor on what he feels or does not feel—but relying solely on what Christ has done, is doing and shall yet do.

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, do you thus believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all your hearts? Although you have upon you the attire of candidates for baptism, I entreat you to retire from this pool if you do not believe in Christ. I think I see a tear in your eyes and I hear you say, “Blessed be God that, with many imperfections, I can still look up to Christ, and say—

***Nothing in my hands I bring;  
Simply to Your Cross I cling;  
Naked, come to You for dress;  
Helpless, look to You for Grace;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly;***

***Wash me, Savior, or I die.”***

Well, dear Friend, if you can truly make that declaration, however feeble your faith may be, this ordinance is for you, the Communion Table is for you, the Doctrines of the Gospel are yours, the promises of Christ are yours, yes, Christ Himself is yours! And Christ is All, therefore, “all things are yours; and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

In your Baptism, it should be your aim to please God—“but without faith it is impossible to please Him.” How can that which is not pleasing to Him be accounted as the observance of one of His ordinances? But “if you believe with all your heart, you may.” Observe it and your observance will be acceptable in His sight. If Christ is the unsupported pillar of your hope, the solitary stay and prop of your trust. If your faith really and truly says, “Nothing save Jesus do I rely on for salvation,” come here, come and welcome! “Come in, you blessed of the Lord; why do you stand outside?”

Some years ago, a man came to me and said that he wished to be baptized. I put this question to him, “Why do you wish that?” He answered, “Because I want to be a Christian.” “But,” I enquired, “do you think that Baptism will make you a Christian?” “Yes,” he said. “Then,” I replied, “you are grossly mistaken. We baptize none but those who profess to be already saved through faith in Jesus Christ. Baptism can have no possible effect in helping you on the road to Heaven.” The man seemed to be utterly staggered at that idea, for he had somehow got into his head the notion that there was something efficacious in the ordinance itself. And when I tried to explain to him that the Scriptures contain no warrant for such a thought as that and, therefore, we would not baptize any who did not believe themselves to be already saved, the man went away staggered. Yet I hope that he also went away resolved to ask himself such solemn questions as these, “How is it that I am not a Christian? How is it that I am not a follower of Christ, and that the minister therefore refuses to baptize me, urging me first to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and after that to attend to Baptism, but not before?”

God forbid that any of you, dear Friends, should for a single moment think that there is any saving virtue in the water in this baptistery! If you were baptized in the River Jordan itself, what could that avail you? Though the waters of Baptism flowed down from the Garden of Eden, they could not wash away the stain of sin! Nothing but the blood of Jesus can do that! He that has been plunged in that—

***“Fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,”***

may also be plunged into the Baptismal Pool. When anyone believes, let him be baptized. But if you believe not, stand back! This is a sacred circle into which no unbeliever can be permitted to enter. “If you believe,” come here, and confess your faith as your Lord ordained. But if you believe not, take heed lest you destroy your own soul by meddling with that ordinance which is not for you in your present condition.

**III.** Now, thirdly, note THE KIND OF FAITH THAT IS HERE MENTIONED. “If you believe *with all your heart.*”

There is a great deal of difference between faith *and* faith. One kind is the faith of the head and another is the faith of the heart. Some men have all their religion in their head—like poor, miserable, poverty-stricken students, they confine their religion to their head and there they let it feed upon some dry thought or empty speculation. But the faith of the true Christian occupies the best parlor of the heart. It has its citadel in the innermost part of his being. It dwells at home in his inmost soul.

The devil himself has the faith of the head. He believes and trembles. He is as orthodox as many very learned divines. As far as the mere statement of theology is concerned, I could trust the devil to draw up a creed. I believe he is thoroughly sound and that he knows a great deal more about God's Word than most of us do. He can quote it correctly when he pleases, although he is also adept at misquoting it for his own ends. I do not think that the devil ever was an Arminian, or that he ever will be one—he understands the Doctrines of Grace, at least in his head, too well for that. In one respect, he is better than some Antinomians, for they believe and presume, while he believes and trembles. Still, Satan and Antinomians never would be very great enemies. I wonder that they talk about the devil tempting them—I believe that they tempt themselves, or that they tempt the devil to tempt them if he really does tempt them at all!

Yet the devil hates much that he believes with his head. There is, for instance, the Doctrine of Election. "Ah," he says, "I am not able to deny the truth of that Doctrine, yet I hate it, for I know that I am not one of the elect." It is the same with redemption. The devil says, "I loathe that Doctrine! I know that Christ has redeemed His people with His blood, but I am not one of them. The Cross of Christ is glorious, and I am obliged to admit its power, for I have felt it often, and I am yet to feel it more and more, but I hate the Cross, for it crushes me, and takes multitudes of my subjects away from me. I know that Jesus is the Son of God—I wish He were not and if I could, I would tear Him from His Throne and cast Him out of His dominions." So, you see, the devil believes with his head much that he hates with his heart.

Faith in Christ is never true unless it is the faith of the heart, unless the heart as well as the head gives assent to it, unless the Truth is not only believed, but is also loved. Do you, dear Friends, thus believe the Truth of God with your hearts? Are you not only convinced of it, but is it your joy and delight? Do you know that you are a sinner, and do you mourn over that sad fact? Do you know this truth experimentally? Do you also know Christ as your Savior? Have you received Him into your inmost hearts as a possession of vital importance to you? Do you appreciate His Presence, and rejoice to have Him always with you? Do you know that the blood of Jesus blots out sin? Have you learned that Truth of God, not merely as a Scriptural Doctrine, but as a matter of heartfelt experience inasmuch as your sins have been thus blotted out? Do you believe, in your heart, that the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier? Do you heartily believe that Truth and therefore do you pray, "Lord, renew and sanctify me by Your gracious Spirit in the inner man"?

If not, whatever faith you may think you have does not entitle you to Baptism, much less to Heaven! Therefore, stand back! If your head alone is full of that which is sound, and right, and true—and your heart is empty of faith in Christ, and love to God and to His Truth—stand back from this baptistery, for you must not intrude into the place which is reserved for the followers of Christ!

Philip said to the eunuch, “If you believe *with all your heart*, you may be baptized.” I am afraid that some who have been baptized in this pool have not believed with all their heart. They said they did, but I question whether it was true concerning all of them. And, Beloved, if we honestly test ourselves, some of us will have grave cause to enquire whether we have any right to the ordinance of Believers’ Baptism. Do you, Friend, believe on Christ with all your heart? Christ will have the whole of your heart or none at all! He will never be content to have part, and to leave the devil to occupy the rest. True Believers will give all their heart to Christ, even though they cannot yet get possession of all of it for Him. The fact is, it is very much the same with the Believer’s heart as it was with the Israelites in Canaan—the whole land belonged to them, yet they could not get possession of it all for a while—they had to fight with the Canaanites and to drive them out. Now, candidates for Baptism, can you say from your heart that you give up all to Christ? Can each one of you say to your Lord—

***“The dearest idol I have known,  
Whatever that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from Your Throne,  
And worship only Thee”?***

Can you give up all—life, body, soul, health, wealth, or talent—can you give up all to Christ? If you cannot, you have not believed on Him with all your heart—there is some part that you have kept back. If you believe with all your heart, your surrender will be of all your heart. “Oh,” says one, “I desire to give all to Christ.” Then, my Brother, you have given all to Him—you have really done so in effect, and it will be your privilege practically to carry out your wish by daily making a full surrender of yourself to Him.

Mark just one other aspect of the text. Have you any other confidence besides that which you have in Christ? Is there even a little self-reliance in your heart with regard to salvation, or a little reliance on your own good works or on any ceremonies that you can observe? Then I must say to you, “Stand back from this baptistery until you believe in Christ with all your heart, and can say to Him—

***“All my trust on You is stayed,  
All my help from You I bring.”***

If you can truthfully say that, come and welcome! If not, stand back! Here I can find comfort for myself, for, whatever I cannot say, I can truly say that I believe in Jesus with all my heart. I have nothing else to trust to. Others may rely upon their good works, but I have none to which I can trust. Some may rely upon their prayers, but I have to weep because mine are so few and so feeble. Some may rest on ceremonies, but I have often proved the futility of even the best of them. At the Lord’s Table it-

self, I dare not trust to any blessing received through the emblems of my Savior's broken body and shed blood—my reliance must be upon Him alone. My own strength is perfect weakness. I cannot trust to it, or to anything but Christ. Can you not say the same, dear Brothers and Sisters? Then may you go down into the water without fear. But if you believe not with all your heart, stand back from this baptistery!

In closing my discourse, I would very affectionately put this question to all my hearers, leaving it to the Holy Spirit to apply it to your heart—Does it not seem, from this passage, that faith is necessary *before* Baptism and that, if this eunuch had not believed in Jesus, Philip would not have baptized him? “I speak as to wise men; judge you what I say.” If any of you are unbelievers, venture not to think that in your present state you can be baptized in the Scriptural fashion. But if you are Believers, and have not been baptized, let me put it to your consciences whether you think you are right in neglecting this ordinance of Christ? That is a matter for you seriously to think of—it rests between your Savior and your own soul! I pray the Lord to guide us all to a right decision. If we are wrong, may He set us right, and if you are wrong, may He set you right! The prayer of a certain scholar was very wise one and I commend it to you. In a great dispute in which he was engaged, he was observed to be frequently writing, so someone said to him, “May I look at your notes?” “Certainly,” he replied. When the notes were examined, it was found that they simply consisted of the words, “More light, Lord, more light!” I think that is a request which we may present for many of our Brothers and Sisters, and certainly for ourselves, “More light, Lord, more light!”

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ACTS 8:4-40.**

**Verses 4-6.** *Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.* We cannot tell how far the soil had been prepared for the sowing of the Gospel seed by our Lord's visit to Sychar, a city of Samaria. The influence of the converts in that place may have inclined the people of the city of Samaria to give more heed to the preaching of Philip. The work of a great and good man may sometimes seem to die out, but its effects remain and may extend beyond the place where he labored.

**7-11.** *For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that he was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he bewitched them with sorceries. He had managed to*

secure great influence over the people, and he held them under his wicked rule.

**12-17.** *But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit: (for as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. So that miraculous gifts were bestowed upon them. Of course, there was already manifest among them that Divine operation of the Spirit of God, by which men are converted, and brought to faith in Christ—but they had not known the special, attesting, wonder-working power of the Spirit until the Apostles came among them. A good work was thus done, yet everything was not altogether as the Apostles could have wished it to be.*

**18-26.** *And when Simon saw that through laying on of the Apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit. But Peter said unto him, Your money perish with you, because you have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. You have neither part or lot in this matter: for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray you to the Lord for me, that none of these things which you have spoken come upon me. And they, when they had testified and preached the Word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the Gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. And the Angel of the Lord spoke unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goes down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. He must have wondered at receiving such an order as that. To be directed to go to a city, he could understand; but to be sent to a road which went through the desert, must have seemed strange to him. Yet he obeyed his Lord's orders.*

**27.** *And He arose and went.* Always do as you are told by your Lord. The first qualification for a good servant of Jesus Christ is immediate obedience.

**27, 28.** *And, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot reading Isaiah the Prophet. He was a devout man who was seeking rest of heart, but he could not find it. He had joined in all the solemn services of the Jewish faith, but as yet he had not discovered*

the great secret of eternal life. He was still searching for it and as he rode along the rough road, he was reading the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.

**29, 30.** *Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join yourself to this chariot. And Philip ran there to him, and heard him read the Prophet Isaiah, and said, Do you understand what you are reading? That is the main thing! A religion that is not based upon understanding will soon come to an end. An emotional religion—one that is nothing but emotion—will be temporary and transient religion. So Philip enquired of the eunuch, “Do you understand what you are reading?”*

**31-34.** *And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened He not His mouth: in His humiliation His judgment was taken away: and who shall declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray you, of whom speaks the Prophet? Of himself, or of some other man? That was a very important question—it went to the very root of the matter. It was useless for him to read about some unknown person—he must know who it was of whom the Prophet had written*

**35.** *Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. You may begin anywhere in the Bible and preach Jesus. You may begin at the first Chapter of Genesis, or at the last Chapter of Malachi, at the first of Matthew or the last of Revelation and still preach Jesus, for He is the sum and substance of the whole Scripture!*

**36-40.** *And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what does hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached. See how he kept to his one business wherever he might be—in Samaria, on the desert pathway, or in the town of Azotus? “He preached.”*

**40.** *In all the cities, till he came to Caesarea. Oh, for the same earnest spirit to be in all of us who profess to be Christ’s followers, that we may preach Him wherever we may be!*

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

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

# KICKING AGAINST THE PRICKS

## NO. 709

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 9, 1866,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.”*  
*Acts 9:5.*

THIS expression is highly characteristic of the Savior from its figurative form. While He was on earth He spoke to the people in parables, and speaking out of Heaven, in this instance, He still adopts the parabolic style, as He did in Patmos, when He revealed Himself to John as walking among the golden candlesticks. Here is a parable wrapped up in a few words—the parable of the ox that was willful, and being stricken with the ox-goad, kicked against it and drove the ox-goad still deeper into its flesh—a very instructive simile, very natural and unstrained like the rest of the Savior’s parables, and very full of meaning. It is plain, direct, appropriate, simple, and self-explaining, like the other parables of our Lord.

I recognize in the Speaker, who addressed Saul of Tarsus, the Man to whom the common people listened gladly, because of the interesting manner in which He delivered His teachings. The great Master of simple metaphor, who here addresses the rebellious Saul, clings to His chosen style and continues to clothe truth in allegory. He does not say to Saul, “It is injurious to you to resist My appeals.” That would be mere abstract *fact*—He puts it more pictorially—“It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.”

Another feature of our Lord’s Character is very manifest in this sentence. Observe the tenderness of the rebuke. It is not, “Oh, Saul, it is wicked, ungenerous, and mischievous of you to resist Me.” There is no rebuke of that kind, unless it may be implied in the expression, “Why do you persecute Me?” But the Savior leaves Saul’s conscience to say that and does not utter it Himself. Nor did Jesus say, “Saul, Saul, it is very hard for My people to bear your cruelties.” Nor does He add, “It is very provoking to Me, and I shall before long strike you in My wrath.” No, it is not, “It is hard for Me,” but, “It is hard for *you*,” as if the thoughts of the Savior were so set upon His poor, erring, but ignorant child that He felt, “As to what you do to My cause I will say nothing—but see what you are doing to *yourself*—you are losing joy and comfort. You are injuring your own soul. You are sowing for yourself the seeds of future sorrow. It is hard for you.”

Who but the Savior could have spoken after this fashion? I do not believe that the most tender-hearted of the Savior’s ministers have been accustomed to look upon persecutors in that light! If we hear of tyrants breathing out threats and slaughter against God’s people, we very readily say, “What a wicked thing! What a cruel and unrighteous thing!” How seldom do we exclaim, “What a sad thing it is for the persecutor!” We add, perhaps, with a little sober vindictiveness, “What a terrible fate will be

that man's!" But we feel but little deep pity for one whose terrible case it is to be an enemy to the sinner's Friend.

Alas, what a bitter portion the poor, ignorant, offending persecutor has chosen! May we be Christ-like enough to have pity upon him! The Savior looks at sin through the glass of compassion—we often look upon it through the lens of Pharisaic pride! Jesus, in the words before us, shines forth as the very same Savior who said to the woman taken in adultery, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more!" It was a gentle voice which said, "It is hard for you to kick against the pricks."

We shall ask you to commence this discourse by praying that He who said, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" may be pleased to speak to some in this great assembly. And may He who turned the enemy into a friend do the like wonder with some men and women here! People of God, breathe that prayer! There is no need for you to *speak* it—the Searcher of all hearts knows your desire! Why should not gracious wonders be worked while we have such a God to deal with?

There are many reasons why it should be our desire and our prayer. The more grievous the offender may have been the greater will be the triumph of Divine Grace in his conversion, and the richer the consolation that shall come to the Church, as it will be to us a greater proof of the power of the Grace of God in these latter days. Pray, then, that the proud sinner may be brought upon his knees today! We have in the text five things—an ox, an ox-goad, kicks against it, painful results, and a wise counsel.

**I.** We have in the parable of the text an ox. That ox is here employed as the picture of persecuting Saul and of all who are like he. No other beast besides the ox is driven by an ox-goad, and therefore it must be the ox which is here meant as kicking against the pricks or goads when he is urged onward by the driver. Alas, how low is man fallen that he can fitly be compared to a brute beast! "Oh," said the proud heart, "does God compare me to a beast?" Ah, my Friend, and it is the *beast* which has cause to complain rather than *you*—for what beast is that who has rebelled against God? I never heard of such!

The beast acknowledges God and bows its neck to man, whom God appoints to be its ruler. The beast fulfils its Maker's purpose. It lives and it dies, and both in life and death it answers the end for which God sent it into the world. But as for you, you want only to run against God, and when you know His will you do the contrary. And though He has addressed you with words of love and tenderness as He does some of you every Sunday, yet you will not hear, but reject what He says, and go on in your rebellious ways! Do not be angry if God should compare you to a beast, for if you knew yourself you would compare yourself to one, too. Even holy David once said, "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before You."

Penitent sinners have frequently wished that they had been beasts rather than men, for they have felt as if sin had degraded their nature below the degradation of the meanest reptile that creeps upon its belly. Oh, Soul, if you know yourself you will not be angry for being thus compared, but smiting upon your breast like the publican, you will confess yourself

unworthy to lift so much as your eyes to Heaven. But courage! Though God compares the unregenerate and rebellious sinner to a beast, yet it is to a valuable animal—it is to a creature which is an object of property and possesses value.

The text does not liken a man to a wild beast without an owner, but to an ox for which its master cares, and for which he has paid a price. The ox is bought with money—it is often dearly purchased. When God compared Saul to an ox, he did as good as say to him, “You are acting like a wild bull, running against Me and goring My people. But still you are precious in My sight, and are purchased with a price.” “I,” says Jesus, “I whom you persecute, I redeemed you, not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, but with My own precious *blood*. You are Mine, and I will not let you go. You are Mine, and I will break you in—I will curb that stubborn will of yours.

“Why do you kick against Me, for I mean to subdue you to do My work. It is vain for you to strive and struggle, for I have bought you and I will have you. I have paid for you too dearly to let you be lost. I have looked upon you as Mine too long to let you go astray from Me any more. I will have you, and therefore bow at once, for your will shall not long stand out against Mine.”

There are some in this house whose conduct might make them comparable to beasts, but I hope they are the objects of God’s eternal love and of the purchase of the Savior’s Atonement and they are, therefore, not likened to the wild beasts of the forest that go to their dens uncared for—but to an ox which is written down among the wealth of its possessor. Our Lord Jesus also compared Saul here to the ox because the ox is an animal that is dependent upon its master for the supply of its needs. Here you will remember the Prophet Isaiah said, “The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master’s crib.” The ox receives its fodder from its master’s hand, and knows the hand that feeds it.

You who are an enemy to God this morning, do you not know that you are His creature and that you are the object of His daily Providence? The breath which is in your nostrils and in mine comes from the Most High. He formed us of clay, and His Omnipotence keeps together the particles of dust that make our frame. But for His preservation we should at once go back to Mother Earth, and the place that knows us would know us no more forever. Dear Hearer, have we not been worse than oxen? We have not known the hand that feeds us! Have we not kicked against the God from whom all our mercies have been flowing? Oh, then, we must be worse than beasts if we do not feel a pang of conscience at the thought of God’s kindness and our ingratitude!

To be indebted to God for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years of mercy and yet never to be grateful to Him! To have received life, breath, and strength from Him, and today to receive the Gospel from His hands and yet to go our way indifferent and careless! This is a crime to be detested and abominated! An ox is a creature of which service is rightly demanded. As every man who keeps an ox expects it to serve him, so also does God expect of those creatures whose needs He supplies that they should do His bidding. Why should God keep them, and they do Him no

service? Would you yourself fodder an ox that would not plow if you use it for such work? Or would you feed a horse that would never be a beast of draft to you? Would you keep even a dog if it did not follow at your heels and flatter you? If the cur snapped at you and howled at you as you do, O Sinner, against your Maker, you would soon have done with feeding him!

Take heed lest God have done with feeding *you*—for if He gets no service out of you He will not forever spare you. We are like the ox—we must either serve or die—we must either plow or bleed. The bullock which is not good for its master in the furrows shall soon be good for the butcher in the shop. And the man who will not serve God in life shall before long have to acknowledge His justice in the pangs of death and to show to wondering worlds what the judgments of God are in the terrors of eternity.

The ox was also selected as a picture of Saul because of its perverseness. The bullock is not easily made accustomed to the yoke. It is not easy to train an ox to do one's bidding. Therefore a very rough and cruel instrument was used by the Eastern farmer—a long stick with a sharp prong at the end which he drove into the stubborn ox to compel it to move. The ox was sometimes very perverse, and when it set its neck to go its own way it was not easy for the farmer to make it move in another, and therefore the strokes of the ox-goad were sharp and many. Ah, how perverse are our wills! They are more stubborn, surely, than the ox. We will not go in the right way. We choose the wrong naturally. We go to the fire of sin and we put our finger in it—and we burn it—but we do not learn better. We then thrust our *hands* into it, and though we suffer for it, we return and plunge our *arm* into the flame.

There are some who are suffering at this very day for their sins. The sins of their youth are in their bones, and yet they stagger to their lusts again. Like the moth that flies to the candle and having singed its wings drops down in pain and agony, and only gets strength enough to fly up to the candle again, so do some men with their sins. But while we are swift to sin, how slow we are to righteousness! Parents sometimes complain that they cannot teach their children, they are so willful. Ah, if they were as willful as *we* are towards God, we should have cause enough to complain. The teacher says, "I have taught this child nineteen times, and he will not learn." But God has taught us nineteen thousand times—"Line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little"!

Every day has had its word and every night its sentence—and yet we are like the deaf adder which will not hear the voice of the charmer, though he charms ever so wisely. This is humbling, but it is true. God makes us feel it to be true and puts us in a proper frame of mind on account of it. Yet remember there is this thing about the ox—though thus a perverse animal—it is a creature which can be of great service to its master. When the ox becomes docile and puts its neck to the yoke and plows in patient earnestness, it is one of the most valuable possessions of the Oriental farmer. What would he do without it?

The patient ox in the East is very largely used in draft as well as in tillage. It is one of the most precious things that a poor man has in the East—to possess that admirably laborious and patient animal. When man once gives his heart to his Master—when once this brutish heart is con-

quered by Divine Grace and becomes a servant of God—of what use he is! Do you see the labor and zeal of Paul? Why, he never grew weary! He was an ox that never fretted under the yoke. He went to the end of many a long furrow and back again, and to the end again. No stripes hindered him. No prisons stopped him. He was not afraid of death itself! He crossed the boisterous sea—no mean feat in those days of unskilled navigation. He traversed the equally dangerous land, suffering perils from robbers, from rivers, from wild beasts, and from false brethren.

Like a strong ox he plowed a heavy soil from morning to evening without complaint. He left no work undone, but he could say at the close of his career, “I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith!” Oh, what a vast amount of good might be done by some of those who are now doing so much mischief! When a sinner is really convicted of sin he cannot think that God Himself can ever make anything of him—but you do not know. Look at that swearing fellow on Elstow Green—the gypsy tinker—who would think that his mischievous hand would ever write of the Celestial City, of the land Beulah, and of the blessed progress of the Pilgrim?

Just look at that poor fellow sold as a slave, a prey to everything that is evil! It is John Newton—who would expect to hear him in the pulpit of St. Mary Woolnoth, telling of the mighty Grace of God? Ah, but the Lord can thus get a double victory over Satan, not merely by capturing Satan’s best men, but by transforming them into captains in the army of the Cross. May God grant that some here, who have been like the ox for perverseness and stubbornness, and whose final doom would be to be felled by the pole-axe of death, may be subdued by the great lion tamer, who can surely tame the ox!

May Jesus come and put His yoke upon your necks, for “His yoke is easy and His burden is light.” And from this day forth may you serve in the kingdom of King Jesus, to the praise of the glory of His Divine Grace.

**II.** In the second place, in this little parable which is so full of teaching, we have THE OX-GOAD. No doubt it is a cruel instrument, but it is one which was thought by the Oriental farmer to be necessary for the stubborn nature of the ox. When he wanted to make his ox go he just drove the goad into it from behind—not walking by the side of it, as we would probably do here—but keeping to the handle of the plow and then pricking the ox from behind.

Our God has many ways of goading us, but He does not use the goad with us where gentler means will avail. I should think that a kind farmer would speak to his ox, and might get it into such a condition that it would know what it was to do and be obedient to his word. Now God brings His people into such a state as that. He says, “I will guide you with My eyes.” And He says, “Be not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding—whose mouth must be held with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.” He might also have said, “Be you not as the ox, which has need to feel the ox-goad or else it will not stir.”

God does not come to blows with men till He has first tried *words* with them. It is a word and a blow with man—but there is often a long space between the word and the blow with God. It is, “Turn! Turn! Why will you

die?” before He comes with the executioner’s axe. Before the tree is cut down there is a time of sparing in which it is dug about, in hopes it may bring forth fruit. But when words are of no avail, then the Lord, in tender mercy, if He means to save the soul, adopts sharper means, and comes from words, to blows, and then wounds. Some of you know how God will wound us when He means to save us. The Psalmist describes it as being broken in pieces. He groans over “the bones which You have broken.” For God does give such cuffs by the hand of Providence, and such blows by the law upon the conscience that He appears as if He were cruel and would utterly slay us!

And, indeed, He will kill us in order that He may save us! He will break us in pieces that He may bind us up! And He will wound us that He may come, in all His power, to heal. Let us for a minute or two think about this ox-goad, and how you and I have felt it, and how some are feeling it today and yet kicking against it. Some of us felt the ox-goad when we were children. Under the government of our parents and friends we were often very restive, and felt it hard to sin. We wanted to go after our own devices, but our parents loved us, and they would not permit it. Perhaps they were stern. It may be that they chastened us after their own pleasure, as we thought, though if we were wise we might have perceived that it was for our profit.

And how some of us kicked and struggled against a mother’s tears! And how irksome was a father’s good advice! Many men showed, in their childhood, what they were made of by their early rebellions against the holy admonitions of loving and anxious parents. Oh, young offenders, yours is no small responsibility! Oh how the young heart can rebel! I speak experimentally when I say I believe a young child’s heart is capable of as thorough and deep-seated rebellion against God and right as the heart of the oldest man. And though the child may not be able either by word or deed to express what he feels, there are evil moments with some children when passion seems as if it would choke them, and their ravings or sullenness prove that a child’s nature is inclined to evil and is most undoubtedly fallen from its birth. In looking back we see that the goad was used upon us even as children.

Since that time some of you have felt the irksome goad in the good advice of friends with whom you have been situated. You do not like to be talked to about religion, some of you. You have half a mind to shift your lodgings to get away from godly people who pester you. You would gladly get another situation, for you work at a bench close by the side of a Christian man and he makes sinning uncomfortable to you. He speaks to you very tenderly and plainly, and you jest at him, and put it off, but still he does make it an uneasy thing for you to be what you are. Oh, how grateful you ought to be for this, and yet I should not wonder but what you are kicking at it.

These are all goads which God uses. He is saying to you, “You stubborn ox-like man, you shall not go to perdition.” He has sent these warnings to you first by one, and then by another, with a view to your good. Every doctrine, and every part of the teachings of God’s Word acts like a goad to unconverted men. I have known people come in here—curiosity has

brought them to hear the preacher—and his sermon has made them feel so angry that they could almost have knocked him down, but yet they could not help coming again. Why did they come? They could not tell you why, but they could not stop! And yet they hated the Truth of God they heard.

Many of you know, before you were converted, that anger was just your first state of feeling when you heard the Gospel. I feel rather glad when I hear that I have made some people angry. I think within myself, “Well, they were not *asleep* at any rate, and they gave the sermon some sort of thought.” When a man thinks enough about the Truth of God to begin to fight against it, I am in hope that the Truth will give him a shaking and never let him go till it has fairly beaten him into better things. Angry feeling is better than *no* feeling, and enmity to the Truth may be looked upon with more hope than indifference!

Now what a goad to some men is the doctrine of the Cross! They cannot hear of the wounds of Jesus and sin pleasantly. To some the doctrine of the punishment of sin is like the file to the viper—they are always breaking their teeth by gnawing at it. There is no part of Scripture which, rightly understood, is not a goad to the sinner, saying to him unmistakably, “Sinner, turn, turn from your wicked ways, for why will you die?” At times the Lord will goad us in another way, namely, by personal afflictions. Perhaps he sends a sickness and lays the strong man moaning upon his bed. Possibly it is a failure in business, a loss of property, a disappointment in marriage, the death of friends, or a gradual decay of the constitution, or the loss of a limb or an eye. Loud voices these, if men had ears to hear.

God does not come to lopping His trees until a stern remedy is needed. Some of you have had so many afflictions that the Lord might well enquire, “Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint,” and you are full of wounds and putrefying sores. Oh the mischief that sin has done in some glaring cases! I know a man at the present moment, a man I said, but alas, poor wretched mortal, he looks hardly like a man! I saw him in rags, shivering in the drenching rain but yesterday. He came of reputable parents. I knew his relatives well. He had some four hundred pounds or more left him a few years ago. As soon as ever he could get hold of it he came to London and in about a month he spent it—all in a hideous whirlwind of evil.

He went back a beggar and in rags, full of horrible sickness, loathsome and an outcast. Since that time he has been so often aided by his friends that they have entirely given him up, and now this poor wretch with scarcely enough rags to hide his nakedness, has no eyes left to pity him and no hands to help him. He has been helped again, and again, and again. But to help him appears to be useless, for at the very first opportunity he returns to his old sins. The workhouse, the hospital, the grave are his portion—for he seems unable to rise to the dignity of labor, and no one will harbor him. I could fairly cry at the sight of him, but what can be done for him if he will destroy himself by his sins? If you say to him, “Why do your friends not notice you?” he will tell you, “They cannot notice me.”

He has brought his mother to the grave. He has worn out everybody who has pitied him, for his life has been so thoroughly bad that it excites no pity—and disgusts his own relatives. For the love of the Lord Jesus I will help this unhappy man again, and intend tomorrow to see him washed, clothed and fed, and put in a way of livelihood. But I have very slender hope of being of any lasting service to him, for he has been tried so often. Yet I never saw a wretch in such misery. He is emaciated, ragged, and has known hunger and cold and nakedness month after month. Unless he mends his ways this will be his lot till he dies. We have more than enough of such cases who cross our path, but this one outdoes them all.

Now I know that some of these forlorn persons sometimes steal into the Tabernacle, and if such are here let me ask you, What is to be done with you? You put even the best and most tender of persons out of patience with you. Trouble has no power to break you, and kindness no influence to melt you. Oh, while there is a remedy, may God apply it to you, poor guilty souls! There are some who have felt this goading to the most fearful extent till they have lost all, and yet they cling to their sins! I would to God that saints would cling to Christ half as earnestly as sinners cling to the devil! If we were as willing to suffer for God as some are to suffer for their lusts, what perseverance and zeal would be seen on all sides!

The goad is used yet farther. When God has goaded a man with afflictions, and pains, and all the doctrines of the Gospel, sometimes He stirs him with the common operations of the Holy Spirit in his conscience. Saul was being goaded at that very moment when Christ spoke, and said, “Why do you persecute Me?” Ah, and take care you do not resist goading. “See that you refuse not Him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaks from Heaven.” I believe that the Holy Spirit often, by what we call the common operations which He exercises upon the hearts of men, deals with men’s consciences so far as to arouse and warn them, but they quench the Spirit. They, as Stephen says, resist the Spirit as did their fathers.

It is a sin which may be committed, and where it is committed often, and long, at last the Holy Dove departs never to return—and such a soul is given up. It may be that some man or woman here is the subject of these inward strivings—may they end in effectual *calling* and not lead to increased damnation, as they must do except the soul be brought to saving repentance.

**III.** In the third place—and here let conscience be awake—we have to speak about THE KICKS. “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.” The ox, when wounded, is so very foolish as to dash its foot against the goad, and consequently drives it deeper into himself and hurts himself even more. This is the natural manner of men till God makes something more than beasts of them. Man is sure, like the ox, to kick against the pricks. How can we do this? Even when we were children we rebelled against our teachers.

When we were but little and were being instructed in the things of God, it is possible that we did not like religion. Prayer was distasteful, Sunday

was dull, and the House of God wearisome. Therefore we kicked against them. As some of you grew up who are now present, you took to sneering at those who kindly advised you. Many young men, the moment they get a word of counsel from any person, treat that person at once as an enemy and vow that they will take no further notice of such a “cant,” as they will call him. That is a common way of kicking against the pricks. Many sinners, when the Word of God is too hot for them, take to caviling at it.

When a sermon comes home, what is the easiest way of getting rid of the impression? Why, begin disputing over it! If any of you have felt any power in the sermon at any time, and you do not want to get a blessing, begin to raise an objection to some point of doctrine or expression of the minister. Do not dwell on that part which you felt was good and was meant for you, but give your thoughts to that which you can quarrel over and the sermon will be of no use to you. Satan will be glad if you begin to blame the *preacher* when you ought to have blamed yourself! If you cavil at Gospel doctrines, if you quibble about the high points and the low points, and say, “Well, I do not see how predestination and free will can agree,” all that will be a snare to you—to prevent your coming to Christ.

Satan does not care whether he drags you down to Hell as a Calvinist or as an Arminian, so long as he can get you there! He does not care whether you are orthodox or heterodox as long as he can make sure of you. A man who is reprovved by a sermon will perhaps feel that if it is true he must give up his drunkenness. “But,” says he, “I will not give up my drunkenness. I do not want to do that, and therefore I do not believe that the sermon is true.” Or another says, “If this is correct, I must shut up my shop on Sunday and so lose my Sunday’s profits. I cannot afford to lose money and therefore I will abuse the preacher.”

The guilty conscience cries, “I will pick a hole in the minister’s coat because he has found one in mine. If what he says is true, I must mend my ways. But I do not intend to do that, therefore I will try and find some fault with the Truth which is taught, or with the man who teaches it.” There are many individuals who are so angry at God through their sin that they have come to persecute God’s people. They cannot burn them, they cannot shut them up in prison—but they vex them with cruel mocking. They twist their innocent actions into something wrong, and then they throw it in their teeth. They even sit down and wantonly invent falsehoods against the innocent, and utter libelous things against the people of God, because they have a conviction that the saints are better than themselves. It seems to be the natural suggestion of our fallen nature that when goodness rebukes us we straightway try to prove that it is not goodness in order that our conscience may be quieted.

Certain profane men have gone so far as to kick at God Himself. They do not hesitate in their malice—they proclaim it in plain plump oaths—and dare their Maker to do most terrible things to them! Mind that He does not answer you, Blasphemer! He is a hearer of *prayer*, and when you pray to Him to damn you, He may, one of these days, do it, Sinner! Do not ask Him again lest He should do it at once. He has a way of doing what men ask Him to do! Do not trifle with Him. It is His mighty mercy that has prevented Him from destroying you long ago!

This is your way of kicking against the pricks, but I hope that since God has brought you here He means to stop your rebellions *today*. I pray He may, and that no longer you may kick against Him, but turn to Him and say, "Lord, what will you have me to do?"

**IV.** Time fails us, and we must therefore speak briefly upon THE RESULT OF KICKING AGAINST THE PRICKS. Christ says, "It is hard for you." Friend, let me hold you by the buttonhole and talk to you. It has been very hard for your mother that you should have gone on as you have done. For her sake, think! With some of you it has been very hard for your families. Drunkenness clothes a man's children in rags as well as himself. It has been hard in some cases with even your neighbors and your employers—they had a deal to put up with—but that is not the matter of consideration this morning. It is hard for *you*.

Oh, young man, you know that sin does not make you happy. You have had your swing of it and you are miserable this morning. Oh no, there is no bliss to be found in evil. At last the Truth of God is beginning to dawn upon your mind. Instead of happiness you have found unrest and dissatisfaction. You are afraid of cholera—afraid to die. You would run almost anywhere to escape an infectious disease because you know where your portion will be when you enter into another world. This is the effect of your kicking against the pricks. You have brought yourself into an unhappy and uneasy state of mind till you sometimes wish that you had never been born.

Do you know what will very likely be your history if you run into sin and persist in it? You will make your present afflictions grow worse and cause your present losses to accumulate upon you. You are kicking against the pricks, and are making the wounds already received ten times worse! And it will always be so long as you keep on kicking. It is possible that you may get into such a state of mind that you will, by-and-by be ready to die by suicide because of remorse. It is hard for you, young man, to be such a sinner as you are now, but how hard it *will* be! I could weep when I think of how hard your sins will be for you if you are ever converted. He that is converted to God finds it hard to have been a sinner so long. His repentance is bitter in proportion to the greatness of his sin. "Alas," he says, "that I should ever have so revolted against the God that loved me with such a love!"

Those who are saved late in life feel that their sins will be their plague till they die. A man does not go and plunge into the ditch of sin without bearing the stench of its vileness in his memory all his life. An old song that you used to sing in your carnal days will come up and defile your closet prayers and perhaps the recollection of some unholy scene in which you had a part in your younger days will trouble you even when you are at the sacramental table! The Apostle Paul always bore the memory of his sin, for he says, "I was the least of the Apostles because I persecuted the Church of God."

He always felt that. And who knows but that the stripes and imprisonment that he had to bear himself must often have brought the tears into his eyes when he endured them as he thought, "I persecuted them in their synagogue, and I compelled them to blaspheme, and now I am called to

suffer the same things myself.” The past life of a regenerate man will always be his grief. “God forgives me,” said one, “but I can never forgive myself.” It is blotted out of God’s book, I know, but it can never be blotted out of mine. I shall remember to my dying day what a sinner I have been.

But ah, Friends, if tears might come into my eyes at the recollection of how you will feel if you are converted, I would gladly weep tears of *blood* as I think of what you will feel if you *die* unconverted! All these kicks against the pricks will be among your sharpest stings when you feel the judgment of God in another world. “Remember,” says Conscience, “you were warned—you did not sin without knowing it was sin—you did not choose the downward path without understanding it to be the path that led to ruin. You felt the pricks of warning, but you kicked against them and now you receive your portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone! You suffer with this aggravation above all others—that you knew your duty but you did it not.”

That great Italian poet, whose marvelous mind so singularly pictured the lost in their everlasting dwelling place, writes over the portals of Hell, “All hope abandon you who enter here!” Ah, it is the Hell of Hell that there is no hope there! But while there is no hope of the future, there are unutterable regrets for the past. My Hearers, I often feel it a very solemn thing to preach to you. And the more earnestly I am able to preach, the more solemn it becomes, because if this Gospel is not “a savor of life unto life” to you, it will be “a savor of death unto death” to your souls. You may make it a holiday to visit the Tabernacle and hear me preach. You may come up from the country and hasten here to see this place as one of the sights of London—but it is no holiday to me to preach to your souls—and no child’s play to have this responsibility upon my shoulders, to deal faithfully with your hearts and consciences!

I have been a goad, I hope, to many of you, and you have tried hard to continue what you are while a loving heart has tried to bring you into a better mind. But by-and-by the goad will become a sword! The very Gospel which warns will be the Gospel that smites. “God shall judge the world”—how?—“according to my Gospel,” says the Apostle Paul. It is according to the Gospel that you shall be judged at the last if you reject it and perish in your sins. This is the result of kicking against the pricks.

**V.** Then the last thing is THE GOOD COUNSEL. It is just this—since it is hard for you to kick against the pricks, and there is nothing to be got by it, cease, oh cease from your evil way! Why should you do it? If it made you happy to be sinners, I could almost pardon you. If it were a profitable thing, I might almost excuse you! But it is such an unsatisfactory thing, and the happiness is so transient—such mere scum upon the pot—that I cannot excuse you if you will follow it. Your grapes are gall, your wine is wormwood, your music is discord, your mirth is misery—why then follow after them?

O sensible, thoughtful man, kick against the pricks no more! If you do not become a Christian, do not be a persecutor. There is no need to make your eternal portion worse. Suppose you think that the Gospel is not true? At any rate do not fight against it, for if it is of God you cannot prevail against it. And if it is not, it will go down without you. Do not, how-

ever, think that we ask you to cease from wrath because we are afraid of you. The Gospel is like an anvil—you may hammer it and it will break your hammer, but itself remain unbroken! You may stumble against this stone and you will be broken, but you cannot break or remove the stone.

Woe unto you if that stone falls upon you, for on whomever this stone shall fall it will grind him to powder! Stop and think. If we can get men to think we may have good hope of them. At any rate, religion is worth a thought. If you must and will go to Hell, go there with your eyes open, and do not be deceived. Eternity must be such a weighty thing that it is surely worth a *thought*. If the devil is worthy to be your master, consider his claims and serve him thoughtfully. If sin, and drunkenness, and money getting, and Sabbath-breaking are the best things for you, think them over and give a reason for the hope that is in you.

There are some of us who think you foolish. Justify your conduct, then, and get an answer ready. Oh, if you would but think, you would soon say, “No, no, no, I know there is a God. I know I have sinned, I know that He must punish me. There is mercy in Jesus, I will find it.” Let me say to you, Sinner, yield your heart to the goading of Divine love, for, “it is hard for you to kick against the pricks.” Oh, think not that the Savior’s blood will be unable to cleanse you! Not your worthiness, but your *unworthiness* attracts His attention! Not your strength, but your *weakness*! Not your riches, but your *poverty*! He came to save just such as you are. Lost one, but loved one, trust in Him! Cast yourself now upon Him, having nothing of your own. Come and rest in Him. He will not cast you away.

He has never cast any soul away, however filthy its previous life may have been, and He will not begin today to reject sinners. He that comes unto Him He will in no wise cast out. “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money, come, buy, and eat! Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Why do you kick against the pricks? “Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” “Whoever believe that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”

Trust Jesus with your whole heart! Trust in Jesus, and your sins, which are many, are forgiven you! This is the Gospel that we are bid to preach, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” May God the Holy Spirit give you Divine Grace to be obedient, and unto Him shall be glory. Amen.

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# **PRESSING QUESTIONS OF AN AWAKENED MIND**

## **NO. 1520**

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

***“Who are You, Lord?...What will You have me to do?”  
Acts 9:5, 6.***

PAUL fell to the ground overcome by the brightness of the light which outshone the midday sun and as he lay there he cried, “Who are You, Lord?” After receiving an answer to his first question, he humbly asked another, “Lord, what will You have me to do?” This morning I spent all my strength and I scarcely have any remaining for this evening, but the subject was well worthy of the greatest exhaustion. I tried to show that we must receive the kingdom of Heaven as little children, or else we could not in any way enter into it. I wanted, if I could, to add a sort of practical tail-piece to that subject, something that would enable me, yet more fully, to explain the childlike spirit which comes at conversion and which is absolutely necessary as one of the first marks and consequences of the work of the Spirit of God upon the heart. I cannot find a better illustration of the childlike spirit than this which is now before us.

Paul was a great man and, on the way to Damascus, I have no doubt he rode a very high horse. He verily thought that he was doing God service. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees and had a very high estimate of his own character and, now that he had letters from the High Priest upon his person, he felt himself to be armed with great power and to be no mean man. He would let those poor Christians in Damascus know! He would worry them out of their fanaticism. He would take care to let them see that Saul of Tarsus was greater than Jesus of Nazareth. But a few seconds sufficed for the Lord to alter the man! How soon He brought Paul down! The manifestation of Jesus Christ, Himself, from Heaven soon subdued the great man into a little child, for the two questions which are now before us are exceedingly childlike.

He enquires with sacred curiosity, “Who are You, Lord?” and then he surrenders at discretion, crying, “What will You have me to do?” He seems to cry, “I give up my weapons! I submit, receiving the kingdom of God as a little child to be Your servant! I only ask to be taught what I am to do and I am ready to do it. You have conquered me. Behold, at Your feet I lie—only raise me up and give me something to do in Your service, for I will gladly undertake it.” To this spirit we must all come if we are to be saved! We must come to think of Jesus so as to desire to *know* Him. And then we must reverence Jesus so as to be willing to obey His will in all things.

Upon these two points I am going to speak with a measure of brevity tonight. Our first object of thought will be the earnest enquirer seeking to

know his Lord. The second will be the obedient disciple requesting directions.

**I.** First, then, if any one of us would be saved he must be brought, by Divine Grace, to be AN EARNEST ENQUIRER AFTER THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST. He must ask the question, “Who are You, Lord?” Notice that he is willing to be taught. He lies there with the Christ above him and he asks Him a question. He is not only willing to learn, but he is eager to be *taught*. “Who are You, Lord?” is the utterance of his inmost soul. He wants to know. And do not you want to know, my Hearer? There is but one name given under Heaven whereby you must be saved! Do you not wish to know something about Him whose name it is? Are you indifferent to your soul’s affairs, careless about what shall become of your immortal soul?

Did Jesus die and is it nothing to you? Do you pass by His Cross as though it were the market cross of a village? Do you hear of His death as though it were some commonplace event in history to be once read and then forgotten? I pray it may not be so with you. But since you must either be lost or saved *eternally*, come and ask with deep anxiety, “Who are You, Lord? Who are You by whom I am to be saved? What right—what power have You to save? What claim have You upon my faith? Oh, tell me, for I long to know.” Lack of thought ruins half of mankind! If men were but anxious to understand the Truth of God, they would soon learn it and receive it. If like the Bereans they would search the Scriptures to find the Truth, or if like Lydia their hearts were opened to receive it, they would soon know the Lord! Like Paul, we must be willing to learn.

And, next, observe the subject that he wished to be instructed upon. “Who are *You*, Lord?” You have heard that Christ is the Savior—let your ambition be to know all about Him. I will tell you one thing—saints on earth and even saints in Heaven are always wanting to have this question more fully answered to them—“Who are You, Lord?” Those who know Him best will tell you that there is a something about Him which still surpasses all their knowledge! And I suppose that even when we see Him face to face there will remain a mystery in His matchless love and a depth unsearchable in His Divine Person into which even then we shall not be able to dive.

“Who are You, Lord?” may well be the question of a soul that is seeking salvation, since it is still the question of those who have found it. “Who are You, Lord?” What is Your Person? What is Your Nature? How is it that You are able to save? Learn well that He is Divine, yet human—the Son of Mary and yet the Son of God. He is Man, your Brother, touched with the feeling of your infirmities, yet He is God eternal, infinite, full of all power and majesty, assuredly Divine! Learn this if you would be saved and regard the Lord Jesus as God over all, blessed forever, yet clothed in the form of a Servant and made in the likeness of sinful flesh. Learn that.

“Who are You, Lord?” What are Your offices? If my eyes could see You I would ask You, what titles do You bear? What offices do You sustain? He is a Prophet—you must be instructed by Him and believe His teaching. He is a Priest—you must be washed by His blood and He must offer sacrifice

for you, no, rather, He *has* offered it and you must accept it as being for you and on your behalf! He is a King, too, and if you will be saved by Him you must let Him govern you. You must yield yourself to Him and be His subject and take up His Cross and bear His easy yoke which is no burden to the neck. Prophet, Priest, King and a thousand other offices does He sustain! Ask, you craving sinner, ask, “Who are You, Lord?” till you shall discover something about Him that exactly suits you and then your faith shall light upon it and your heart shall cry, “He is all my salvation and all my desire!”

“Who are You, Lord?” It is a question you may ask about His relationships. Who is He? The Son of the Highest and yet the Brother of the lowest! Who is He? King of angels and King of kings and yet the Friend of sinners and the Helper of the humblest that will come to Him! He stands as the Head over all things to the Church—He is His Church’s Husband and the world’s Ruler—Master of Providence, Sovereign of Heaven, Conqueror of Hell itself! All power is in His hands. The Father has committed it unto Him and now He stands in such relationship to us that if we believe in Him, He gives us eternal life and guards us from all ill, for He has said, “I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands.”

O beloved Hearer, if you would be saved, study deeply that question, “Who are You, Lord?” and be not satisfied till you know Christ and are known of Him—till there is a mutual knowledge between you and Himself—for it is only so that you can be saved. An unknown Christ is no Christ to you! A Savior whom you do not know is a Savior who will not know you in the day of His appearing! “Who are You, Lord?” Now, that question, as I have said, concerning Christ should be asked by all of us, but it is not at all a speculative question. It is a question of the utmost practical importance to every man, woman and child and in proportion as a man knows the answer to that question he will receive its practical result.

Listen and understand this. “Who are You, Lord?” What will be the first result of having this question answered? Why, when Paul knew that He whose face had shone upon Him brighter than the sun was Jesus of Nazareth, He was seized with the deepest possible contrition. “What?” he seemed to say, “Have I persecuted the Lord? When I was hunting down those poor people, was I hunting down the Messiah? Was I fighting against the Christ of God?” He had not known that before, but when he knew who the Lord was, then his heart was broken within him with a deep sense of sin. Now, come here, some of you! You have been living for years refusing true religion and despising it, but have you ever thought that you were refusing Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and despising the Beloved of God who condescended to come into the world to suffer for love’s sake?

When they put Jesus to death He was, as our sweet poet puts it—“Found guilty of excess of love.” It was all that could be laid to His dear charge and for excess of love He died. And you have refused Him! You

have now, these 20 years and more, refused that thorn-crowned head, that brow so marred, those wounded hands, that gashed and wounded side! You have refused the matchless Savior without whom you are undone forever! Have you known this? Have you done it willfully? I hope you can reply, "But I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Therefore He winks at your ill manners and He bids you, now, come to Him and He will gladly receive you! He will in no wise cast you out! To know Christ, then, is a practical knowledge, because it leads to repentance. When Christ is unknown, we can go on refusing and even persecuting Him. But when we clearly perceive that it is the Son of God and the bleeding Lamb whom we have refused and persecuted, then our hearts melt—we beg His forgiveness and cast ourselves at His feet.

A second practical result is that then our hope is encouraged, for though Paul, at the sight of the Lord Jesus must have been full of bitter anguish, it was by that same sight that he was afterwards cheered and comforted. What? Are You in Heaven brighter than the sun? Are You the Man of Nazareth whom I have persecuted? Are You He who was rejected and despised? O You bright and shining One, are You that same Christ to whom the publicans and harlots drew near? Are You He who came to seek and to save that which was lost? Are You exalted on high to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins? Then there is hope for me! It is the *sinner's* Christ that is in Heaven, the same that took the little children and said, "Suffer them to come to Me." Oh, then, I will trust Him! I feel I may, I can, I must! I yield myself to Him because I now *know* Him. I did not before. How practical is this knowledge!

And it had another effect upon Paul. It led him to complete submission. He said, "Is this Christ whom I have rejected, Lord of All? Then it is, indeed, hard for me to kick against the pricks. I will not do so any longer. Resist Him? That I dare not do! If all power is in His hands, then to oppose Him is as hopeless as it is wicked! Behold, I surrender at discretion. O Lord Jesus, be my king. Accept me as Your subject. I oppose You no longer!" How I wish that Jesus would make some here know Him who have never known Him before—that they may at this very hour yield to Him because if once they knew Him it would fire them with ardor in His service! There was never a man yet that did really know Christ whom Christ did not fill with an inward flame so that he felt he could live or die for Him!

Some human military leaders have had such extraordinary influence over their soldiers that they have commanded and have been cheerfully obeyed, even at the cost of life. The Christ of God has a superlative power over all hearts that know Him. See how Paul felt His influence and scoured the world to win Christ's lost ones! Perils of robbers; perils of rivers—the deep sea itself; scourging, stoning—all these were nothing to the Apostle from the day when he knew Christ! He had been exceedingly hot against Him, but now he burns and blazes with zeal for Christ. And so will it be with all who know Jesus! Right practical, then, is the question, "Who

are You, Lord?" Oh that the Spirit of God would lead everyone to ask that question for himself!

Only once more and I leave the question. It is this. While Paul was willing to learn, his subject was important, for he wished to learn of Christ and it was exceedingly practical, for it moved him to every good thing. But it is worthy of remark that he sought instruction from the best possible Master, for, my Brothers and Sisters, who can tell us who Christ is but Christ Himself? Here is His Book. Read it! It is the looking glass! Jesus is yonder and He looks into this Book and if you look into it with well-washed eyes, you may see His reflected image in this glass darkly, however, at the best. So, too, when you hear His faithful servants preach, you may see somewhat of Christ—but let me tell you there is no sight of Christ like that which comes personally to your own soul by the Holy Spirit.

I do not mean that any men among us will ever see Christ while we are here with these eyes—and if we did, it might not do us good, for thousands saw Him who, nevertheless, cried, "Crucify Him." But I do mean that there are eyes inside these eyes—eyes of the mind and of the soul—to which Christ Himself must reveal Himself. And I charge you who have never seen Him to fall on your knees and cry, "Show Yourself to me!" You must have *personal* dealings with Him, each one for himself, and you may have these dealings! He is accessible tonight! He will receive you at once if you seek Him. He has declared that He will not cast any out that come to Him!

Oh, will you not ask Him to show Himself to you? If you knew He would refuse you, you might be excused the prayer, but since He will manifest Himself to every contrite, lowly, seeking soul, will you not seek Him? Will you not, even now, humbly put this question to Him, "Who are You, Lord? Reveal Yourself to me, as You do not to the world, but as You do to seeking souls!" So, then, I leave that question to come to the second one. May the Holy Spirit help us while we handle it.

**II.** "What will You have me to do?" THE OBEDIENT DISCIPLE REQUESTING DIRECTION. We are always telling you that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life. That is the basic doctrine of the Gospel. But remember that we never told you that you might believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and then live as you liked! That is far from us. He who truly believes in Christ does as Christ bids him and becomes, from that time on, Christ's *servant* and disciple as well as His saved one. Therefore the question, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" You will notice that the Apostle here puts himself into the position of a soldier waiting for orders. He will not stir till he has received his officer's command. "Lord, what will You have me to do?"

He stands quite ready to do it, but he needs to know what the order may be and, therefore, he looks up and prays, "Lord, direct me. What would You have me to do?" It is his Lord's will, alone, that Paul now means to do. "Lord, what will You have me to do?" Before, it used to be, "What will Moses have me to do?" And with some now present it has been "What should I like to do?" for whatever their soul lusts after, that have

they done and whatever new pleasure, no matter how sinful it might be, if it were within their reach, they followed greedily after it! But he that would be saved must yield up his will to his Lord.

Now, Beloved, take heed unto yourselves that Christ is your Master and nobody else. It would never do to say, "What would the Church have me to do?" As far as the Church teaches what Christ taught, obey her, but no farther. It would not even be right to say, "What would an Apostle have me to do?" Paul said, "Be you followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." But if Paul does not follow Christ, we must not follow Paul! He says, "Though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel, let him be accursed." And so let it stand. I count it to be a sad lowering of a Christian's standard when he takes any mortal man living, or even any man now in Heaven to be his guide and master.

"One is your Master, even Christ," and your question should be, "Lord, what will You have me to do? I see what I am bid to do in the Prayer Book. I see what I am bid to do by learned and godly men, but these things have no authority over my conscience. Lord, what would *You* have me to do? If it is not Your will and Your Word, I know there can be no light in it, but what I know not, teach me." And, then, notice that this childlike obedience of the Apostle is *personal*. It is, "Lord, what will You have *me* to do? I have little enough to do with my neighbors. They have their duty and their calling, but, Lord, what would You have *me* to do? Other persons must follow the light they have, but, Lord, what will You have *me* to do? My father, my brother, my friend—I have no right to judge these—to their own Master they must stand or fall. But, Lord, what would You have *me* to do?"

You that look at your own inability when you come to Christ must come to Him with a personal faith, pleading for strength to do His will. You must yield to Jesus a *personal* obedience, even should it separate you from all your family! Let it separate the nearest ties. Let it cause your past friends to give you the cold shoulder. Let it subject you to persecution even unto death—you have nothing to do with these consequences—your business is to say, "Show me what You would have *me* to do and I will, in Your strength and by Your Grace, do it." I mention a little incident in my own personal history for which I have always had reason enough to thank God. When I was converted to God after some long time of bitter anguish of spirit, I found rest. And the very first thing I did when I found rest in Christ was to read, for myself, the New Testament and see what the Lord would have me to do.

I found in the Word of God the duty of Believers' Baptism. I had never met with any Baptist friends in my life until I had, for myself, discovered the Truth of God. I had not even heard of their existence, so negligent had they been in the spreading of their views on that matter! But taking up the New Testament with my lexicon to see what the word meant, I found that the word, "baptize," signified to *immerse*. When I read the Scriptures I found everywhere that Believers were *immersed*. I did not, at first, know the existence of another person who held that opinion, but it did not mat-

ter to me the turn of a hair! I was only afraid that I might not find anybody to baptize me—but I meant to attend to the duty in some way or other!

I discovered, afterwards, that there were many who had searched the Scriptures and had come to the same conclusion as myself. But to me, then, it seemed like walking away from all the Christian people that I knew. Have I ever regretted the step? No. Unimportant as some might think it, it gave to my whole spirit and life a tone for which I have reason to thank God. I stood upon my own feet, having read the Bible for myself. I took my own way in obedience to my Lord and Master and from that day I know that I have not willfully turned aside from His statutes, either in doctrines or in precept, but I have taught the faith as I have learned it! When I go to my chamber at night with a thousand imperfections to confess, yet I can feel that I have honestly and faithfully followed my Master.

If I have erred, it has been from lack of light and not from lack of will to serve Him. But if I had ignored that first conviction and if I had made little nicks in my conscience at first, could I stand before you all this night and declare that I have not shunned both to do and to declare the whole counsel of God? I charge every young convert, as soon as he believes in Christ, to read and search the Bible for himself and say, “Show me what You would have *me* to do.” I would rather be right, alone, than be wrong with all the world! And every honest Christian man ought to feel that he would rather follow Jesus Christ with two or three than run with a multitude after the *traditions* of men!

God help you, Beloved, as soon as you are converted, to become thoroughly obedient disciples, searching the Word. I do not set so much importance upon the *result* of your investigation as I do upon the investigation, itself. I care less about the result you arrive at than I do for the Spirit which would lead you, as a disciple, earnestly to desire to follow your Master and would lead you to do everything that you believe to be His will—the little as well as the great. The Lord help us to be anxious to know and do His will in all things, regardless of consequences.

Note again, that the Apostle not only puts it personally, but he pleads for Grace at once. “Lord, show me what You would have me to do?” as much as to say, “I will do it directly.” He does not ask to be allowed a little delay, but, “What would You have me to do? Here I, Your willing servant, stand.” Young man, if you would have salvation you must be ready to follow Christ tonight! Tonight, it may be, is the time when the Spirit of God is struggling with you and, if resisted, He may never return. Just now the scales hang in an even balance. Which way shall they turn? It may be tonight for life or death the scale shall turn for the last time. O blessed Jesus in Heaven, why should we hesitate if You will, indeed, save us? We may well make a complete surrender and say, “Now, even now, I enlist beneath Your banner, for I am Your willing servant.”

And observe, once more, that Paul does not make any kind of conditions. What would You have me to do? I will do it. If unpleasant to the flesh it shall be pleasant to my heart and if it appears stern, yet if You will

help me, I will do it. “What will You have me to do?” Paul little knew, when he asked the question, what the doing of His Master’s will would involve, but he meant at the time that whatever it would involve he was prepared for it. O you that would be Christians, do *not* suppose that it is just believing something—an article of a creed, or undergoing a ceremony that will save you! You must, if you are Christ’s, yield yourselves up to Him! He did not come into this world to lead men to Heaven by back roads and crooked paths—He leads them into the way of righteousness, the end which is everlasting peace!

Will you be child enough to follow Him? Will you have the childlike spirit which only needs, first, to know who He is and then exclaims—

**“Through floods or flames,  
If Jesus leads  
I’ll follow where He goes”?**

The Lord grant it may be so with us! I close with just this remark, that it is by *knowing* Christ that you will learn to obey Him and the more you obey Him the more easy it will be. And in obeying Him you will find your honor. Paul at this day stands in a most honorable place in the Church of God simply because, being called of God to do His will, he did it faithfully even to the end. Is it not beautiful to see how Paul, in one moment, seems to have forgotten all his old Phariseeism? All the harsh words and bitter blasphemies that he had spoken against Christ—they were all gone in a moment! What strange changes will come over some beings in an instant!

One of my students who had been a sailor has preached the Gospel for some long time, but his English was far from grammatical. Having been in college some little time he began to speak correctly, but suddenly the old habit returned upon him. He was in the Princess Alice [ship which sank with many aboard—ed] at the time of the lamentable catastrophe and he escaped in an almost miraculous manner. I saw him some time after and congratulated him on his escape and he replied that he had saved his life but had lost all his grammar. He found himself, for a while, using the language of two or three years ago—and even now, though he is recovering his spirits, he declares that he cannot get back what he had learned! He seems to have drowned his grammar on that terrible occasion.

Now, just as we may lose some good thing by a dreadful accident or occurrence which seems to sweep over the mind like a huge wave and wash away our treasures, so by a blessed catastrophe if Christ should meet with anyone tonight—much which he has valued will be swept away! You may write on wax and may make the record fair. Take a hot iron and roll it across the wax and it is all gone. That seems to me to be just what Jesus did with Paul’s heart. It was all written over with blasphemy and rebellion and He rolled the hot iron of burning love over Paul’s soul and the evil inscription was all gone. He ceased to blaspheme and he began to praise!

May the same be done to many here present to the praise and glory of my Master’s love and power! Amen and amen!

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# THE GOOD ANANIAS— A LESSON FOR BELIEVERS NO. 1838

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 26, 1885,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias,  
and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias.  
And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.”  
Acts 9:10.*

AT this season we are called upon to think of foreign missions. As members of the Baptist Missionary Society, we are in happy and hopeful circumstances. God is smiling upon the work, both at home and abroad, and raising up men whose hearts are in the cause. Last year the Society was in arrears—it has expended very much more money this year than last year—and yet it has paid its way, is clear of debt and begins the year with a balance in hand! For this we are very thankful, not only because the money is necessary to defray the charges of the holy service, but because it shows that the Churches have confidence in the Missionary Society and that they are awakening to their responsibility concerning it. The more Believers in the Lord Jesus consider the matter, the more they will see that it is the duty and the privilege of all who know the Lord to make Him known to others.

There was a time when Christian people thought it idle to send missionaries to the heathen, but that time only survives in regretful memories. We remember reading that in a Scottish assembly, a Moderate minister, famous in his day, talked of the proposal to send missionaries to the heathen as the greatest absurdity to which he had ever heard! One who was of another mind cried out, “Reach me that Bible”—and when the Bible was opened and he began to point to its teachings, the quibbler was silenced. Are there any such quibblers yet afire? If there are, they are wise enough to hold their tongues! No reviewer in our day would dare to sneer at “consecrated cobblers,” for they remember Carey and tremble in their shoes! Brothers and Sisters, we are to go into all the *world* and preach the Gospel to *every creature*. This is our Captain's orders and it would be *treason* to disobey! We have acted negligently towards this commission far too long! It is high time that we awakened from our sinful slumbers. May many a man and woman among us be called to mission work and may the rest be eager to help them by their generous gifts.

What subjects have risen before me while thinking of a discourse upon missions! Many grand and exciting themes have tempted me. The coming of the Lord, the conquest of nations to His sway, the reign of peace, the overthrow of falsehood and all manner of glorious topics invite me! But something less ambitious has won my thoughts. It lies upon my heart not to speak of things upon a great scale, above our present power, but to talk of *practical* matters within the reach of common Christians. I shall not, therefore, treat of the Millennial reign, but of the kingdom of Christ in your soul and mine—and of how we can increase His dominions and cause His Kingdom to come with power! I had rather speak five words to practical purpose than 50,000 for oratorical effect.

I have selected my text that we may see what can be done by private Christians and learn how we can *personally* serve the Lord and become links in the great chain of His gracious dispensation. The mass of us cannot go abroad as missionaries, but we can *all* be *messengers* for Christ in our own city. We cannot all preach, but we can all pray! We cannot all give money, but we can all fill the treasury of supplication! The question for each one to ask, is—“Lord, what would You have me do?” What can I do with a household about me? What can I do, who can only take rank as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, without special office in the Church?

It seems to me that Ananias may serve as a typical person and that his history may furnish us with many useful lessons. Brethren, I shall invite you, this morning, to think about this good Ananias, to whom the Lord said in a vision, “Ananias, and he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.”

**I.** First, let us think a little about THE MAN. He is described as “a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias.” We hear of him this once and we know nothing more about him. He comes forward at a critical point in Paul’s life—executes for him a very useful office—and then disappears. The good soldier was sent upon special service by his Captain and, when he had fulfilled his commission, he retired to his ordinary place in the ranks. Who was this Ananias?

We remark of him, first, that he was *simply a private person*. He is not described as pastor, or evangelist, or even as deacon or elder of a Church—yet this *private person*, obscure in life and without special distinction in the Church, was the channel for communicating the Holy Spirit to the great Apostle of the Gentiles! For the time being, he became one of the most important persons in sacred history! The Lord did not send to Paul for the opening of his eyes and the comforting of his heart, an Apostle, lest any should have said that Paul received his commission second-hand from those already in office. The Lord did not send to him any man of distinguished position or eminent gifts, lest it should be concluded that Paul received the Gospel at *his* hands. The great Apostle could say in later days, “I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ.”

It was necessary that instrumentality should be used, but it was wise that such instrumentality should be of the most ordinary kind, lest any power should be ascribed to it and lest it should arrogate to itself credit

for the Apostle's conversion and later life. I see, therefore, in many of you, dear Brothers, special qualifications for certain uses, even qualifications which your being Church officers, or preachers, might take from you your very obscurity and *lack* of glittering talent may be a fitness for peculiar service. There is a special work for you to do who are private Christians and I trust you will be prompt in the doing of it.

Ananias is especially said to have been a *disciple*. Dwell on that title. He was a *learner*. He sat at Jesus' feet and learned of Him and, therefore, was ready to instruct Saul of Tarsus. A true disciple is also a follower—he is an imitator of his Master. Christ's discipleship is always practical—it is of the heart and of the hands as well as of the head—all these were needed in the mission of Ananias to Paul. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we must take care that we keep up the character of disciples! May we bear fruit, so we shall be His disciples. Let us never dream of knowing more than our Master teaches us. Let us never think that we are perfect, so that we have no more to learn. He who gets beyond a disciple rises beyond his proper place. Our strength for usefulness lies in our remaining disciples. You cannot disciple all nations unless you are disciples, yourselves! How can you teach others that which Christ does not teach you? But if you sit at His feet and receive of His Words, then shall you speak so that others shall learn of you.

Paul tells us, in Acts 22:12, that Ananias was "*a devout man.*" How much I wish that all avowed disciples of Jesus were devout men! I suppose he was devout while he was yet a Jew, before he received Christ. But when he was enlightened, another element entered into his devotions, so that he worshipped God in the name of Jesus. Nowadays we greatly need more devout men, men of prayer, men who dwell with God in secret—devoted men, men of devotion—for the strength of the spirit of man lies in fellowship with the Spirit of God. A devout man is soon discovered—this fire from Heaven cannot be hid! The devout man may not be more somber than others—why should he be? He certainly will not be more anxious to make a display, but it will soon be seen that he is more full of power.

A devout man is a remarkable man! If he prays, you perceive that he is familiar with that holy exercise. If he is called to endure trials, his patience proves that he submits himself to God. His daily conduct in the affairs of this life exhibits a secret, sacred something which few understand, but which all feel. The Spirit of God dwells with the devout man and fits him for the Lord's service! I believe that God loves to send, as His special messengers, those who ordinarily dwell near Him. Let us aim to abide with God that we may be employed by Him! Every Christian man cannot be a talented man, but every Christian should be a devout man! Every man cannot be eloquent, but every man who loves the Lord may be devout—and in that devotion lies a main qualification for service. He that has power with God will not fail to have power with men.

Paul also tells us that Ananias had "*a good report* of all the Jews which dwell in Damascus." They hated Christians, but they could not help respecting this devout man. The world had then, as it still has, a respect for

those who walk with God. If we are to be useful to our fellow men, we must deserve their esteem. We are not to curry favor with them by lowering our principles to gain their approbation, but, on the contrary, we are to win their respect by sheer force of *unbending holiness* so that we may have power over them for their good. We are to win influence over our fellow men by an upright character and a generous behavior—so that if they wish to speak against us, they may find no matter for accusation unless it is concerning our zeal for the Lord our God. Oh, that our Church members were all men of spotless character! Oh, that all professors were well reported of! The Church is injured in her efforts for the conversion of the world by the inconsistencies of certain of her members. Let us provide things honest in the sight of all men and, by our lives, adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things—and then we shall be prepared for the Lord's use among our neighbors!

This, then, was Ananias, a disciple towards Christ, devout towards God and upright towards men.

Another qualification of Ananias for the work which the Lord put upon him was *his general thoughtfulness for the Church of God*. This comes out in his own words. It is evident that he thought about the persecutions of his Brothers and Sisters. He says, concerning Paul, the persecutor, "I have heard by many of this man." No doubt he had frequently made Paul the subject of conversation, for he was grieved at the afflictions of the saints in Jerusalem and he feared for his Brethren in Damascus. Observe that he is the first to call Christians, "saints," or holy ones. He had evidently observed the followers of Jesus and had noticed with delight this point of their character! It is well to speak frequently of matters which concern Christ's Kingdom.

Ananias was in sympathy with tried saints, was deeply touched by the story of their trials and could not forbear to dwell upon their sorrowful experiences. All the servants of God who are what they should be, take a great interest in the condition of the Church of God—they bear one another's burdens and share each other's griefs. They do not go in and out of their pews on Sunday and then fancy that their connection with the Church is ended—they bear upon their hearts the interests of Zion! They hang their harps upon the willows if she is captive and they rejoice when they see her enjoying prosperity. They take pleasure in her stones and favor the dust thereof. It is one mark that a man is right towards God when he is right towards the family of God. All that belongs to Jesus belongs to me if I belong to Jesus. All the interests of His Kingdom are my interests if I am truly walking in fellowship with my Lord!

See, then, the man Ananias—there is nothing brilliant about him—he, by no means, claims distinguished rank. But he is what I pray we may *all* be—a vessel fit for the Master's use—cleansed, prepared, consecrated, set apart unto God! Hence he was used of the Lord.

**II.** Now, secondly, let us consider HIS POSTURE. This is seen at once in his answer to the Divine call. The Voice said to him, "Ananias," and he answered, "Behold, I am here, Lord." He was familiar with the Old Testa-

ment. He remembered how the Lord said, “Abraham,” and the Patriarch answered, “Here am I.” He remembered how the young child, Samuel, when the Lord said to him, “Samuel, Samuel,” answered, “Here am I.” He remembered how the Prophet, when he saw the excellent Glory and heard the Voice saying, “Who will go for Us?” responded, “Here am I, send me!” He made the same answer, because his mind was full of Scripture and also because he could not find a better reply, for the words were few, reverent and very fully expressive of what he felt.

Did not this indicate that his heart was *responsive* to the Divine Voice? “Ananias.” “Here am I.” Do you not think that God speaks to us many times and gets no answer? Happy is he who can say with David, “When You said, Seek you My face, my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek.” Every Sabbath you receive a heavenly message and, in your reading of Scripture and in your private worship, voices whisper to you from God, voices which the ears hear not—does your heart hearken to these calls? When your heart hears a rebuke for a certain omission, do you respond by fulfilling that omission? Or if it is a rebuke for sin committed, is your heart humbled at once and ready to respond by putting away the sin? If there is a call to duty, or a secret prompting to sacrifice, does your spirit say at once, “Here am I”? Scarcely should we need the Lord to speak, for, “as the eyes of a maiden look unto the hand of her mistress,” responding to very motions of her hands, so should our heart be immediately answerable to the will of the Lord in all things. O Lord, make us like wax to Your seal. May our heart echo the voice of our heavenly Father!

He was also *ready*. “Here am I,” he said. He did not ask, “What for?” but, “Here am I,” ready for anything! Oh, that our hearts might be in such a state that were it for living or for dying, for giving or for losing, for suffering or for working, the same response would come forth—“Here am I, make what use You can of me, my Lord; I shall count it an honor and a joy if You will send me anywhere, to anyone, with any message, at any time—here am I.” Oh, Brothers and Sisters, are we free from reservations? Whatever the Lord says to us, are we prepared to do it? What drawbacks there often are! What hindrances to consecration, what reserves for the flesh! But, blessed shall that man be who has no answer to give to God’s call but just, “Here am I.” Ready, yes ready!

Again, I think his posture was one which I can only describe by using the phrase that he was *all there*. “Ananias.” “Here am I,” he said. Would not some Christians be compelled to say, if they described themselves truthfully, “I am not here—You call me but I am not here”? Is it not so, that sometimes in prayer we are not there? In singing the praises of God, how often it happens that the mind is wandering—we are not there! I know there is such a thing as preaching, teaching and doing service for God with a portion of yourself—and it is not a fact that all that is within you is stirred up to the service of the Lord. I often see upon a sunny wall, a chrysalis, and when I go to take it down, I find that the summer’s sun has shone upon it and the insect has developed and left nothing but an empty shell behind. How often in the pew we find the chrysalis of a man,

but where is the man? Wait till tomorrow morning, and see him in his shop—*there* is the man! Or, to follow up the figure, there is the butterfly with all its wings! Wait till you find our friend engaged in *secular* employment to his own advantage and then you will see what he is made of! But in the work of the Lord, he is not worth his salt!

But oh, Brothers and Sisters, if ever a man ought to be all there, it is when he is called to the service of God! He should marshal all his faculties and every faculty should reply, “Here am I.” Call over the muster-roll of all your powers, capacities and abilities—and let each one of them answer to it, “Here am I!” The whole of a living man is something worth having, but a fragment of a man is only fit to be buried. Oh, that we might be found with our loins girt and our lamps trimmed—and we, ourselves, as men that wait for our Lord and watch for His coming! We are to be ready at His bidding to consecrate every faculty of spirit, soul and body, to the grandest cause that ever moved the soul of man. There is the man and there is his posture—may we be like he and stand as he stood! Help us, O Spirit of the living God!

**III.** Now, thirdly, we are to look to HIS DIRECTION. When he had thus said, “Here am I!” the Lord gave him his orders in detail. I do not say that the Lord will give us orders verbally as he did to Ananias. And I would have you take heed that you do not mistake whims of your own mind for the voice of God, but I do say that whatever your hands find to do, you are to do it with all your might and believe that God’s voice is calling you to that service which His Providence places in your way. God still guides His servants when they are willing to be guided. Ananias had his orders as to *where* he should go. The Lord said, “Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas.” The Lord knows the street and He knows the house where the sinner lives who is to be blessed by you. The Lord is very specific in His directions, for He gives Ananias the name of the person who kept the house. Whether it was a house of public entertainment or not, I do not know, but the Lord knew all about it and He gave His messenger precise directions. If you stand waiting for the Lord, He will direct you, today, to the right street and to the right house. Only wait upon Him and if you go in His name, He will take care that you are not sent to the wrong person.

His directions further related to the person *to whom* he was to go. This person was to be named Saul, known to come from Tarsus, and he was to be a blind man, for he was to “receive his sight” through this Ananias. The Lord knows the individual whom you are to bless and all about him. He knows what he is, where he is and what he has been doing and what he is doing and what he is going to do. Though, as I have already said, you have no *verbal* directions given to you, yet any person who falls in your way, if you will but seek to do God’s work to him, will turn out to be the person whom God intends you to bless. You are to deal with him in faith under that impression and you will not be disappointed.

Ananias was also told *when* to go. He was to arise and go at once. Perhaps he had not yet left his bed, or it was a vision of the night, but he was

to, “Arise and go.” God’s errands are so important that we must not delay in their performance. Whenever a man proposes to obey in a week’s time, he confesses himself to be disobedient for that time. He who, when he receives a message, delivers it at once, with the impression of his call fresh upon him, will deliver it with authority and power. This day there is a call to each Believer to proclaim the glories of the name of Christ wherever he has opportunity—let him do this at once!

Ananias was also told *why* he was to go. He was to go to Saul of Tarsus, “for behold he prays.” The servant was to go because the Master was already there! *God* had inspired the prayer of the blinded persecutor and now He was about to answer it by Ananias! Where God has plowed, we are to sow. Of that preparation you know but little, but your own duty is clear enough. If you begin to pick and choose the objects of your labor, you will select the wrong persons. But if because God has put such and such a person in your way, you tell him of Jesus and His love, you will make no mistake! The Lord who prepares you to speak has prepared him to listen! In fact, in this case, Paul was so prepared that he had “seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in.” If we are always ready for the Master’s work, we shall be surprised to find how beautifully He makes us fit in with His Providence and His Grace!

There is a person in this Tabernacle, this morning, who has been here many times and has always expected that a Christian friend would speak to him, but nobody has done so yet. But if *you* do it this morning, he will respond to you and say, “Thank you; this is what I was looking for. God has been troubling me of late in my thoughts and I am desirous to find the way of peace. You are the very person whom I wished to see.” God sends the right messenger to the right man—Ananias to Saul.

He had further directions, for he was told what he was to do when he found Saul—he was to lay his hands on him. There is a great deal in the touch of an earnest man. If you stand half a mile off from a man and throw the Gospel at him, you will miss him. But if you go close to him and lay hold upon him, giving him a hearty grip of the hand, and show that you have an affection for him, you will, by God’s blessing, lead him in the right way. You must come into *heart* contact if you are to influence the man. “But,” you say, “if I did thus grasp a man and speak with him, I could not open his eyes.” Could Ananias do so? Yet the Lord worked by Ananias and why not by you? “Oh, but I do not think I could comfort a troubled heart.” Ananias could not have comforted Paul unless the Lord had been with him. Paul was a vastly superior man to Ananias, yet the humbler man was the means of the spiritual enlightenment of the greater mind—and why should not you? Though you should meet with a great skeptic, or a very learned person who is quite a giant Goliath, compared with you, yet make bold to play the man—for the Lord does not work by gigantic instruments—but by young David who seems unequal to the task. At any rate, I do pray you, dear Brother, are ready to speak what the Lord has spoken to your own soul—and be this your resolve—

**“Now will I tell to sinners round**

***What a dear Savior I have found!  
Point them to Your redeeming blood,  
And say, Behold the way to God.***

Your instructions are in the Scriptures—follow them!

**IV.** But now, fourthly—good Ananias, excellent man as he was, had HIS DIFFICULTIES and so, when he was told to go, he said, “Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem: and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon Your name.”

These difficulties were *very natural*. Saul’s conversion was astonishing to the last degree. Ananias had long been thinking of the terrible persecutor, Saul—“I have heard by many of this man.” Could it be that this wolf had become a lamb? Ananias had Saul on the brain through terror of his cruelties and now he was to have Saul on the heart through joy of his repentance! He had heard such dreadful stories of the ferocious persecutor, that as soon as he heard the word, “Saul,” it took his breath away! There is a promise that the leopard shall lie down with the kid but it is not surprising that the kid should, at first, shrink from the monster—and so this dear, plain, simple-minded man was startled at the idea that he was to visit the malicious man who had sought the lives of Christians.

But notice that his objections were such that *he could tell the Lord about them* and, whenever you feel any difficulty, if you can lay it before the Lord in prayer, there may be *unbelief* in it, but there will be no *willful sin* in it. We do not praise that good man who said, “Send by whomever You will send, but not by me.” Yet he was not blamed when he gave his reason and mourned that he was slow of speech. The Lord met him in great tenderness and helped his infirmity. To tell your difficulty to God may be an evidence that you are hearty in his service and only regret that you have not greater ability to consecrate to it.

But, observe, that his difficulty was *unfounded*. If he had thought for a minute, he would have concluded that if Saul prayed, he must have ceased to persecute. To any man who prays, we may go with confidence that he will listen to our witness concerning Christ, in whose name he is praying. Ananias had forgotten this. The Lord had changed the heart of Saul. He had visited him with the light of His Glory and made him His captive for three whole days of darkness. And now he was ready enough to welcome the man by whom his eyes would be opened! Do we not lose opportunities of doing good by dwelling too much upon the past characters of those to whom we are sent? Do we not say, “I have heard of this man, that he is a desperate, drunken, swearing fellow—I shall not go near him”?

My dear Friend, this is the man who most needs your aid and who knows but, at the very time, when you go to him, the Lord may be dealing with his conscience so as to set before you an open door? Are we to speak to none but those who will welcome us? In that case we shall be often disappointed, for such persons do not always repay our exertions. Those who have been, for a long time, very hopeful, are usually the most hopeless of

cases—but utterly hopeless people are often the most hopeful when we have faith enough to approach them. Do not bury a man before he is dead! Hope that so long as a sinner lives he may yet live unto God! Be hopeful that He who placed this sinner in your way and you in the sinner's way, has designs of love which are about to be accomplished.

V. Concerning Ananias, I want to remind you, in the fifth place, of his COMFORT in the work. The Lord reassured His servant, first, by reminding him of the *doctrine of election*. God said to him, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me." Some read it, "He is a choice vessel," as if there were originally something in Paul which rendered him a choice person. But the Apostle, himself, does not put it so, for he describes Ananias as saying, "The God of our fathers has chosen you, that you should know His will." He did not know the will of the Lord except through the Divine choice. To him, the Revelation of God came as the *gift of Sovereign Grace*! Here was one whom God had chosen to bless, though Ananias knew it not. The grand doctrines of Sovereign Grace and of electing love are the most powerful inducements to labor for the conversion of all who come in our way!

Did not our Lord say to one of His servants, "I have much people in this city"? And did he not make this his encouragement for preaching the Truth of God with all boldness? So let it be *your* encouragement. Behind all opposition there is an almighty will which cannot be set aside—there is a purpose which must be accomplished—there is a predestination that can, by no means, be defeated. "Oh," says one, "if I believed that God had an elect people, I should not preach again." It is amazing how people argue—for that is the very reason why I do preach! If the Lord has not chosen any, what is the use of my preaching? But if He has done so, I shall not preach in vain! Often have I thought to myself—I shall have a picked congregation today—God will bring the very people here that He means to bless—and He will save His own elect by His own Word! It does not rest with *me*, nor with *them*, but with HIM and, therefore, there is hope! The eternal purpose goes forth in all the majesty of its might, therefore will we go to every creature, testifying in the name of Jesus—and believing that as many as the Father gives Him, shall come to Him.

Moreover, the Lord put aside the fears of Ananias by telling him that He had *chosen this man to a great purpose*. "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name among the Gentiles." A great sinner is to be made a great saint! A great opposer is to become a great laborer. Who knows how largely God may use the sinner whom we seek to save? Who knows what may be in any man, or in any child? You, dear teachers in the school, may be teaching Luthers, or Melancthons! You may be instructing, in those young girls, holy women who shall serve the Lord abundantly! You are handling choice materials, therefore be not careless in your service. To you is given not gold, nor silver, nor precious stones, to fashion, but immortal spirits that shall glorify Christ on earth and in Heaven!

And then, to remove all difficulty from the mind of Ananias, the Lord told him that *He would go with him*—"For I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." You are bid to teach the Gospel to an

individual who has been very hardened—and you fear that you have no strength for such an undertaking and, therefore, you cry—“Lord, I cannot show this man the Truth!” The Lord replies, “I will show him.” “But,” you say, “he is so ignorant!” “I will show him.” “Alas, he is blind and prejudiced!” “I will show him.” You are, “laborers together with God.” When we lift our trowel upon this wall, we may know that a Divine arm is moving at the same moment—and the stone which we seek to place in its course shall be laid there by an Omnipotent hand which works effectually!

Therefore, give yourselves up to your Lord’s work, whatever that work may be. “Behold I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: you shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff. You shall fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them; and you shall rejoice in the Lord, and shall glory in the Holy One of Israel.”

**VI.** I must ask your attention for a minute or two to the sixth point, and that is, Ananias’ difficulties being graciously taken away. Observe HIS OBEDIENCE to his Master’s orders.

It was *prompt* obedience—“Ananias went his way and entered into the house.” No longer hesitating nor delaying, he went his way with all speed. His obedience was *exact*—he entered into the house and, putting his hands on Saul, said, “Brother Saul.” He did as he had been told. There is a great point in that. Mind that what you preach is the Gospel of the Lord Jesus and that what you do is by order from the Throne of God and that it is carried out in the Spirit’s power, for you cannot expect the Lord to bless your message if you alter it. If my servant goes to the door and amends the message which I have sent by him, why then, he must bear the responsibility of doing so and also run the risk of dismissal! But if I, as Christ’s servant, deliver my Lord’s message to the best of my knowledge, just as He gave it to me, then my Lord is responsible for the success of it and not myself! Be prompt, therefore, and be exact.

Then, see how *loving* he was. “Brother Saul,” he said. Saul of Tarsus would not have made two bites of Ananias a little time before, if he had fallen into his power, but now the words, “Brother Saul,” are sweet to his ears. Love is the method of Grace. You cannot win souls by putting on a morose countenance and repelling all approaches—it must be, “Brother Saul.” Do not be afraid to call the individual, “Brother,” but take care that you mean it. Though he may be a greater and wiser man than yourself, still come close to him with confident affection, for if he is, indeed, a Brother, he will accept the salutation. And, if not, your peace will return to you. Ananias did not use the term as a cant expression, but his spirit and feeling were brotherly. The love of his speech betrayed his deep affection and intense sympathy. He was as pleased with Saul as a mother with a newborn child! He shared, with angels, the joy over the returning prodigal!

See, also, how *wisely* he spoke. It was given him, in the same hour, what he should speak. He did not pompously say, “I am an ordained official and, therefore, speak with great dignity.” No, he began, “The Lord,

even Jesus, that appeared unto you in the way as you came, has sent me.” It was wise thus to sink himself in His authority. He speaks most wisely all through and speaks precisely the right words. When he alludes to Paul’s former course, he only gives a hint of it—“The Lord that appeared to you in the way as you came.” He does not say, “as you came to persecute us,” but he allowed conscience to do its own work. He gives the items of his errand—“Jesus has sent me that you might receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” I have not time to indicate all the points which show the prudence of the Lord’s messenger. May we, also, be made wise to win souls!

Notice how thoroughly *faithful* Ananias was. He said, “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins.” The tendency with many good Evangelists is to say nothing upon that point. The main thing is to get this man to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, but to say, “Arise, and be baptized”—is not that far less important? Brothers, we have nothing to do with altering Christ’s message—we are bound to deliver it as a whole—without addition or diminution. The tendency everywhere is to say, “Baptism should not be mentioned—it is sectarian.” Who said so? If our Lord commanded it, who dares to call it sectarian? We are not commanded to preach a *part* of the Gospel, but the *whole* of the Gospel—and Ananias did this. Is it not written, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”? Why omit one clause? I question whether God’s blessing has not been withheld from some teachers and preachers because they have failed to repeat their message in its entirety.

A Brother will write to me next week and say, “I am sorry that I cannot circulate your sermon because you allude to Baptism.” My dear Brother, if you cannot circulate the sermon, I must be content without your kind help—but I cannot amend the Lord’s Word to please the best man upon earth! What prominence is given to Baptism here! We would greatly err if we believed in baptismal *regeneration*, or even in the efficacy of washing in water for the removal of sin—but, on the other hand—we are *not* to place in the background an ordinance which, by the language of Scripture, is placed in the forefront! Ananias said to Paul, “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins.” And this tallies with that other text, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” In both of these passages the Lord puts a special honor upon Baptism and it would be evil for us to neglect that which He so evidently esteems!

Do not make any mistake and imagine that immersion in water can wash away sin—but do remember that if the Lord puts this outward profession, side by side, with the washing away of sins, it is not a trifling matter! Remember that other text, “With the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”? Faith must be followed by *obedience*, or it cannot be sincere—do, then, what Jesus bids you. That is not, however, my point. I want to urge upon you that you should always speak the Lord’s Word faithfully and be true to that which the Lord reveals to you, even to the jots and tittles. In these days there is much talk about, “undenominationalism,” and in that talk

there is much to be admired. But the danger is lest we should, on all hands, begin to pare away a little from the Word of God for the sake of an *imaginary* unity.

The suggestion is that one is to give up this—and another is to give up that. But I say to you—give up *nothing* which your Lord commands! In all charity, believe that your Brother desires to hold only Christ's Truth, but make sure that you hold it yourself, whether he holds it or not. This is the best “undenominationalism” in the world—every man to be faithful to his convictions and *true to his Master* out and out—and then to give his Brother in Christ credit for doing the same! In this way we may expect the Master's blessing.

**VII.** Lastly, observe the RESULT of what Ananias said. The results were IMMEDIATE, for Paul received his sight at once, was comforted at once and baptized at once! But the results were most *extensive*, for this Paul became a preacher of the Gospel to every land! As the Apostle of the Gentiles, he brought multitudes to Jesus! It was a splendid work that Ananias did that morning, for to this day, the testimony of Paul to the Cross of Christ is ringing over Europe and throughout the whole world! Where would we have been as a nation if it had not been for the Apostle of the Gentiles? Our Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to raise up, in Paul, an especially useful instrument of blessing to the sons of men. I might almost say that, among those that are born of woman, there has not been a greater than the Apostle Paul! It was necessary that Ananias should link him to the Church of God by instructing him in the faith and initiating him by Baptism.

Go you, then, my Brothers and Sisters, wherever God sends you, for you know not what may be within a man, a woman, or a child whom you shall bring to Jesus! Everybody is not a Paul, but yet you may find a Paul among your converts. The pearl fisher standing on the rock plunges deep into the sea—he does not know whether or not he shall bring up a pearl that will decorate an emperor's diadem. But he searches the deeps in that hope and why should he not bring up such a treasure as well as anybody else? No matter though the fisherman, himself, may be coarse, ragged and rugged, yet he may light upon a priceless pearl!

And you, whoever you may be, I charge you, in the name of the Eternal God, plunge yourself into your work with whole-hearted devotion and you shall yet discover some hidden jewel which shall adorn Immanuel's diadem! So may it be with you, dear Friends, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—**

**Acts 9:1-21; Acts 22:1-16.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—**

**72 (SONG I), 45 (VERSION I), 972.**

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# PAUL'S FIRST PRAYER

## NO. 16

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 25, 1855,  
BY THE REV C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“For, behold, he is praying.”  
Acts 9:11.***

GOD has many methods of quenching persecution. He will not suffer His church to be injured by its enemies, or overwhelmed by its foes. And He is not short of means for turning aside the way of the wicked, or of turning it upside down. In two ways He usually accomplishes His end—sometimes by the confusion of the persecutor and at others in a more blessed manner, by his conversion. Sometimes He confuses and confounds His enemies—He makes the diviner mad. He lets the man who comes against Him be utterly destroyed, allows him to drive on to his own destruction and then, at last, turns round in triumphant derision upon the man who hoped to have said aha! aha! to the Church of God. But at other times, as in this case, He converts the persecutor. Thus, He transforms the foe into a friend. He makes the man who was a warrior *against* the Gospel, a soldier *for* it. Out of darkness He brings forth light. Out of the eater He gets honey, yes, out of stony hearts He raises up children unto Abraham! Such was the case with Saul. A more furious bigot it is impossible to conceive. He had been bespattered with the blood of Stephen when they stoned him to death—so officious was he in his cruelty, that the men left their clothes in the charge of a young man named Saul. Living at Jerusalem, in the college of Gamaliel, he constantly came in contact with the disciples of the Man of Nazareth. He laughed at them, he reviled them as they passed along the street. He procured enactments against them and put them to death! And now, as a crowning point, this werewolf, having tasted blood, becomes exceedingly mad. He determines to go to Damascus, that he may glut himself with the gore of men and women—that he may bind the Christians and bring them to Jerusalem—there to suffer what he considered to be a just punishment for their heresy and departure from their ancient religion! But oh, how marvelous was the power of God! Jesus stays this man in his mad career—just as with his lance in rest he was dashing against Christ, Christ met him, unhorsed him, threw him on the ground and questioned him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” He then graciously removed his rebellious heart—gave him a new heart and a right spirit—turned his aim and object—led him to Damascus—laid him prostrate for three days and nights—spoke to him—made mystic sounds go murmuring through his

ears—set his whole soul on fire. And when at last he started up from that three day's trance and began to pray, then it was that Jesus from Heaven descended, came in a vision to Ananias and said—"Arise and go into the street which is called Straight and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus—for, behold, he is praying."

First, our text was *an announcement*—"Behold he is praying." Secondly, it was *an argument*—"For, behold, he is praying." Then, to conclude, we will try to make an application of our text to your hearts. Though application is the work of God, alone, we will trust that He will be pleased to make that application while the Word is preached this morning.

**I.** First, here was AN ANNOUNCEMENT—"Go inquire for Saul of Tarsus—for behold, he is praying." Without any preface, let me say that this was the announcement of a fact which was noticed in Heaven, which was joyous to the angels, which was astonishing to Ananias and which was a novelty to Saul, himself!

It was the announcement of *a fact which was noticed in Heaven*. Poor Saul had been led to cry for mercy and the moment he began to pray, God began to hear. Do you not notice, in reading the Chapter, what attention God paid to Saul? He knew the street where he lived—"Go to the street that is called *Straight*." He knew the house where he resided—"Inquire at the *house of Judas*." He knew his name. It was *Saul*. He knew the place where he came from—"enquire for Saul of *Tarsus*." And He knew that he had prayed. "Behold, *he is praying*." Oh, it is a glorious fact that prayers are noticed in Heaven! The poor broken-hearted sinner climbing up to his chamber, bends his knees, but can only utter his wailing in the language of sighs and tears. Lo, that groan has made all the harps of Heaven thrill with music! That tear has been caught by God and put into the vial of Heaven, to be perpetually preserved. The suppliant, whose fears prevent his words, will be well understood by the Most High. He may only shed one hasty tear. But "prayer is the falling of a tear." Tears are the diamonds of Heaven—sighs are a part of the music of Jehovah's Throne. For though prayers are—

***"The simplest form of speech  
That infant lips can try,"***

so are they likewise, the—

***"Most sublime strains that reach  
The Majesty on high."***

Let me dilate on this thought a moment. Prayers are noticed in Heaven. Oh, I know what is the case with many of you. You think, "If I turn to God, if I seek Him, surely I am so inconsiderable a being, so guilty and vile, that it cannot be imagined He would take any notice of me." My Friends, harbor no such heathenish ideas! Our God is no God who sits in one perpetual dream, nor does He clothe Himself in such thick darkness that He cannot see. He is not like Baal, who hears not. True, He may not regard battles. He cares not for the pomp and pageantry of kings. He lis-

tens not to the swell of martial music. He regards not the triumph and pride of man—but wherever there is a heart big with sorrow, wherever there is an eye suffused with tears, wherever there is a lip quivering with agony, wherever there is a deep groan, or a penitential sigh—the ears of Jehovah are wide open! He marks it down in the registry of His memory. He puts our prayers, like rose leaves, between the pages of His Book of Remembrance. And when the volume is opened at last, there shall be a precious fragrance springing up from there. Oh, poor Sinner of the blackest and vilest character, your prayers are heard and even now God has said of *you*, “Behold he is praying.” Where was it—in a barn? Where was it—in the closet? Was it at your bedside this morning, or in this hall? Are you now glancing your eye to Heaven? Speak, poor heart! Did I hear your lips just now mutter out, “God have mercy on me, a sinner”? I tell you, Sinner, there is one thing which does outstrip the telegraph. You know we can now send a message and receive an answer in a few moments. But I read of something in the Bible more swift than the electric fluid—“Before they call I will answer and while they are speaking I will hear.” So then, poor Sinner, you *are* noticed—yes, you are heard by Him that sits on the Throne!

Again, this was the announcement of *a fact joyous to Heaven*. Our text is prefaced with, “Behold,” for, doubtless, our Savior, Himself, regarded it with joy. Once only do we read of a smile resting on the Countenance of Jesus, when lifting up His eyes to Heaven, He exclaimed, “I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes—even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” The Shepherd of our souls rejoices in the vision of His sheep securely folded. He triumphs in spirit when He brings a wanderer home! I conceive that when He spoke these words to Ananias, one of the smiles of Paradise must have shone from His eyes. “Behold,” I have won the heart of My enemy. I have saved My persecutor. Even now he is bending the knee at My footstool, “Behold he is praying.” Jesus Himself led the song, rejoicing over the new convert with singing! Jesus Christ was glad and rejoiced more over that lost sheep than over ninety and nine that went not astray. And angels rejoiced, too! Why, when one of God's elect is born, angels stand around his cradle. He grows up and runs into sin, angels follow him. Tracking him all his way, they gaze with sorrow upon his many wanderings. The fair Peri drops a tear whenever that loved one sins. Presently the man is brought under the sound of the Gospel. The angel says, “Behold, he begins to *hear*.” He waits a little while, the Word sinks into his heart, a tear runs down his cheek and at last he cries from his inmost soul, “God have mercy upon me!” Look! The angel claps his wings! Up he flies to Heaven and says, “Brethren angels, listen to me—‘Behold, he is praying.’” Then they set Heaven's bells ringing. They have a Jubilee in Glory! Again they

shout with gladsome voices, for verily I tell you, "there is joy in Heaven among the angels of God over one sinner who repents." They watch us till we pray and when we pray, they say, "Behold, he is praying."

Moreover, my dear Friends, there may be other spirits in Heaven that rejoice, besides the angels. Those persons are our friends who have gone before us. I have not many relations in Heaven, but I have one whom I dearly love, who, I doubt not, often prayed for me. For she nursed me when I was a child and brought me up during part of my infancy and now she sits before the Throne in Glory—suddenly snatched away. I fancy she looked upon her darling grandson and as she saw him in the ways of sin, of vice and folly, she could not look with sorrow for there are no tears in the eyes of glorified ones. She could not look with regret, because they cannot know such a feeling before the Throne of God. But ah, that moment when by Sovereign Grace, I was compelled to pray, when all alone I bent my knee and wrestled—I think I see her as she said—"Behold, he is praying! Behold, he is praying!" Oh, I can picture her countenance! She seemed to have two heavens for a moment, a double bliss, a Heaven in me as well as in herself—when she could say, "Behold, he is praying." Ah, young man, there is your mother walking the golden streets. She is looking down upon you this hour. She nursed you—on her breast you lay when but a child. And she consecrated you to Jesus Christ. From Heaven, she has been watching you with that intense anxiety which is compatible with happiness. This morning she is looking upon you. What do you say, young man? Does Christ by His Spirit say in your heart, "Come unto Me"? Do you drop the tear of repentance? I think I see your mother as she cries, "Behold, he is praying!" Once more she bends before the Throne of God and says, "I thank You, O You ever gracious One, that he who was my child on earth, has now become *Your* child in light."

But, if there is one in Heaven who has more joy than another over the conversion of a sinner, it is a minister, one of God's true ministers. Oh, my Hearers, you little think how God's true ministers do love your souls. Perhaps you think it is easy work to stand here and preach to you. God knows, if that were all—it would be easy work. But when we think that when we speak to you, your salvation or damnation in some measure depends upon what we say—when we reflect that if we are unfaithful watchmen, your blood will God require at our hands—oh, good God, when I reflect that I have preached to thousands in my lifetime, many thousands—and have perhaps said many things I ought not to have said, it startles me, it makes me shake and tremble! Luther said he could face his enemies but could not go up his pulpit stairs without his knees knocking together. Preaching is *not* child's play, it is not a thing to be done without labor and anxiety—it is solemn work—it is awful work if you view it in its relation to eternity. Ah, how God's minister prays for

you! If you might have listened under the eaves of his chamber window, you would have heard him groaning every Sunday night over his sermons because he had not spoken with more effect. You would have heard him pleading with God, "Who has believed our report? To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Ah, when he observes you, from his rest in Heaven—when he sees you *praying*, how he will clap his hands and say, "Behold, the child You have given me! Behold, he is praying!" I am sure when we see one brought to know the Lord, we feel very much like one who has saved a fellow creature from being drowned. There is a poor man in the flood. He is going down, he is sinking. He must be drowned, but I spring in, grasp him firmly, lift him on the shore and lay him on the ground. The physician comes. He looks at him, he puts his hand upon him and says, "I am afraid he is dead." We apply all the means in our power, we do what we can to restore life. I feel I have been that man's deliverer and oh, how I stoop down and put my ear beside his mouth! At last I say, "He breathes! He breathes!" What pleasure there is in that thought! He breathes. There is still life. So when we find a man praying, we shout—he breathes! He is not dead! He is alive! For while a man prays he is not dead in trespasses and sins but is brought to life, is quickened by the power of the Spirit. "Behold, he is praying." This was joyful news in Heaven, as well as being noticed by God.

Then in the next place, this was *an event most astonishing to men*. Ananias lifted up both his hands in amazement. "O my Lord, I should have thought anybody would pray but that man. Is it possible?" I do not know how it is with other ministers but sometimes I look upon such-and-such individuals in the congregation and I say, "Well, they are very hopeful. I think I shall have them. I trust there is a work going on and hope soon to hear them tell what the Lord has done for their souls." Soon, perhaps, I see nothing of them and miss them altogether. But instead thereof, my good Master sends me one of whom I had no hope—an outcast, a drunk, a reprobate—to the praise of the glory of His Grace! Then I lift up my hands in astonishment, thinking, "I should have thought of anybody rather than you." I remember a circumstance which occurred a little while ago. There was a poor man about 60 years old. He had been a rough sailor, one of the worst men in the village. It was his custom to drink and he seemed to be delighted when he was cursing and swearing. He came into the Chapel, however, one Sunday, when one nearly related to me was preaching from the text concerning Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. And the poor man thought, "What? Did Jesus Christ ever weep over such a wretch as I am?" He thought he was too bad for Christ to care for him. At last he came to the minister and said, "Sir, 60 years have I been sailing under the colors of the devil. It is time I should have a new owner. I want to scuttle the old ship and sink her altogether. Then I shall have a new one and I shall sail under the colors of Prince

Immanuel." Ever since that moment, that man has been a praying character, walking before God in all sincerity. Yet he was the very last man you would have thought of! Somehow God does choose the last men—He does not care for the diamond, but He picks up the pebble stones, for He is able, out of "stones, to raise up children unto Abraham." God is more wise than the chemist—He not only refines gold, but He transmutes base metal into precious jewels. He takes the filthiest and the vilest and fashions them into glorious beings, makes them saints, whereas they have been sinners and sanctifies them, whereas they have been unholy!

The conversion of Saul was a strange thing. But, Beloved, was it stranger that you and I should have been Christians? Let me ask you if anybody had told you, a few years ago, that you would belong to a Church and be numbered with the children of God, what would you have said? "Stuff and nonsense! I am not one of your canting Methodists! I am not going to have any religion. I love to think and do as I like." Did not you and I say so? And how on earth did we get *here*? When we look at the change that has passed over us, it appears like a dream! God has left many in our families who were better than we were and why has He chosen us? Oh, is it not strange? Might we not lift up our hands in astonishment, as Ananias did, and say, "Behold, behold, behold, it is a miracle on earth, a wonder in Heaven"?

The last thing I have to say here, is this—*this fact was a novelty to Saul himself*. "Behold, he is praying." What is there novel in that? Saul used to go up to the Temple twice a day at the hour of prayer. If you could have accompanied him, you would have heard him speak beautifully, in words like these—"Lord, I thank You I am not as other men are. I am not an extortioner, nor a publican. I fast twice in the week and give tithes of all I possess" and so on. Oh, you might have found him pouring out a fine oration before the Throne of God! And yet it says—"Behold, he is praying." What? Had he never prayed before? No, never. All he had ever done before went for nothing—it was not prayer! I have heard of an old gentleman who was taught, when a child, to pray, "Pray God bless my father and mother," and he kept on praying the same thing for 70 years when his parents were both dead. After that it pleased God, in His infinite mercy, to touch his heart and he was led to see that, notwithstanding his constancy to his forms, he had not been praying at all. He often said his prayers, but never prayed. So it was with Saul. He had pronounced his lofty orations but they were all good for nothing! He had prayed his long prayers for a pretense. It had all been a failure. Now comes a true petition and it is said, "Behold he is praying." Do you see that man trying to obtain a hearing from his Maker? How he stands! He speaks Latin and blank verse before the Almighty's Throne. But God sits in calm indifference paying no attention. Then the man tries a different style—procures a book—and bending his knees again—this time he is

praying in a delightful *form*, the best old prayer that could ever be put together. But the Most High disregards his empty formalities. At last the poor creature throws the book away, forgets his blank verse and says, "O Lord, hear, for Christ's sake." "Hear him," says God, "I have heard him." There is the mercy you have sought. One hearty *prayer* is better than ten thousand *forms*. One prayer coming from the soul is better than a myriad cold *readings*. As for prayers that spring from the mouth and head only, God abhors them. He loves those that come deep from the heart. Perhaps I would be impudent if I were to say that there are hundreds here, this morning, who never prayed once in their lives. There are some of you who never did. There is one young man over there, who told his parents when he left them, that he would always go through his form of prayer every morning and night. But he is ashamed and he has left it off. Well, young man, what will you do when you come to die? Will you have "the watchword at the gates of death"? Will you "enter Heaven by prayer"? No, you will not. You will be driven from God's Presence and be cast away!

**II.** Secondly, we have here AN ARGUMENT. "*For*, behold, he is praying." It was an argument, first of all, for *Ananias' safety*. Poor Ananias was afraid to go to Saul. He thought it was very much like stepping into a lion's den. "If I go to his house," he thought, "the moment he sees me, he will take me to Jerusalem at once, for I am one of Christ's disciples. I dare not go." God says, "Behold, he is praying." "Well," says Ananias, "that is enough for me. If he is a praying man, he will not hurt me. If he is a man of real devotion, I am safe." Be sure you may always trust a praying man! I do not know why it is, but even ungodly men always pay reverence to a sincere Christian! A master likes to have a praying servant even if he does not regard religion himself. He likes to have a pious servant and he will trust him rather than any other. True, there are some of your professedly praying people who have not a bit of prayer in them! But whenever you find a really praying man, trust him with untold gold. For if he really prays, you need not be afraid of him. He who communes with God in secret may be trusted in public. I always feel safe with a man who is a visitor to the Mercy Seat. I have heard an anecdote of two gentlemen traveling together, somewhere in Switzerland. Presently they come into the midst of the forests and you know the gloomy tales the people tell about the inns there, how dangerous it is to lodge in them. One of them, an infidel, said to the other, who was a Christian, "I don't like stopping here at all, it is very dangerous indeed." "Well," said the other, "let us try." So they went into a house, but it looked so suspicious that neither of them liked it. And they thought they would prefer being at home in England. Presently the landlord said, "Gentlemen, I always read and pray with my family before going to bed. Will you allow me to do so tonight?" "Yes," they said "with the greatest pleasure." When they went upstairs, the infidel said, "I am not at all afraid, now." "Why?" said the

Christian. "Because our host has prayed." "Oh," said the other, "then it seems, after all, you think something of religion—because a man prays, you can go to sleep in his house." And it was marvelous how both of them did sleep. Sweet dreams they had, for they felt that where the house had been roofed by prayer and walled with devotion, there could not be found a man living that would commit an injury to them. This, then, was an argument to Ananias—that he might go with safety to Saul's house!

But more than this there was *an argument for Paul's sincerity*. Secret prayer is one of the best tests of sincere religion. If Jesus had said to Ananias, "Behold, he preaches," Ananias would have said, "*that* he may do and yet be a deceiver." If he had said, "He is gone to a meeting of the Church," Ananias would have said, "He may enter there as a wolf in sheep's clothing." But when He said, "Behold, he is praying," that was argument enough! A young person comes and tells me about what he has felt and what he has been doing. At last I say, "kneel down and pray." "I would much rather not." "Never mind, you shall." Down he falls on his knees, he has hardly a word to say—he begins groaning and crying and there he stays on his knees till at last he stammers out, "Lord have mercy upon me a sinner. I am the greatest of sinners. Have mercy upon me!" Then I am a little more satisfied and I say, "I did not mind all your talk, I wanted your prayers." But oh, if I could follow him home. If I could see him go and pray alone—then I would feel sure. For he who prays in private is a real Christian. The mere reading of a book of daily devotions will not prove you a child of God. If you pray in private, then you have a *sincere* religion. A little religion, if *sincere*, is better than mountains of pretense! Home piety is the best piety. Praying will make you leave off sinning, or sinning will make you leave off praying. Prayer in the heart proves the reality of conversion. A man may be sincere, but sincerely wrong. Paul was sincerely right. "Behold, he is praying," was the best argument that his religion was right. If anyone should ask me for an epitome of the Christian religion, I would say it is in that one word—"prayer." If I should be asked, "What will take in the whole of Christian experience?" I would answer, "prayer." A man must have been convinced of sin before he can pray. He must have had some hope that there was mercy for him before he can pray. In fact, all the Christian virtues are locked up in that word, *prayer*. Do but tell me you are a man of prayer and I will reply at once, "Sir, I have no doubt of the reality, as well as of the sincerity of your religion."

But one more thought and I will leave this subject. *It was a proof of this man's election*, for you read directly afterwards, "Behold, he is a chosen vessel." I often find people troubling themselves about the Doctrine of Election. Every now and then I get a letter from somebody or other taking me to task for preaching election. All the answer I can give is, "There it is

in the Bible. Go and ask my Master why He put it there. I cannot help it. I am only a serving man and I tell you the Message from Above. If I were a footman I should not alter my master's message at the door. I happen to be an ambassador of Heaven and I dare not alter the message I have received. If it is wrong, send up to Headquarters. There it is and I cannot alter it." This much let me say in explanation. Some say, "How can I discover whether I am God's elect? I am afraid I am not God's elect." Do you pray? If it can be said, "Behold, he is praying," it can also be said, "Behold he is a chosen vessel." Have you faith? If so, you are elect. Those are the marks of election. If you have none of these you have no grounds for concluding that you belong to the peculiar people of God. Have you a *desire* to believe? Have you a *wish* to love Christ? Have you the millionth part of a *desire* to come to Christ? And is it a practical desire? Does it lead you to offer earnest, tearful supplication? If so, never be afraid of non-election. For whoever prays with sincerity was ordained of God before the foundation of the world that he should be holy and without blame before Christ in love!

**III.** Now for the APPLICATION. A word or two with you, my dear Friends, before I send you away this morning. I regret that I cannot better enter into the subject. But my glorious Master requires of each of us according to what we *have*, not according to what we have *not*. I am deeply conscious that I fail in urging home the Truth so solemnly as I ought. Nevertheless, "my work is with God and my judgment with my God," and the Last Day shall reveal that my error lay in judgment, but not in sincere affection for souls.

First, allow me to address the children of God. Do you not see, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that the best mark of our being sons of God is to be found in our *devotion*? "Behold, he is praying." Well then, does it not follow, as a natural consequence, that the more we are found in prayer, the brighter will our evidences be? Perhaps you have lost your evidence this morning. You do not know whether you are a child of God or not. I will tell you where you lost your confidence—you lost it in your closet. Whenever a Christian backslides, his wandering commences in his closet. I speak what I have felt. I have often gone back from God—never so as to fall, finally, I know—but I have often lost that sweet savor of His love which I once enjoyed. I have had to cry—

***"Those peaceful hours I once enjoyed.  
How sweet their memory still!  
But they have left an aching void!  
The world can never fill."***

I have gone up to God's house to preach without either fire or energy. I have read the Bible and there has been no light upon it. I have tried to have communion with God, but all has been a failure. Shall I tell where that commenced? It commenced in my closet. I had ceased, in a measure, to pray. Here I stand and confess my faults. I acknowledge that

whenever I depart from God it is there it begins. Oh Christians, would you be happy? Be much in prayer! Would you be victorious? Be much in prayer!—

***“Restraining prayer, we cease to fight.  
Prayer makes the Christian’s armor bright.”***

Mrs. Berry used to say, “I would not be hired out of my closet for a thousand worlds.” Mr. Jay said, “If the twelve Apostles were living near you and you had access to them—if this communion drew you from the closet—they would prove a real injury to your souls.” Prayer is the ship which brings home the richest freight. It is the soil which yields the most abundant harvest. Brothers and Sisters, when you rise in the morning, your business so presses you that with a hurried word or two of prayer, down you go into the world! And at night, jaded and tired, you give God the last end of the day. The consequence is that you have no communion with Him.

The reason we have not more true religion now is because we have not more prayer. Sirs, I have no opinion of the churches of the present day that do not pray. I go from chapel to chapel in this metropolis and I see pretty good congregations. But I go to their Prayer Meetings on a week evening and I see a dozen persons. Can God bless us? Can He pour out His Spirit upon us while such things as these exist? He could, but it would not be according to the order of His dispensation, for He says, “When Zion travails, she brings forth children.” Go to your Churches and Chapels with this thought—that you need more prayer. Many of you have no business here this morning. You ought to be in your own places of worship. I do not want to steal away the people from other chapels. There are enough to hear me without them. But though you have sinned this morning, hear while you are here, as much to your profit as possible. Go home and say to your minister, “Sir, we must have more prayer.” Urge the people to more prayer. Have a Prayer Meeting, even if you have it all to yourself. And if you are asked how many were present, you can say “Four.” “Four? how so?” “Why, there was myself and God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit—and we have had a rich and real communion together.” We must have an outpouring of real devotion or else what is to become of many of our churches? Oh, may God awaken us all and stir us up to pray, for when we pray, we shall be victorious! I would like to take you, this morning, as Sampson did the foxes—tie the firebrands of prayer to you—and send you in among the shocks of corn till you burn the whole field up! I would like to make a conflagration by my words and set all the churches on fire till the whole has smoked like a sacrifice to God’s Throne. If you *pray*, you have proof that you are a Christian! The less you pray, the less reason have you to believe your Christianity. And if you have neglected to pray altogether, then you have ceased to breathe and you may be afraid that you never did breathe at all.

And now my last word is to the ungodly. Oh, Sirs! I could gladly wish myself anywhere but here. For if it is solemn work to address the godly—how much more when I come to deal with you? We fear lest on the one hand we should so speak to you as to make you trust in your own strength. While on the other hand, we tremble lest we should lull you into the sleep of sloth and security. I believe most of us feel some difficulty as to the most fit manner to preach to you—not that we doubt but that the Gospel is to be preached—but our desire is so to do it that we may win your souls. I feel like a watchman, who, while guarding a city, is oppressed with sleep. How earnestly does he strive to awaken himself, while infirmity would overcome him. The remembrance of his responsibility bestirs him. His is not lack of *will*, but of power! And so I hope all the watchmen of the Lord are anxious to be faithful, while at the same time they know their imperfection. Truly the minister of Christ will feel like the old keeper of Eddystone lighthouse. Life was failing fast but summoning all his strength, he crept round once more to trim the lights before he died. O may the Holy Spirit enable us to keep the beacon fire blazing, to warn you of the rocks, shoals and quicksand which surround you! And may we always guide you to Jesus and not to free will or creature merit. If my friends knew how anxiously I have sought Divine direction in the important matter of preaching to sinners, they would not feel as some of them do—when they fancy I address them wrongly. I want to do as God bids me and if He tells me to speak to the dry bones and they shall live, I must do it, even if it does not please others. For if I don't, I would be condemned in my own conscience and condemned of God. Now with all the solemnity that none can summon, let me say that a prayerless soul is a Christless soul. As the Lord lives, you who never prayed are without God, without hope and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel! You who never know what a groan is, or a falling tear, are destitute of vital godliness. Let me ask you, Sirs, whether you have ever thought in what an awful state you are? You are far from God and therefore God is angry with you. For "God is angry with the wicked every day." Oh, Sinner! Lift your eyes and behold the frowning Countenance of God, for He is angry with you! And I beseech you, as you love yourselves, just for one moment contemplate what will become of you, if living as you are, you should at last die without prayer. Don't think that one prayer on your deathbed will save you. Deathbed prayer is a deathbed farce, generally, and passes for nothing. It is a coin that will not ring in Heaven but is stamped by hypocrisy and made of base metal. Take heed, Sirs. Let me ask you, if you have never prayed, what will you do? It were a good thing for you if death were an eternal *sleep*. But it is not. If you find yourself in Hell, oh, the racks and pains!

But I will not harrow up your feelings by attempting to describe them. May God grant you never feel the torments of the lost. Only conceive that

poor wretch in the flames who is saying, "Oh for one drop of water to cool my parched tongue!" See how his tongue hangs from between his blistered lips! How it tears off the skin and burns the roof of his mouth, as if it were a firebrand. Behold him crying for a drop of water! I will not picture the scene. Suffice it for me to close up by saying what the Hell of hells will be to you, poor Sinner—the thought that it is to be *forever*. You will look up there on the Throne of God and it shall be written "forever!" When the damned jingle the burning irons of their torments, they shall cry, "forever!" When they howl, their echo cries, "forever!"—

***"Forever is written on their racks,  
'Forever' on their chains!  
'Forever' burns in the fire  
'Forever' always reigns!"***

Doleful thought! "If I could but get out, then I should be happy. If there were a hope of deliverance, then I might be peaceful, but I am here forever!" Sirs, if you would escape eternal torments, if you would be found among the numbers of the blessed, the road to Heaven can only be found by *prayer*—by prayer to Jesus—by prayer for the Spirit—by supplication at His Mercy Seat. "Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel? As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live." "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion." Let us go to Him and say, "He shall heal our backslidings, He shall love us freely and forgive us graciously, for His Son's name's sake." Oh, if I may but win one soul today, I will go home contented. If I may but gain twenty, then I will rejoice. The more I have, the more crowns I shall wear. Wear? No, I will take them all at once and cast them at Jesus' feet and say, "Not unto me, but unto Your name be all the glory, forever."—

***"Prayer was appointed to convey  
The blessings God designs to give.  
Long as they live, should Christians pray,  
For only while they pray they live.  
And will you still in silence lie,  
When Christ stands waiting for your prayer?  
My Soul, you have a Friend on high,  
Arise and try your interest there.  
'Tis prayer supports the soul that's weak,  
Though thought is broken, language lame  
Pray, if you can, or cannot speak,  
But pray with faith in Jesus' name."***

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

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

# “BEHOLD, HE PRAYS”

## NO. 1860

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 20, 1885,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Inquire in the house of Judas for one called  
Saul, of Tarsus, for, behold, he prays.”  
Acts 9:11.*

THESE words are the hallmark of genuine conversion. “Behold, he prays” is a surer witness of a man’s conversion than, “Behold, he sings,” or, “Behold, he reads the Scripture,” or, “Behold, he preaches.” These things may be admirably done by men who are not regenerate! But if, in God’s sense of the term, a man really *prays*, we may know for sure that he has passed from death unto life. True prayer is a sure evidence of spiritual quickening—the Holy Spirit has put spiritual life into the heart of the man who prays, for prayer is the breath of heavenly life. Prayer is the outcome of that sense of need which arises from the new life—a man would not pray to God if he did not feel that he had urgent need of blessings which only the Lord can bestow. While expressing his sense of need and appealing to God for help, the praying man gives evidence of being at peace with his Lord and cured of his natural alienation. He who prays, trusts, and thus reveals the faith which saves. Some forms of prayer display great faith, but all *real* prayer is the working of faith, either little or great. Will a man cry to God for mercy if he does not believe in Him? Will he plead at the Mercy Seat if he does not expect to obtain his desire? Thus, dear Friends, prayer of the true kind is a voucher for the existence of spiritual life in its consciousness of need, in its turning towards God and in its faith in Him.

Prayer is the autograph of the Holy Spirit upon the renewed heart. Prayer is also an admirable form of communion with God and, as the carnal mind can have no fellowship with God, it becomes the token of regeneration, the evidence of adoption! He that prays has some knowledge of God, some acquaintance with the great Invisible. The habit of private prayer and the constant practice of heart fellowship with the Most High are the surest indicators of the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. When it can be said of a man, “Behold, he prays,” the seal of the great King is upon him! He bears the endorsement of the Searcher of hearts. Hence the Lord gave to Ananias this sure indication that Saul of Tarsus was a converted man, by saying to him, “Behold, he prays.”

In Saul’s case, this indication was very specially remarkable. “Behold, he prays” had a peculiar meaning in relation to this converted Pharisee. I shall have to show you this at length. It was thought a great wonder that

king Saul, of the Old Testament, prophesied. So unexpected and amazing was the event that it became a proverb—"Is Saul also among the Prophets?" But it was an equal marvel when this more modern Saul was seen to pray! Is Saul of Tarsus among those who pray to Jesus for mercy? The Lord from Heaven, Himself, mentions it as a prodigy! He points to it as a thing to be beheld and wondered at, for He says to His servant Ananias, "Behold, he prays."

I. We will begin our discourse with the following observation—This expression concerning Saul of Tarsus is remarkable, for IT IMPLIES THAT HE HAD NEVER BEFORE PRAYED. "Behold, he prays" could hardly be spoken of one who had been accustomed to pray in former days.

This is very striking, for Saul was a Pharisee and, therefore, a man who habitually repeated prayers. Pharisees boasted of the regularity, number and length of their prayers. Perhaps there had never been a day in Saul's life from the time in which he was conscious in which he had not gone through his prayers. Many devout Jews spent nine hours a day in prayer, for they occupied an hour in actual supplication and sat still for an *hour before* and an *hour after* prayer—and this was done three times a day! Pharisees offered prayer not only in the Temple and in the synagogue, but even at the corners of the streets where they could be seen of men. Whatever the quality of their praying might be, there was plenty of it in *quantity*. If any fact was in public evidence so that nobody could deny it, it was that Saul of Tarsus had been much in prayer and, therefore, it is the more striking that the Lord, Himself, should say to Ananias concerning this constantly devout Pharisee, "Behold, he prays."

Behold how the Lord revises the judgements of men! In the opinion of all who knew Saul of Tarsus, the disciple of Gamaliel, he was much given to prayer. But He who searches the hearts and knew Saul well—and knew truthfully what prayer is—here declares that now, *at last*, Paul begins to pray! Despite all his former superfluity of ostentatious devotion, Saul, all his life, had never prayed at all! What his friends would have put down as a great mass of prayer, the Lord here makes nothing of! Until the first broken-hearted confession of sin came from the poor blinded persecutor of Jesus, the Lord considered that he had never prayed! I want to push this fact home upon some who are present with us, this morning. I mean those who, in a formal manner, have always prayed and yet have never *spiritually* prayed. Your mother taught you a form of prayer—you repeated this form all through your childhood and your youth. At this moment you are most regular in bowing the knees, both morning and evening, and yet no single prayer may ever have risen from your heart to the heart of God!

You go constantly to your place of worship; you are diligently observant of every Christian ordinance; you join in the responses, or you bow your head and listen in silence to the extemporaneous utterance of your minister and, therefore, you suppose that you pray—and yet it may be a vain supposition! If anyone were to say that you had not prayed, you would be very angry! And yet it is possible that such a statement would be strictly true. How much I long that today, for the first time, you may in real earnest cry unto the Lord God and cause Him to bear witness that now, indeed, you

pray! You will then think little of all your heartless repetitions of prayers and you will cry to God for the Holy Spirit who helps our infirmities, since we know not what we should pray for as we ought.

I have told you that the Pharisees were noted for their prayers and, therefore, it seems the more amazing that the Lord should announce that Saul of Tarsus had now begun to pray. Yet it was so—he was now offering his first *real* prayer. That prayer of the Pharisee which we read just now from the 18<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Luke was meant for prayer, but there is not a particle of prayer in it! He did not ask for anything. He did not confess a necessity, nor plead a promise. He did not seek mercy, nor mention propitiation. His formal thanksgiving was stained with proud self-esteem and it was more the boast of vanity than the request of humility! Much of what is called prayer is the husk and not the kernel of prayer. Suppose you take the best form that was ever written and you go through that in the most orderly style—you may do that and *continue* to do it throughout a life of 70 years—and yet you may never have sought God in real earnest!

If you prefer to compose your own prayers, you may do so throughout life and you may make prayers which shall be excellent in language. You may even make a new one every morning and every evening—and yet there may not have been a single atom of true supplication in the whole round of pious effusions! What if your first prayer has yet to be prayed? What a solemn suggestion to you who have been nursed in the lap of piety and wrapped in the garments of religion! I do not wonder that it cuts you to the quick. This heart-searching enquiry ought not to be thrust aside as if it did not concern you. Unless your heart speaks to God; unless your soul comes into spiritual contact with the great Father of Spirits, your form of prayer, whether it is liturgical or extemporaneous, is of little worth! God is not the God of the dead, but of the living—and this applies to prayers as well as men—

**“God abhors the sacrifice  
Where not the heart is found.”**

One sentence of true heart-pleading, such as, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” is worth volumes of mere lip-service!

Real prayer must be *spiritual* and Saul’s prayers had not been such before. Words are but the body of devotion—the confession of sin, the longing for mercy, the groaning for Grace—these are the soul and spirit of prayer! A man may have repeated the choicest words and these may have been the outward embodiment of true prayer because his heart went with them—but, on the other hand, he may have used equally select expressions and may not have prayed at all—for there may have been in him no stirring of the heart towards God. A man may utter no words whatever. He may sit in absolute silence and he may be praying most effectually. Moses cried aloud when he said not a word and Hannah was heard in the Temple when she made no sound, but only her lips moved! I reckon that those prayers which cannot be expressed in language are often the most deep and fervent. When desires are so weighty that they burden our words and even crush them down, then are they most prevalent with God. There is power in that solemn silence which is “frost of the mouth, but thaw of the

mind," when the soul flows with strong current in a deep and hidden bed till it reaches the heart of God and prevails with Him.

Anyway, that prayer which is not spiritual is not reckoned of the Lord to be prayer at all, for "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." You may, if you like, praise God with organs, as the English do, or you may pray to God with windmills, as the Tartars do—the things are very much alike, as I believe—but your praising and your praying will not be measured by the heaving of the bellows, nor by the revolution of the sails. They will be measured only by the *heart work* which was in them. If the spirit does not commune with God, there has been no prayer. There may have been music and oratory, but there has been no prayer if the spiritual nature has not spoken with the Father of Spirits. Notice, then, that we only begin to pray when we begin to live spiritual lives.

Next to this, Saul had never prayed a single *right* prayer of the kind which the Lord can accept. Saul, up to then, had not known the Lord Jesus and, therefore, he did not know the way of access to the Father through His Son, whom He has appointed Mediator. Saul knew the letter of the Truth of God according to the *Ceremonial Law*, but he did not know the spirit of it as it is embodied in Jesus. He had been going about to establish his own righteousness, but he had not submitted himself to the righteousness of Christ and, therefore, in his prayers he had not been traversing the road which led to the heart of God. If a man, using his rifle at Wimbledon in a contest for a prize, were told, "It is not that target on the right, but this upon the left which must be aimed at," if he would continue to shoot towards the right, even though he should make a center, yet he would not have scored! Inasmuch as that was not the target appointed in the competition, his best shots would count for nothing.

When a man does not pray in the Lord's appointed way, nor through Jesus Christ, nor in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, he does not pray at all! However fine his prayer, it is only a splendid *sin*. If you employ a servant to do a work and he obstinately persists in doing another thing, he will not earn his wages. However industriously he works at what you have never set him to do, he will receive nothing at your hands. So if you pray to God in a way which God has never ordained; if you refuse to use the name which He has appointed; if you neglect the cultivation of that holy and humble spirit which the Lord will, alone, accept, you may pray till your tongue cleaves to the roof of your mouth, but in God's judgement you have not prayed at all and you will not receive anything of the Lord!

It is certain, too, that Saul of Tarsus had never made mention of *the name of Jesus* in his prayers and, therefore, God reckoned that he had not prayed. Saul had *heard* of Jesus, but he had rejected His claims and hated His people. Our heavenly Father never turns a deaf ear to the name of Jesus when it is honestly pleaded. But He will not hear us if we despise that ever-blessed name. There is no other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved! There is no other name by which we can hopefully approach the Mercy Seat! Saul had rejected that name and had come in his own name and, therefore, he had not prayed at all.

Suppose a king should make a rule that every petition that was presented to him should bear a certain stamp which his representative would freely put upon it? Then if a man neglected or refused to have his petition thus endorsed, he could not wonder if his petitions were treated as impertinences and returned unanswered! Virtually, such a man has sent in no petition, whatever, since he has declined to comply with the regulation without which no petition can be received! Friends, let us see to it that we most humbly and heartily, in our prayers, plead the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the force of prayer lies mainly in our pleading the name and work of the well-beloved Son of God! We must set ourselves on one side and hide ourselves behind the Lord Jesus—for we and our prayers can only be accepted in the Beloved, through the Person, the merit, the sacrifice, the ever-living intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ! If we have not prayed in the name of Jesus, we have not prayed at all!

Furthermore, I should like you to notice that real prayer cannot come from men whose *characters* are contrary to the mind of God. He whose character contradicts his prayer has not prayed. His life has effectually pleaded against his lips. Saul of Tarsus was opposed to the Son of God—how could he be in favor with God? He did not believe the Gospel, though the seal of God was on it—how, then, could God receive his prayer? How shall the Lord listen to us if we will not listen to Him? How shall God accept us if we will not accept His Son? If we set ourselves in opposition to His Gospel, do we not shut the door of mercy in our own faces? While we pretend to be knocking at Heaven’s gate, we are turning the key against ourselves! Saul had been more than an opposer, he had become a *persecutor*—can persecutors enjoy the favor of God? Can we hope for God’s blessing while we are cursing God’s people? How can a persecutor pray?

Saul of Tarsus was evidently full of hate and cruelty—how could he pray? Love is the element of the children of God! “Everyone that loves is born of God”—but Saul had conceived such an intense disgust against the followers of the Crucified, that he hauled them to prison and voted for their death! Brothers and Sisters, we have no right to persecute any man for his religion or his irreligion—whether he is Catholic, Jew, Muslim, or Infidel, we must do nothing wrong towards him, nor rob him of any of his rights, however erroneous his views may be. We are bound to be just and right towards all men as men, whatever their religions convictions, or irreligious notions. Injustice is no friend to the Truth of God! We must not fight God’s battles with the weapons of ill will. For us to hate those who are in error and talk of them with contempt or wish them ill, or do them wrong is not according to the Spirit of Christ. You cannot cast out Satan by Satan, nor correct error by violence, nor overcome hate by hate. The conquering weapon of the Christian is love and if Paul had sought to overthrow what he thought to be an error by *love*, although he had been mistaken, he would not have been so guilty.

Whoever they might be, whether righteous or wicked, men or women, he would compel them to blaspheme the name of Jesus, whom he judged to be an impostor. He sought to domineer over their consciences and to oppress them for their beliefs. How, then, can God hear his prayer? If you

have the spirit of hate in you, it nullifies your devotions and makes your prayer to be no prayer. In *love* lies the essence of prayer and prayer ought to be the flower and crown of love. If I go through the world hating my fellow men because they differ from me. If I am determined to force my own doctrines upon others with an iron hand, I cannot lift that hand in prayer! A malicious heart pollutes the sacrifice which it offers. When I come before God in prayer, I may be offending Him when I dream that I am pleasing Him. Friend, if you are living an ungodly life, I do not care how regularly you bend your knees in seeming devotion, there is nothing in it! If you are not living as a Christian should, your prayers prove *nothing*—your matins and your vespers, your family prayers and your Prayer Meetings are the mimicry of prayer and nothing more.

You may have been baptized and you may have frequented the Lord’s Table, but it is all mockery—the caricature of godliness and nothing more—unless you strive after holiness and labor to conform your life to the will of God. God will hear us when we hear Him—He will do our will when we do His will. But persistence in known sin and especially indulgence in enmity and hatred are so destructive to prayer, that till we are free from them, we do not pray! Be at peace with all men, or talk not of prayer! Lay aside all opposition to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus or you can no more pray than a fiend of the Pit!

Yet again—Saul, with all his prayers, had never truly prayed because *humility* was absent from his devotions. What a test this is! Saul had gone about the world feeling that he was a righteous man. Did he not wear texts of Scripture between his eyes? What a pious man he was! Had he not broad borders on his garments—borders of blue? What a saint he was! Did he not fast thrice in the week and pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin? There was not a better man in all the dominions of Caesar than this Saul, in his own judgment! When he prayed, there was a high flavor of self-righteousness in his religious exercise and this made them disgusting to the Most High. The Lord delights in humble and contrite spirits, but the proud, He knows afar off. There was no confession of sin, no crying for mercy through a propitiation—his prayer was the expression of thankfulness that Saul of Tarsus was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the Law, blameless!

In the courts above, where outward appearances are nothing and God looks at the heart, his pious harangues were not reckoned to be prayers at all. If you feel quite content with your own prayers, permit me to suggest that you do not pray, for few who pray aright are ever content with their own petitions. Those who dream themselves to belong to the Good-Enough family will find themselves bad enough and the Too-Goods will find themselves shut out of Heaven! If you have a righteousness made out of your prayers, throw it to the dogs! Self-righteousness is a leaven which the Lord commands us to put away, for He abhors it and considers that it pollutes His Passover. If you pray as a deserving person, pleading your own good deeds, there is such a lie at the bottom of your prayers that you have not prayed at all!

I say again this makes terrible work of a great many persons who have been brought up in outward religion. Dear Friend, be not vexed or angry if this should seem to come home to you. If before your eyes the whole heap upon your threshing floor should be blown away like chaff, thank God that it has been blown away so soon, while there is time to gather the true wheat! It is better for you to make the sad discovery *now*, than to make it when you come to die, or to wake up in another world where there will be no hope of rectifying the error! Let this thought come to every professor of religion this morning—that you may have been a praying man or woman for years, you may have come, like Saul of Tarsus, to the fullness of your age and have abounded in the appearance of devotion—and yet you may have to pray to God for the first time!

**II.** This brings me to my second reflection, and that is, IT IS IMPLIED IN THE TEXT THAT IT WAS A REMARKABLE THING FOR SUCH A PERSON TO NOW PRAY. It is put with an *ecce*, a mark of admiration, “Behold, he prays!” It is a very difficult thing, a very *marvelous* thing, for a man to truly pray who has been, all his lifetime, praying in a false way! It is a miracle of Grace to bring a proud Pharisee to plead for mercy like a penitent publican! It is not half so wonderful that an irreligious man should begin to pray as that a vainglorious professor should begin to pray. The most remarkable conversion that could take place here, today, would not be that of Elymas, the sorcerer, but of Saul, the Pharisee! The most remarkable conversion in the Apostolic age was that of a man who, from his youth up, had been plunged in self-righteousness and in the self-content which comes of attention to ritual, ceremony and the form of godliness. “Behold *he* prays.”

It is hard for him to pray because he is a person who has been a formalist for a long time. He is so rooted in the *habit* of formal devotion and so contented with it that it is extremely difficult to bring him to attend to spiritual things. The letter kills in more senses than one—and the man so killed has no life for the things of the spirit. If he goes up to his chamber at the hour of prayer, he runs along the old trams without the least feeling and heart. He repeats the words, but he might as well be reading an unknown language. The tendency is to say the same thing over and over again till the lips move mechanically and the soul is in a deep slumber. The Bible is read, but the mind is dozing. The sermon is heard, but the heart is wandering. Where is the good of this? Yet how hard it is to get men out of it! It is easier to attend a thousand “masses,” or to go to church every day in the week, than to offer one true prayer!

It is very difficult for you who are rich in nominal devotion to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. It is hard to get the robe of Christ’s righteousness upon that man’s back who believes that his own coat is as good as it needs to be—he has worn his own rags so long that they cling to him! He is too proud to beg, for he has lived so long like a gentleman on his own income. He has been rich and increased in goods so long—and in need of nothing—that he has grown so used to his way of external and superficial religion, that you cannot get him, without a miracle of Grace, to seek after that which is deep and true.

Again, *self-righteousness* is a very great hindrance to coming to Christ in prayer. In Christ’s day, the publicans and harlots entered the Kingdom before the Pharisees who were self-righteous! It is a great thing to conquer sinful self, but it is a greater thing to overcome *righteous* self. The man who is downright bad and feels it, asks for mercy, but these people are bad at heart and do not feel it and, therefore, they will not seek the Lord. They think that they have done everything they ought to have done—wrapping themselves about in their shoddy righteousness, they imagine themselves to be quite fit to enter into the royal feast without putting on the wedding garment of the king’s providing! It costs a self-righteous man a great effort to stoop to prayer. If he did but know that his righteousness is only a part of his filthiness, he would change his note. The Scripture says, “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” When we see them to be such, we are glad to be rid of them, for they are loathsome in themselves and the foul disease of pride poisons every thread!

The man that has been accustomed to pray without his heart and to be pious without being converted is very hard to be made to pray because he is *prejudiced* against the way of Grace. He has made up his mind that he will not see the Light of God because he believes in his own light. You talk to him about salvation by Grace, redemption by the precious blood and justification by faith, alone, but he cannot stand such themes—they may suit the wicked, but *he* is of another breed! He is overshadowed with the glory of himself and, therefore, he cannot see the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The habit of superficial external religion once formed is as hard to break as for the Ethiopian to change his skin. A man hugs his self-righteousness as he hugs his life. Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has, will he give for his legal life, the life of self.

Besides, a self-righteous man knows that everybody thinks him to be right and, therefore, he cannot demean himself by such prayers and confessions as might suit a common sinner. If you talk to him about being converted, why, dear Sir, he needs no conversion! He was *born* good! He has *always* been a Christian! He needs no *change*—you don’t know what a fine gentleman he is! He never cries in the bitterness of his soul, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” Why should he? His mother and father were extremely good people and he was born again at the baptismal font and has since been confirmed! What more do you need? Washed in the blood of Jesus? Well, perhaps he needs this as others do, but there is no special sin in him, nothing, certainly, for which he could be condemned. Persons who are of this order are seldom brought to pray. They may be called reprobate silver, for the Lord has rejected them. If ever such as these are saved, it will astonish men and angels—and the Lord Himself will cry, “Behold, he prays.”

Even religious intensity and fervor may become a hindrance to a man’s conversion when that ardor is for a false faith. The earnest formalist is encased in steel and the arrows of the Gospel glance off him. Some worship every nail of the church door and every tile of the chancel. If such a thing as a priest should cross the road, they are ready to kiss the ground he treads upon! How can these be brought to the simplicity of the faith?

Among Dissenters are there not persons who are obstinate for trifles, conservative for old methods, inflexible with habit, ferocious for externals and yet devoid of spiritual life? Those who have none of the inward and spiritual Grace are often the more fierce for the outward and visible sign. The man who has no money is a great stickler for a respectable appearance, the fact being that if he does not keep that up, he will soon be in the *Gazette*. A sincerely gracious Christian is tempted, rather, to think too little of externals than too much of them. He sets the highest value upon the *inner* life and faith in the Lord Jesus. I say again, Brothers and Sisters, it is such a wonderful thing that the externally-religious man ever should begin to pray in earnest that it is recorded as a wonder! “Behold, he prays.”

See what was needed in Saul’s case to make him pray—the Lord Jesus must, Himself, appear and bring him to his knees! Nothing less than a Light shining from Heaven could show him his vileness! Oh that such a Light would break upon all self-righteous souls! The proud man must fall to the earth, cast down from his high places! Until he lies low, he will still glory in his flesh. He must be struck with blindness, that he may be ready to accept the sight of faith. Three days he must neither eat nor drink, to wean him from earth and make him feed on the Bread of Heaven. Great must be the agony of his spirit, for he that has been so intensely self-righteous cannot be brought to Christ without a wrench. He that has rested in himself so completely and so long needs to be torn up by the roots before he will quit his carnal confidences. It takes, as it were, a special interposition of Grace to bring a religious professor to pray in spirit and in truth!

**III.** And now I want you to notice, in the third place, that albeit it was a great wonder that Saul prayed, yet IT IS DIVINELY DECREED IN THE TEXT THAT HE DID.

One would have liked to have heard Saul of Tarsus pray. Look at him now! This fine, good man! How humble, how lowly he is! His prayer began with a full and grievous confession of sin. He offered neither excuse nor extenuation. He looked to Him whom he had pierced and mourned for Him. He acknowledged that he was the chief of sinners—“Because I persecuted the Church of God.” The only thing he could say by way of apology was, “I did it ignorantly, in unbelief.” Look at him there, alone in his chamber, with his eyes opened and yet blinded, He weeps, cries, groans and humbles himself before the Lord. Indeed, he prays! The other day, as he rode along to Damascus, everybody looked upon him as a saint, but now by his own confession, he is a sinner of the blackest sort! Listen how he defames himself! He repents in dust and ashes! He prays for mercy. He begs to be forgiven his scarlet sins. He acknowledges that if he were sent to Hell, it would be no more than just, but he begs that for the Savior’s sake, he may be spared and permitted to see the Light of God’s Countenance. I think I hear him making this sad confession. Behold, he now prays!

Now you will find him acknowledging his great need. “Why,” he says, “Lord, I need everything! It is not one thing that I am devoid of, but every-

thing is gone that is worth having. I need a new heart and a right spirit. I need the Truth of God in the hidden parts and that, in the inward parts, I may be made to know wisdom." He had *nothing* to boast of—he had turned from a boastful millionaire into a beggar! He would cry, "Lord, give me my sight again, but specially grant me my *spiritual* sight. Take away the scales from my heart as well as from my eyes! Help me to see Jesus as my Savior! Help me to live to His Glory, as before I have lived to persecute Him." He prayed this time—and none could doubt it!

I think I can see mingled with that prayer the lowliest adoration. How he would worship Jesus of Nazareth as his God now that he was conquered by Him! How he would cry, "My Lord, my Lord, have I been persecuting *You*? Are *You* the Messiah whom all the 12 tribes expected, and have I rejected *You*? Did I sit to see *Your* servant, Stephen, stoned, and keep the garments of those that stoned him, and I have been breathing out threats against *You*, my Lord?" Surely the deep homage of his chastened spirit must have come up sweetly before the exalted Lord as Saul bowed himself in the dust before Him and said again and again, "God forbid that I should glory, except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Behold, he prays!"

Consider what pleas he had. Did it ever strike you how Saul must have pleaded? Pleading is the truest and strongest part of prayer. Now, how did Saul of Tarsus plead? Assuredly he urged the promise, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." He knew the Old Testament Scriptures better than we do and he would be sure to use them in his prayer. I hear him crying, "O Lord, You have said, 'Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'" Surely, he also went over that 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm, every bit of it—it suited him exactly. "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness."

Do you not think that when he had gone over those promises, he would then plead the types of the Ceremonial Law concerning Christ? How the 53<sup>rd</sup> of Isaiah must have flashed in his mind! He was blinded, but what a light must have flamed up in his spirit as he saw the Man of sorrows, the acquaintance of grief, and heard the Prophet say, "Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . The chastisement of our peace was upon Him." How Saul would begin to cry to Jesus, "Oh, Son of God, be my Scapegoat, be my Sin Offering, be my morning and evening Sacrifice! Be to me the blood of sprinkling and the Paschal Lamb!" Knowing, as he did, all the types of the Jewish Law, he must have found them rich in comfort, now that, in beholding Jesus, he had found the Key of them all!

And, Beloved, all this must have been steeped in a wonderful fervor. If we could have stood outside the door and listened, we should have understood why the Lord said, "Behold, he prays." Before, you might have heard him repeating words, but now he uttered groans, cries, sobs and tears! Before, you might have said to yourself, "He is saying his prayers," but

this time it was as when a man wrestles for his life and is in bitterness for his only son! All previous prayer was sham, but this was real! All the rest was but a performance, but now he did real business with the Most High! "Behold, he prays." Now he is a real Israel, and lo, he comes off more than conqueror through Him that has taught him to pray!

**IV.** Lastly, we see that as soon as he did pray, IT WAS EVIDENT THAT THE LORD ACCEPTED HIS PRAYER. How do I know this from the text, "Behold, he prays"? Well, I know it from the text, first, because here is God bearing witness that he *did* pray. Might not the Lord stand in a Prayer Meeting and hear a dozen of us talk our piece and never say, "Behold, he prays"? But if a voice from Heaven were to say concerning someone, "Behold, he prays," we would know that the man was accepted of the Lord. So it was with Saul. The first time he prayed, God heard him. Try it, my Friend, try it! If this is your first prayer this morning, breathe it to God with humble faith and He will hear you!

We know that God had accepted this first prayer, for He was *about to answer it*. He had Ananias in readiness to go and comfort the poor blinded penitent. God is about to answer your prayer, my dear Brother, this morning, if you have cried to Him. Perhaps the man is present in the Tabernacle who will speak to you before you leave these walls, or somebody will soon call to tell you the way of peace more perfectly. If now you quit the way of self-righteousness and formal devotion and begin to cry out for the living God, that God will meet you!

Moreover, we are sure that God accepted this first prayer because He *called attention to it* by a, "Behold." It is as if God said to angels, to men, to everybody—"Behold, he prays." We have heard of the seven wonders of the world and of other marvels concerning which men cry, "Behold," but that which strikes God most is a praying man, a *sinner praying!* God does not say, "Behold Herod on his throne," or, "Behold Caesar in his palace," but He does say, "Behold, he prays," as if He would make the praying man the center of observation, the focus of regard! "Behold, he prays." The heart of God is delighted with true prayer. The arch-enemy notices true prayer and trembles when a man falls on his knees. And God would have all His saints on earth and His saints in Heaven look down upon a man in prayer. To the great Father's heart, it is a prodigal returning! He cries, "Behold, he prays," but He means, "Behold, he is coming home! Behold, he seeks his Father's face! Behold, I have found My son which I had lost!" Prayer is God's delight, God's admiration!

Beloved, has this ever been the case with you, that you could draw the attention of the great God to yourself? I am afraid there are many of whom it would have to be said, "Behold, he *never* prays!" What a sight upon earth—a man created by his Maker who never worships his Creator—a man who is daily fed by God's bounty, but never worships Him! Sir, you are a monster, you are a creature among men most loathsome! A man that lives without prayer ought not to live! It is a wonder that the earth does not open her mouth and swallow up such a wretch! And yet when he *does* pray, God makes a wonder of it!

It is his first prayer this morning. I see him—the sermon is over and he has reached home. He has gone up to his room. He is afraid somebody will come in and disturb him—he is turning the key. He is kneeling by the side of that bed on which he has slept so often without prayer and he cries, "O God, I do not know what to say, but be merciful to me, a sinner, and forgive my sins!" I hear the rustling wings of angels as they gather around the sacred spot! Soon they fly upward crying, "Behold, he prays!" Years shall pass on with you, young man, and you shall come to middle life and be exposed to sharp temptation—what will you do then? Good spirits watch you, fearing lest you should go astray, and devils watch for your halting. You will then remember that day in the middle of September when you first prayed—and you will say to yourself, "I will again cry unto God, as I have often done." You go upstairs and say, "Lord, many days have passed since first I cried to You and I have not ceased to cry, but now I am in special trouble. I beseech You, deliver me!" God will help you. The great wheel of Providence will revolve for you. Meanwhile, both angels and devils have spied you out—the angels sing and the devils mutter, "Behold, he prays."

A few years have passed. The young man has grown old and the time is come that he must die. He has gone up to the same room for the last time and there are those about him who weep and watch. Mark the sweet serenity of the departing soul! He is looking into eternity without fear. He knows whom he has believed and he is ready to depart. What is he doing in his expiring moments? "Behold, he prays." Prayer, which has long been his vital breath and native air, is now—

***"His watchword at the gates of death—  
He enters Heaven with prayer!"***

Demons that gather about our last hour shall flee away as bats fly out of a cavern scared by a torch! They shall flee when they hear the voice, "Behold, he prays." The shining ones shall gladly meet the soul that is on Jordan's bank when they hear the voice, "Behold, he prays." They shall meet the praying spirit on the other side of the river and shall smile while the prayer of earth melts into the praise of Heaven! Soon shall we be forever with the Lord! God grant it may be so, for His name's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—**

***Luke 18:1-14; Acts 9:1-22.***

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—138, 977, 98.**

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# AN ENCOURAGING LESSON FROM PAUL'S CONVERSION NO. 944

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 7, 1870,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem: and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on Your name. But the Lord said unto him, Go your way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake.”*  
**Acts 9:13-16.**

THE conversion of Saul of Tarsus was one of the most remarkable facts in Christian history. Perhaps there has never happened an event of equal importance since the days of Pentecost. It was important as a testimony to the power and Truth of the Gospel. When such a man, so violently opposed, so intelligent and well-instructed, could be converted to the faith of the Nazarene by the appearance of the Lord from Heaven, it was a testimony alike to the fact of our Lord's Resurrection, and to the power of His Word.

Paul also occupied a high place among the defenders of the faith when the Gospel had to struggle for a footing against Judaism and philosophy. Being well-versed in the Scriptures of the Old Testament and in the traditions of the Jews, and possessing great argumentative powers, he became a leading apologist for the faith. In the synagogues and the schools he overthrew those who opposed the doctrines of Jesus. In addition to this, the conversion of the Apostle Paul gave a great impetus to the missionary spirit of the Christian Church. Here he shone preeminently.

Into what lands did he not carry the Gospel? Ordained to be the Apostle of the uncircumcision, he proclaimed in the utmost ends of the earth the name of Jesus Christ. The Apostle, moreover, as a writer takes the highest place in the Christian canon. It pleased God to select this most remarkable man to be the medium of Inspiration by whose writings we should receive the most thorough and complete exhibition of the Gospel of the Grace of God. Turn to the New Testament and see with astonishment how large a space is occupied by the letters of one first called Saul of Tarsus, but afterwards Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ.

It is a matter of fact that Paul not only directed the energy of the Christian Church of his own day, but he shaped its mode of action. In addition he so toned the thought of the Christian world that to this moment I suppose he exercises, under God, a greater influence over the theology of Christendom than any other man. We claim him as the great Apostle of the Doctrines of Grace. Heading a line of teachers, among whom

Augustine and Calvin stand conspicuous, he remains unrivalled as “a wise master-builder.” Even the things hard to be understood which he was not afraid to grapple with have continued to have their effect upon Christian theology.

The Pauline mark will never be erased from the page of Church history. That, however, is not my business this morning. I would rather remind you that the conversion of the Apostle Paul was, in itself, instructive. It was not only operative upon the Church, but as a narrative it is instructive to us. We are not to look upon it as a strange phenomenon to be only gazed upon, and wondered at—it is a lesson book for all time. It contains a world of teaching within it, and principally teaching upon this point—the fact of the Divine interposition in the Church of God.

God has been pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. This is the era of instrumentality—Christ bids His disciples go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. And it is by the communication of one earnest heart to another that men are usually converted. Such, however, was not the way by which Paul was converted. He was called into the Church by an interposition of the living Christ out of Heaven, speaking directly to his soul. And we doubt not that the same Jesus has still His own ways of reaching human hearts when human instrumentality is not available.

Paul's conversion is a type, or as our version reads it, a pattern, and it is natural to believe that the pattern has been copied. I shall look upon his conversion as being typical of some others that have occurred, and that will occur till the last hour of the Christian dispensation. Certain men will be brought to God not by manifest instrumentality, but more secret means. The Church has reason to believe that while she industriously uses all the power committed to her, there will be interpositions of a power far higher than her own which will work for her great successes and bring to her great additions of strength.

While Barak fights below, the stars in Heaven shall also fight against Sisera. That is the point I want to speak upon, this morning, for the glory of God, and the encouragement of any desponding spirits among us.

**I.** Our first thought shall be, this morning, **THERE ARE OTHER PRODUCTIVE FORCES AT WORK FOR THE CHURCH BESIDES HER TEACHING.** Her teaching is her main source of growth. She is to look to the instruction that she can give through her members, and her ministers, for the birth of most of her sons and daughters. But she is also to remember that there are other forces at work over and above these appointed agencies. The mountain is full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the Gospel.

And, first, let me remind you of what may be expected from the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church of Christ. All the success of the Church comes through Him. That blessed Person of the Divine Trinity in Unity is pleased to give power to the Truth of God whereby it operates upon the hearts and consciences of men. It is not to that point, however, that I draw your attention. I would ask you a question: Have we not reason to expect that the Holy Spirit will occasionally display His power, by working *apart* from the ordinary agencies of the Church?

It is certain that the Holy Spirit can act directly upon the minds of men apart from human agency, for He has often done so in past ages. He can, if it so pleases Him, melt the stubborn heart, subdue the obdurate will, and purify the depraved affections. And though I believe He never works apart from the Truth and the things of Christ, yet He can do all this while acting altogether apart from any human teaching. There have been many cases of the kind. We have heard of persons at their labor who have not been accustomed to attend the house of God, nor of reading religious books—and yet in the middle of their work they have been filled with penitent and devout thoughts—and have suddenly commenced an altogether new life.

We have known cases of persons not engaged in lawful pursuits, but intending to perpetrate vice, who have, nevertheless, found the power of God to be greater over them than the power of their corrupt affections. They have been struck with certain reflections which they had never recognized before, have paused, and have been led to turn altogether in another direction. They have, in fact, become believers in Christ and men of holy and ardent lives.

Why should not the Holy Spirit do so still? If He pleases to employ us, it is to His honor to work by such poor instruments, but if He shall please occasionally to do *without* us, it is also to His honor, and I may add it is equally to our satisfaction. For we delight that He should display His power. We have reason to expect that He will so work sometimes, and this is one of the forces which may work apart from instrumentality.

Think again, my Brethren, of the intercession of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Most potent in Heaven is the plea of Him who here on earth offered Atonement for the sins of His people. For Zion's sake He does not hold His peace, and for Jerusalem's sake He does not rest. Nor will He till His Glory shall fill all the earth, and His elect bride shall share there. Now our Lord Jesus Christ not only prays for those whom we pray for, but He prays for those we never thought of praying for.

There are some whom He mentions before the Eternal Throne whom we have never mentioned. They have never yet been observed by any interceding Christian, whose cases have never impressed a single godly heart. Yet Jesus knows them—and He does cry to God for them, and shall there not come to them Grace in due season? Yes, my Brethren, I rejoice in this, that where through ignorance or through the narrowness of my charity, my prayer has never stretched itself, the prayer of the great High Priest who wears the Urim and Thummim can yet reach, and the salvation of God shall come to such.

I doubt not Jesus might well have said to Paul, "I have prayed for you, and therefore you shall be Mine," and in many other cases the same is true. The intercession of our Lord is a mighty power, and as it wins gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious also, Apostles, and preachers, and teachers, are called forth by Divine Grace. Not our colleges, our councils, our societies, or our conferences, but the intercession of Jesus is the mainstay of our strength—the secret cause of the calling of men into the mystery of the Gospel.

Think, too, of another force, the result of which is not altogether expended in connection with manifest instrumentality. I mean the daily and incessant intercession of the faithful in all places. Of course, this intercession brings success to instrumentality, the work of the Church would be nothing without it—true prayer is true power. But there are prayers, I doubt not, which go up to Heaven but are not offered in connection with any particular agency, and are not answered through any manifest instrumentality.

There are groanings which cannot be uttered for the general cause, for the regeneration of the elect, for the Glory of the Redeemer in which we appeal directly to God, and look for Him to rend the heavens and arise in His might—such prayers most probably have a reply after their own likeness. The prayers of the Church come down in a great measure, as I have said, upon instrumentality, but they also drop, I doubt not, on solitary and uncultivated places. The prayers of God's Church are like the clouds which ascend from the sea, as the sun shines on the waves—they fall on the fields which have been sown by man, but they also drop upon the pastures of the wilderness—and the little hills rejoice on every side.

Who shall say that Saul's conversion was not traceable to the prayer of Stephen, when, as he expired, he said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"? Yet there was no distinct connection between the two such as could be defined and described. Who shall say that the gatherings in Jerusalem for earnest prayer may not have had about them power with God for the conversion of the persecutors, the dread of whom may have made them more earnest in supplication? Yet we do not see the same connecting link as between the famous Prayer Meeting in the house of John Mark's mother, and the escape of Peter from prison.

Pray on, Beloved Brethren, for though there should seem to be no connection between your prayers and the salvation of the sons of men, yet this shall be one of the forces in operation which shall not spend itself in vain. God will be pleased, in answer to humble and unknown pleaders, to bring out His own hidden ones.

Then remember there is another impalpable, but very potent force—the aroma of the Truth of God in the world. The Truth is mainly spread by plain earnest statements of it, but there is also a savor in Truth, an inherent perfume, whereby even in our silence it spreads itself. Paul declared that where he had preached the Gospel he was a sweet savor of God, both in them that were saved and in them that perished. The Gospel is like myrrh, and cassia, and aloes. It will make itself felt even where it is not sought after. Place some Oriental perfume in a room and all the air will be loaded with its sweetness.

Where the Gospel of Jesus Christ comes, it impregnates the social atmosphere, it permeates society, it has an effect far beyond its local habitation. I do not doubt that many men who have not yet bowed before the Deity of Christ have unconsciously learned much from Him, and what they perhaps think to be their own is but a blessed plagiarism from the Jesus of Nazareth. Even the philosophies of men have been all the more sober, and the laws of men all the gentler, because of the existence of the Gospel.

Men cannot live in the midst of Christians, and yet altogether shut out the influence of Christianity. There is a lavender field over yonder, and though a man may hate the smell of it, and block up his windows and keep his doors closed, somehow or other, he may count on it, when the wind blows in the right direction, the perfume will reach him. And so it is here—if a man will not listen to the preaching of the Gospel, if he constantly neglects attendance upon the means of Grace—yet for all that, the kingdom of Heaven has come near to him. And in some form or other the angel of mercy will frequently cross his path.

May we not hope for results from these influences? May not these things be the thin end of the wedge which shall be driven home by Divine force until the sinner is divided from his sins? I feel sure it is so in cases numberless. For we may say of the Gospel as David did of the sun, "His going forth is from the end of the Heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

Further, remember there is at work in the world, wherever there are Believers, the influence of Christian life and of Christian death. Christian life wields a mighty power. Wherever the Christian acts up to his profession, and the Grace within him shines forth in holiness, those who observe him take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus. And as example speaks more loudly than precept, we may look for very marked results. The eloquence of Christian holiness is more potent for conversion than all the speaking of Christian orators—may we not therefore hope for converts by it?

So, too, there are secret forces in every real Christian's death. When the ungodly man stands at the bedside and sees a Christian die singing in holy triumph, there may not be a word addressed to him—the dying Christian may be so absorbed in Heaven that he may scarcely have a thought of the sinner who is looking on—but that happy death will be a potent agency to arouse, to attract, to win the heart for Christ Jesus. Besides that, my Brethren, we ought never to forget that all the work of God in Providence is on the side of those who fight for the Gospel of Jesus.

I might truly say of the Church that the stones of the field are in league with her, and the beasts of the field are at peace with her, for all things work her good. Sickness, when it stalks through the land, is a powerful preacher to the unthinking masses. We have seen men impressed, in years of cholera, who despised religion before. We have marked them listening to us with attention when a disease has humbled them. When death has come into the house, and the dear babe has died, it has frequently happened that ears were opened which never heard the Gospel before. And hearts were impressed that were hard as iron until the fire of affliction melted them.

I believe Death himself to be an able ally of a faithful minister. The funerals which break men's hearts with natural sorrow are often overruled for the breaking of their hearts in a spiritual sense, also, so that oftentimes there are brought to Jesus, by the death of beloved ones, men who, to all human appearance, would otherwise have been lost. Have courage, you that fight for Christ—disease and death itself shall be overruled to help you. Physical calamities and catastrophes shall subdue the rebel-

lions spirits of men, and you, then, stepping in with consolation, shall find a welcome for the Gospel.

As God sent the hornet before his conquering Israel to overthrow the Canaanites, so does He send Providences to work together, for our help, that the Truth may prevail. Providence, like the angel at the sepulcher, rolls away the stone for us. It makes straight in the desert a highway for God. It is the Elijah which clears the way for the coming Savior.

In addition to this, I must not fail to remind you that every man has a conscience. And though conscience is sadly impaired, it still leans to the right side. Conscience is not perfect, though some assert it to be so. In common with all the faculties of man it was disarranged by the Fall, and conscience is therefore no infallible judge of right and wrong. Still, for all that, half-blinded as it is, it yet knows which is light and which is darkness. And though it puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, still in the violence which it puts upon itself, it reveals an inner sense as yet undestroyed.

Still is it a fact that even those who have not the Law, "are a Law unto themselves: which show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." The right awakens still an echo in man's bosom. The pure, the good, the true still may count on recognition from the glimmering moral sense within. To the preacher this is a fact full of hope, and he ought not to forget it.

See then, that over and above our work which ought to be constant, incessant, intense, we have the Holy Spirit at work. We have Christ pleading. We have the whole company of the faithful sending up their perpetual intercessions. We have the blessed savor of the Truth of God spreading itself abroad. We have the evidence and power of holy living and triumphant dying. We have the wheels of Providence revolving, and the consciences of men made to yield an acquiescence to the Truth of God. I have thus very hurriedly run over a very extensive range of consideration.

**II.** Secondly, reflect, my Brethren, that FROM THESE SOURCES WE MAY EXPECT REMARKABLE CONVERSIONS. We expect to see the major part of conversion through the daily instruction given to the children of Christian people, through the constant preaching of the Gospel, the distribution of religious literature, and the direct efforts of the followers of Christ. But over and above all this, we have a right to expect remarkable conversions from the less manifest sources of which I have spoken.

As in the case of Saul, these conversions will bring to us persons formerly violently opposed to the Truth through prejudice. In Paul we see a man opposed to Christ not because he was opposed to the Truth of God, but because he thought that Jesus was not the Messiah. He worshipped God, the God of his fathers, with a fervent heart—and because he conceived that Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be what He was not—he hunted down His disciples to the death.

Once convinced that he was wrong, he followed the right at once. And we may hope that interpositions will occur in which the Holy Spirit will enlighten the darkness of men who are honest in their darkness, and that they, seeing the light, will embrace the Gospel and bow before our King.

Be that a subject of your prayers. I doubt not there are to be found, this day, devoted to an evil cause, men who nevertheless would not willfully choose what they knew to be error. They are devoted to it because in their ignorance they sincerely believe it to be true.

Many a heretic has died for his heresy, believing it to be the very Truth of God. Our prayers should be that these men who would do right if they but knew it, may receive the blessed help of Him who is the light of the world, and may be brought to see in His light the true light. In such cases I should hope for their enlightenment. They are seeking goodly pearls, and I trust they will find the Pearl of Great Price. He who has made them honest and good ground will, we trust, sow them with good seed.

We may expect, too, from these sources, the conversion of persons who have been doing much mischief to the good cause, and who are resolved to do still more. Does not Ananias put it so? "He has done great evil to the Church at Jerusalem, and here he has authority to bind all who call on Your name." Yes, but do not despair of a man because he is industriously opposed. Do not despair of him even because he is furious. Anything is better than to slumber in indifference. Provoke a man by the Gospel till he gnashes his teeth at you and he is none the less likely to be converted.

Preach to him till he says, "He plays well upon a goodly instrument, he makes sweet sounds to charm my ears," and you will probably lull him into everlasting destruction. I love to see men rather aroused to oppose, than made to acquiesce, because they care not whether the Gospel is true or false. We may expect the Lord to arrest the chief ones among His enemies, for it will glorify Him.

These sources will probably produce converts from among those who are beyond the reach of ordinary ministries. We sometimes regret that the voice of a thoroughly faithful ministry is seldom heard in the courts of kings, and that there is little hope of the Gospel's reaching the great ones of the earth. No, but for all that, the Lord can reach those whom we cannot reach. He can in life or in the dying hour come to the hearts of men whose ears were never reached by any testifier to the Truth, and He can bring them yet to His feet. He is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

Paul would not have heard a preacher of Christ. He would have hurried him to prison, but never have listened to him. There was no likelihood of Saul's conversion by ordinary means. He would not stop to examine any documents had they been offered to him. Apologists for Christ he would have rejected with scorn—but the Lord has a way where we have none—and He calls whom He will by His own Sovereign power.

We may expect persons who shall be converted by these causes to become very earnest. A man who feels that God has had singular mercy upon him feels that being much loved, and having had much forgiven, he must render much service. If I have been brought to Christ in the Sunday school, or after habitual listening to the Truth, I am a great debtor to the mercy of God. But the probabilities are that I shall not be so much impressed with my indebtedness as I ought to be. But if I have been quite out of the way, as it were, in the wilderness of sin, and yet the voice of the Lord that breaks the cedars of Lebanon has sounded in my ears—then I

shall glorify that voice—and glorifying it consecrate myself to the God who uttered it.

Such men, too, become profoundly evangelical. I trace Paul's exceeding evangelism to the fact that he was so remarkably converted. He could not be content with the surface of Truth—he dived into the depths of Grace and Sovereignty. He saw in himself the boundless power, the infinite mercy, the absolute Sovereignty of God. And therefore he bare witness more clearly than any other to these Divine attributes. He spoke of election, and predestination, and the deep things of God. Who but he could have written the ninth of Romans, or the Epistle to the Galatians?

Courage, then, my Brothers and Sisters—the noble minds will yet be engaged in the service of our Master. They tell us that the power of Popery spreads in the land, that everywhere men are going back to the old falsehoods from which they once were delivered. We are told that we are to be ground down again beneath the iron wheels of superstition. And on the other hand, we hear that infidelity and skepticism spread themselves like a plague over the land. Be not afraid. God will convert the priests and convince the infidel demagogue. You need not fear. The leaders on the enemy's side shall yet be champions in our Master's army.

Reckon not your feeble bands. Count not the timid soldiers already enlisted. Say not, "How few we are and how weak!" You know not where the Lord's hidden warriors are, nor what chief among the mighties He has concealed. They are not merely hidden among the stuff of worldliness, but they are there, in open hostility to His Cross and Crown—the mightiest warriors against Christ. Some of these shall, through conquering Grace, become the servants of God. Can you not believe it? Have you no faith in Jesus Christ? Believing it, will you not pray for it? Praying for it, will you not expect it? All things are possible to him that believes. Above all, everything is possible to the might of the eternal God and His ever-blessed Spirit. We must say no more on that, but pass on to a third reflection.

**III. THIS OCCASIONAL SINKING OF INSTRUMENTALITY ANSWERS ADMIRABLE ENDS.** It might be thought to be a dangerous thing that sometimes God should work in Grace apart from man. I mean dangerous to the industry of the Church, for some are always ready enough to clutch at excuses for leaving God's work alone. And there are always certain indolent spirits who would gladly say, "Let God do His own work, it can be accomplished without us, we therefore may be excused."

These men know better. They know the falsehood of their talk. It were not worth the Master's while to confute them, their own hearts condemn them. There are admirable reasons for the Lord's sole working—for, first, these interpositions disclose the Presence of the living Christ. We, too, often forget the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet the power of the Church lies in Christ. He is the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God. Some may remember Jesus, but not in His present Personal Character.

In the Roman Catholic Church its power over devout minds lies in no small degree in the fact that the Person of Christ is much spoken of, loved, and revered. But mark well that you seldom see the Christ of the Romish Church in any but two attitudes. As a rule, either He is a babe in His mother's arms, or else He is dead—scarcely ever is He set forth by

them as the living King, Head, and Lord. In both of those first aspects let Him be revered, let the incarnate God and the dying Savior have your hearts. But there is another fact to be borne in mind, and that is that He ever lives! That Church which, not forgetting His birth, nor His sacrifice, yet most clearly recognizes that He still *lives*, is the Church that shall win the day.

We must have a living Head to the Church, we cannot do without one. Men will assuredly invent a living head on their own account, if they overlook the living Christ. They will find some priest or other whom they would gladly gird with the attributes of Deity, and set up as the Vicar of Christ. But we have a *living* Christ, and when He is pleased to appear to any man by His Spirit—I speak not of miraculous appearances, but of other direct operations of His Spirit upon the spirits of men—when He reveals Himself apart from instrumentality to man, then the Church discovers yet, again, that He is in her midst fulfilling His promise—“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” Still the Lord Jesus walks among the golden candlesticks and exerts a living force in the hearts and consciences of men—and He would have us remember this.

Further, dear Friends, these interpositions tend to remind the Church of the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit. The tendency nowadays is to expunge the supernatural, to bring everything down to the rule of reason, and the denial of faith. But for all that, there is a Holy Spirit. Rest assured that that doctrine of the creed, “I believe in the Holy Spirit,” is a matter of reality. I am as certain that there is a Holy Spirit as that I live, for unto my spirit He has spoken, and I have come into contact with Him. I know that there are men's minds, for those minds have affected me. I know also that there is an Eternal Spirit, for He has affected my spirit, and I speak concerning Him what I know, and testify what I have seen. In proportion as that Truth is made clear to the Church by her personal experience, by the Spirit's moving where He wishes, and working Divine wonders, the Church will be girt with power from on High.

This, too, tends to unveil many of the Divine attributes. Men so remarkably converted are sure to display the Sovereignty of God. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,” is an utterance which rolls like thunder over the head of Paul when he sinks amidst the blaze of the light from Heaven. God is saving whom He wills, for He stops the persecutor in the fury of his rage. There, too, was seen God's power.

There might have been heard as a thunderclap from Heaven, “Power belongs unto God,” when down fell Saul, wounded beneath the arrows of the Prince of Peace. There, too, was seen Divine Grace. Paul looked upon himself as the fairest pattern of God's longsuffering, obtaining mercy, though he had persecuted the Church of God. The very chief of sinners, and yet made not a whit behind the chief of the Apostles.

And so these remarkable conversions aid very much the faith of the Church. When she is beginning to droop and to sink, when holy men fancy that at least, for awhile, the cause must wither, and even the bravest spirits wait rather than press forward—then it is that these remark-

able conversions come in and inspirit the whole band—and they take courage and march to the victory with willing footsteps!

And this also startles and impresses the world. What does the world know of the conversion of those who have sat in these pews ever since they were children? What does the world care about the faith of those who, happily for themselves, were led to Jesus from their youth? But let some gross blasphemer weep the tear of penitence. Let some bold persecutor preach the faith which once he sought to destroy, and the whole city hears of it! The land is astonished and in proportion God is glorified, and the power of His Grace is manifested.

Thus, you see, there are good reasons for the Lord thus working. He may do as He wills. He will have us see that He does not need us. He may, if He pleases, use us. It is His rule to do so, and we are to work knowing that to be the rule. But we must adore, and admire, and bless Him that sometimes, putting us aside, He puts His own bare arm to the work. Thus His glorious right arm is exalted, for the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.

**IV.** We shall now come to our fourth point, and draw towards a close. ALL THIS BY NO MEANS LOWERS THE VALUE OF INSTRUMENTALITY. It is not so intended, and only stupidity would so interpret it. For, first, such cases are rare, very much rarer than conversions by the agency of the Church. One Saul is struck to the earth, only one. But Peter preaches at Pentecost, and three thousand are pricked in their hearts. See the difference in numbers!

The preaching of the Gospel is God's way of converting—His usual and general way. "Since all His paths drop fatness," it is especially so with this path of the ministration of the Truth by an earnest heart to other hearts. One Paul, I say, one Paul on the road to Damascus—but three thousand saved by the preaching of the word by Peter. I read of one Colonel Gardner who, on the very night he was about to commit a great sin saw, or fancied he saw, the appearance of our Lord, and heard the words, "I have done all this for you, what have you done for Me?" There is one such case—only one—I believe most certainly a true case.

But there were fifty thousand, perhaps, in Scotland and in England at that time who were brought to a knowledge of the Truth by the ordinary methods of mercy. So the exhibition of special interposing Grace now and then does not interfere with the regular work of the Church, or lower our esteem of it. Riding along, I see in the hedgerow a tree with rich fruit upon it. I am surprised, I do not know how it came there, it is a very unusual thing to see our garden fruit trees in public hedgerows. But when I have seen it I do not think any the less of my neighbor who over yonder is planting fruit trees in his orchard.

That is the ordinary way to get fruit. If now and then a fruit tree springs up upon the heath, if we are hungry we are glad to pluck the fruit—we do not know how it got there, and it is of no consequence that we should know—there is the fruit, and we are glad of it. But still we do not give up our orchard. Because sometimes a man finds a shilling, does he give up work? Extraordinary events in nature are always treated as such, and are not made the rule of everyday action. Even thus wise men treat unusual

displays of Divine power. To forego regular agency that we may wait for wonders were as idle as to leave the regular pursuits of commerce to live upon the trash washed up by the sea.

Remember, next, that these very cases involve human agency somewhere. Saul is on his way to Damascus, and, lo, he is struck down by the light, and by a voice from Heaven is converted. But after the three days of blindness and fasting, how does he get comfort? Does that come by another voice from Heaven? It might have. But the Lord takes care that the very instrumentality which is put aside in one place shall be honored in another, and so Ananias must be sent forth to bless the penitent.

Ananias was a plain disciple. We do not know that he was either a preacher or an Evangelist, but a disciple of good repute, living at Damascus. And he must come and say, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto you in the way, has sent me." So you shall always find in conversion that there is instrumentality somewhere or other. My dear Brother, if God is pleased to convert a soul without using you, He may honor you by employing you to comfort him after conversion. Conviction may be worked by the Holy Spirit without means, but in the full decision, in the laying hold on Christ, He may give you occupation. Somewhere or other God will use you—only be a vessel fit for the Master's use—and you will not be long out of service.

Further, so far from dishonoring instrumentality, the conversion of Saul and others of the kind is a provision of a most remarkable instrumentality. "I have called him"—not to be a singular article for exhibition—but, "to be a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name among the Gentiles." Remarkable converts become themselves the most indefatigable servants of God. Paul put all the wheels of the Church in more rapid motion than they ever knew before, and became himself one of the greatest wheels.

He goes everywhere preaching the Gospel, so that instrumentality is not silenced, but God helps it to a higher position than before. Was it not through Paul that men were called into the fellowship and afterwards into the work of Jesus Christ? Should we ever have heard of such as Timothy and Titus and others if Paul had not been their spiritual parent? So that here we have not only a master worker begotten by this non-instrumental work, but he also begets other workers, and so the work of God to distant generations receives an impetus from the conversion of one single man. No, God does not dishonor instrumentality. If He puts it by for awhile to glorify Himself, He brings it forward again in due season and makes it brighter and more fit for His purpose.

Let us adore, dear Friends, in conclusion, the power of the All-Working God. Let us reverence and worship Him. In our gatherings as Christians, let us worship Him with whom power still dwells. Let us not look to the earnestness of that man, or to the wealth of this, to the judgment of a third, to the eloquence of a fourth—but let us look to Him who has all power in Heaven and in earth. "Whom having not seen we love," "in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Let us believe that the Father works up to now and Christ works. Let us think of Him, who "works all things according to the counsel of His

own will.” Let us never be dispirited, but believe that the everlasting purpose of God will be accomplished—that the success of His Church will never be in jeopardy—that the onward march of the armies of God can be in no peril. All flesh shall see the salvation of God. All the earth shall worship Him, and Christ shall be acknowledged to be God to the glory of God the Father.

The power to accomplish this is not contained in these poor vessels of clay, nor limited by the capacities of manhood, nor bounded by the perceptions of mortals! The arm which is on the side of the Church is Omnipotent. The mind that works over all for the glorious cause is infinitely wise and prudent. “Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your hearts. Wait, I say, on the Lord.” Keep His way, delight also yourselves in Him, and He shall bring it to pass, and you shall see that accomplished which you would not have believed though a man had spoken it unto you. Go on working, there is your sphere. Pray much that God would work also, for prayer is another part of your sphere.

Expect God to work, believe that He will surely conquer Satan. Be confident that evil will not win the day, that error cannot be permanent, that there will occur Divine surprises which will make the Church to wonder at what her Lord God can do! In one word, *believe*, and you shall be established. Wait upon God and you shall be strong. Never give way to unbelief. Believe in the unseen. Rest in the invisible. Have confidence in the Infinite. And the Lord send to us and to all Christendom a band of men whom He has chosen whom He shall call out as He did His Apostle—and who shall become the leaders of His Church, and the conquerors of the world. The Lord grant that some who are here this morning may be among that elect company. Amen.

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# AENEAS

## NO. 1315

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 16, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*Upon the occasion of the regular hearers vacating their seats to allow strangers to fill the house. "And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down, also, to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole: arise, and make your bed. And he arose immediately. And all that dwelt in Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord." Acts 9:32-35.*

I MAY not hope that I shall see you all again, and so, as I have the opportunity of only preaching one sermon to you, I must make it as full as I can of the *essence of the Gospel*, from beginning to end. We have heard of a chaplain who preached in a jail, who selected a subject which he divided into two heads. The first part was the sinner's *disease*. This he took for his topic on one Sabbath and closed the sermon by saying that he would preach upon the sinner's *remedy* upon the following Sunday. Now, there were several of the prisoners hanged on Monday, according to the custom of the bad old times, so that they did not hear that part of the discourse which it was most necessary for them to hear.

It would have been well to have told out the great news of salvation at once to men so near their end. And I think that in every sermon, if the preacher confines himself to one subject, and leaves out essential Gospel Truths under the notion that he will preach salvation by Jesus another day, he is very unwise, for some of his congregation may be dead and gone—alas, some of them lost—before he will have the opportunity of coming to the grand and all-important point, namely, the way of salvation!

By the Grace of God we will not fall into that evil tonight! We will try to shoot at the very center of our target and preach the plan of salvation as completely as we can. And may God grant that His blessing may rest on it, the Holy Spirit working with it. I shall only preach this one sermon to some of you. You will, therefore, have the greater patience with me as I shall not inflict myself upon you again. But, if we are to have only one communication with each other, let us come to real practical business and waste no time. A good deal of sermon-hearing is mere trifling—let us come to matter-of-fact preaching *and* hearing at this time!

I am afraid that some sermon preaching is *playing*, too—fine words and oratorical fireworks—but no agony for souls. We mean business tonight! My heart will not be satisfied unless many of you who came in here without Christ shall go down those steps saved by His atoning blood! Bitter will be my disappointment if many do not lay hold of Jesus and realize in their own souls, Peter's words, "Jesus Christ makes you whole." I have

faith in the great Physician that many of you will go away whole tonight though you were sin-sick when you came into this House of Prayer. Much supplication has gone up to Heaven for this and the Lord hears prayer—therefore do I reckon that miracles of healing will surely be worked in this house on this occasion!

To the point, then! Peter came to Lydda and found one who bore the classic name of Aeneas. He was no mighty warrior, however, but a poor paralyzed man who had been confined to his bed for eight long years. Touched with a sight of the man's feebleness, Peter felt the impulse of the Spirit upon him and, looking at him as he lay there, he said, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole: arise, and make your bed." Touched by the same Spirit who inspired the Apostle, the man believed the message—believed that Christ had healed him—at once rose and made his bed and in an instant was perfectly restored!

Now let us hear something about this man. We are not to hear Virgil sing, "arms and the man," but we are to let Luke tell us of the man and his Savior.

**I.** In the first place, then, it is very clear that THE MAN WAS TRULY SICK. Had he not been *really sick*, the incident before us would have been all a fake—a feint and a pretence from beginning to end—but he was hopelessly infirm. He had been anxiously watched by his friends for eight years and was so completely palsied that during all those years he had not left his bed, which had grown hard as a stone beneath him. Now, as there is no room for a great cure unless there is a great sickness, so there is no room for God's great Grace unless there is great sin! Jesus Christ did not come into the world to save sham sinners, but *real* sinners—neither did He descend from Heaven to seek those who are not diseased with sin, for the whole have no need of a physician—but He has come to seek those who are deeply diseased and to give them real healing.

This man's sickness was no imaginary ill, for he could not move. His hands and feet were quite paralyzed. If in any limb there was a measure of motion, it was only a tremulous quiver, which rather indicated growing weakness than remaining force. He was bereaved of all strength. Are you such by nature, my Friend, in a spiritual sense? Certainly you are so—but have you found it out? Has the Spirit of God made you feel that you can do nothing aright apart from Him and that you are altogether ruined and palsied unless Jesus Christ saves you? If so, do not despair because you feel how terribly your soul is smitten!

But, on the contrary, say to yourself, "Here is room for mercy in me. If ever a soul needed healing, I do. Here is space for Divine power to operate in me, for if ever a soul was weak and palsied, I am just that soul." Be cheered with the hope that God will make your infirmity a platform upon which He will display His power! The man had been paralyzed *eight years*. The length of its endurance is a terrible element in a disease. Perhaps yours is no eight years' malady, but 28, or 38, or 48, or 78—perhaps 88 years you have been in bondage! Well, blessed be God, the number of years in which we have lived in sin cannot prevent the mercy of God in Christ Jesus from making us whole! You have a very long bill to dis-

charge, while another friend has but a short one and owes comparatively little—but it is just as easy for the creditor to write, “paid,” at the bottom of the large bill as the smaller one.

And now that our Lord Jesus Christ has made full Atonement, it is as easy for God to pardon the iniquities of 80 years as the sins of the child of eight. Be not despairing, then, Jesus Christ can make such as you are whole, even though your heart and your understanding have been long paralyzed with sin. The man’s disease was one which was then reckoned to be, and probably is now, *entirely incurable*. Who can restore a palsied man? Aeneas could not restore himself and no merely human physician had skill to do anything for him. Dear Hearer, has the Spirit of God made you feel that your soul’s wound is incurable? Is your heart sick? Is your understanding darkened? Do you feel your whole nature to have become paralyzed with sin and there is no physician?

Ah, I know there is none among *men*, for there is no balm in Gilead, there is no physician there! There never was, or else the daughter of my people would have been healed of her hurt long ago. There is no soul physician except at Calvary! No balm but in the Savior’s wounds! If you feel that you are incurably soul-sick and the case is desperate unless Infinite Mercy shall interpose, then I am glad that you are here tonight. I am glad that there is such a one as Aeneas present! Do you know that the most delightful task in the world is to preach to those who consciously need the Savior? Mr. Whitfield used to say that he could wish to preach all day and all night long to those who really knew that they needed Christ.

We are bound to preach to everybody, for our Master said, “preach the Gospel to every creature” under Heaven. But, oh, when we can get at a knot of hungry souls, it is easy and pleasant work to feed them with the Bread of Heaven! And when hearts are thirsty, it is sweet work to hand out the Living Water, for they are all eager to take it! You know, the great difficulty is that you can bring a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink if he is not thirsty—and so you may set Jesus Christ before men, but if they do not feel their need of Him they will not have Him. You may preach in tones of thunder, or plead with accents of intense affection, but you cannot stir them to desire the Grace which is in Christ Jesus unless they feel their *need* of it.

Oh, I am happy tonight—thrice happy—if anywhere in this house there is an Aeneas who is sick and knows that he is sick! Who knows his disease to be incurable, laments that he is palsied and can do nothing and longs to be healed by Divine power, he is the man who will welcome the glad news of the Gospel of Free Grace! The man was really sick and so are you, my Hearer! Your sins are great, your sinfulness of nature is grievous and your case is beyond reach of human skill.

**II.** In the second place, THIS MAN, AENEAS, KNEW SOMETHING ABOUT JESUS because, otherwise, when Peter said, “Jesus Christ makes you whole,” Aeneas might have earnestly enquired what he meant, and could not intelligently have acted upon what he could not comprehend. He could not have believed what Peter said because he would not have understood his meaning. Mere words, unless they appeal to the *understand-*

*ing*, cannot be useful. They must convey light as well as sound, or they cannot breed faith. When Peter said, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole," I have no doubt that Aeneas remembered what he had heard about Jesus Christ and His wondrous life and death.

Now, lest there should be one in this congregation who does not know Jesus Christ, and does not understand how it is that He is able to heal sin-sick souls, let us briefly tell the old, old story over again. "Jesus Christ," translated into English, means, "Savior anointed." Who is He? He is the Son of the Highest, very God of very God! And when we were lost in sin, He who is called the Son of God, laid aside His most Divine array and came here to be dressed like ourselves in this poor flesh and blood! In the manger He lay as an infant, and on a woman's breast He hung a feeble Babe. The God who stretched forth the heavens like a tent to dwell in and dug the deep foundations of the earth, came down to earth to take upon Himself our nature and to be born of a woman!

Oh, matchless stoop of unbounded condescension that the Infinite should be an Infant and the Eternal God should conceal Himself within the form of a Babe! This marvel was performed that we might be saved! Being here, the Lord of angels lived some 30 years or so among men. He spent the earliest part of His life as a carpenter's son, obedient to His father and He was, throughout the whole of His earthly sojourn obedient to His Father, God. Inasmuch as we had no righteousness, for we had broken the Law, He was here to make a righteousness for us and He did so. But there was also needed an atonement, for we had sinned, and God's judgment demanded that there should be punishment for sin.

Jesus stepped in as the Surety and the Substitute for the guilty sons of men! He bared His back to the lash of Justice and opened His breast to her lance, and died that sinners might live! The Just for the unjust, He died that He might bring us to God—

***"He bore, that we might never bear,  
His Father's righteous ire."***

Now, when He had thus lived and died, they placed His body in the tomb, but He rose again on the third day and He is yet alive! And by this Man, Christ Jesus, who is risen from the dead, is preached unto the nations the remission of sins. For after 40 days this same Jesus, who had been dead and buried, rose into the heavens in the presence of His disciples, ascending till a cloud concealed Him from their sight. And He now sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, pleading, there, the merit of His blood, making intercession for sinners that they may be reconciled to God.

Now, Beloved, this is the story that we have to tell you, with the addition that this same Jesus is coming again to judge the quick and the dead, for He is Lord of all! He is, at this hour, the Mediator appointed by the infinitely glorious Jehovah, having power over all flesh that He may give eternal life to as many as Jehovah has given Him and this we beseech you to consider, lest when He comes as a Judge you should be condemned at His bar. Aeneas had heard, more or less, of these great facts. The story of the Incarnate God had come to his ears by some means or other, and Aeneas understood that though Jesus Christ was not in the

room, and there was only Peter and a few friends there, and though Jesus Christ was not on earth, but was gone to Heaven, yet His power on earth was the same as ever it was.

He knew that Jesus could work miracles from Heaven as well as when He was here below. He understood that He who healed the palsy when He was here, could heal the palsy now that He has risen to His Throne. And so Aeneas believed in Jesus Christ from what he had heard, simply trusting in Him for healing. By means of that faith Aeneas was made whole! I will very earnestly dwell on that point for a second or two. I am persuaded that in this congregation all of you know the story of Jesus Christ Crucified. You have heard it on the Sabbath from the pulpit. Your children sing it when they come home from Sunday school.

You have a Bible in every house, and you read the "old, old story" in the plain but sublime language of our own noble version. But, oh, if you have heard it and know it, how is it that you have not drawn from it the same inference that this poor paralyzed man did? How is it that you have no faith? Jesus lives! He sits on Zion's hill! He still receives poor sinners! Jesus lives "exalted on high to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins." He can heal you, now, and save you, now, as well as if you met Him in the street, or saw Him standing at your door knocking for admittance. I would to God that this inference were drawn by you all!

**III.** We have got this far—the man was sick and the man knew something about Christ. And now came the most important point of all—THE MAN BELIEVED ON THE LORD JESUS. Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole." The man did not believe in *Peter* as the healer, for you notice Peter does not say anything about himself. Peter does not say, "As the head of the Church, I, by power delegated to me, make you whole." There is no allusion to any such claim! Peter preached too clear a Gospel for that! That is the purest Gospel which has the least of *man* in it and the most of Christ. I charge you, men and women, do not listen to that teaching which sets the priest in front of the Savior, or even by the side of the Savior, for it is false and ruinous!

Your forefathers, Englishmen—your forefathers bled and died that they might never submit to that vile superstition which is being now propagated by a considerable party in the Established Church of this once Protestant land! No man beneath the sky has more power to save your soul than you have yourself! And if any presumptuous priest tells you that he has, do not believe him, but despise his claims! An old woman asks me to cross her hand with a sixpence and says that she will tell my fortune. I am not such a fool! And if another person dressed in robes, which are not quite so becoming to him as a red cloak is to an old woman, tells me that he can regenerate my child, or forgive my sins, I treat him with the same contempt and pity as that with which I treat the wicked hag! I believe in neither the one imposter nor the other!

If ever you are saved you must be saved by Jesus Christ, alone, through your own personal belief in Him—certainly not by the intervention of any man, or set of men—hail they from whatever Church they will!

May God send the Pope and the priesthood and all their detestable deceptions down in this land, forever, and may His Christ be exalted! As this man had no faith in any supposed power coming from Peter, much less had he any faith in himself, neither did he look within himself for hope. He did not say to Peter, "But I do not *feel* strength enough to get well." Neither did he say, "I think I feel power enough to shake off this palsy."

He said neither the one nor the other! Peter's message took him off from himself. It was, "Aeneas, JESUS CHRIST makes you whole! It is not that you have stamina in your constitution and rallying points about your bodily system. No, Aeneas, you are paralyzed. You can do nothing. But Jesus Christ makes you whole." That was what the man had to believe and it is very much what you, also, my dear Hearer, must believe. With his faith Aeneas had the desires which showed that it was not mere speculation, but solid practical believing. He anxiously wished to be made whole. Oh, that sinners anxiously wished to be saved! Oh, that yonder angry man wished to be cured of his bad temper! Oh, that yonder covetous man wished to be cured of his avarice! Oh, that yonder lustful man wished to be cured of his uncleanness! Oh, that yon drunk wished to be cured of his excess! Oh, that men really wanted to get rid of their sins!

But no. I never heard of men reckoning a cancer to be a jewel, but there are many men who look upon their sins as if they were gems which they keep as hidden treasures so that they will sooner lose Heaven than part with their lustful pleasures! Aeneas wanted to be made whole and was ready to believe, when Peter spoke to him about Jesus Christ. And what did Aeneas believe? He believed—and may you believe the same!—first, that Jesus could heal *him*, could heal *him*, *Aeneas*. John Brown, do you believe that Jesus Christ can cure you? I do not care, John, what your faith is about your *wife's* case—it is about *yourself* that you need faith! Jesus Christ is able to save *you*—you, Aeneas. You, John Brown. You, Thomas. You, Sarah. You, Mary. He is able to save *YOU*. Can you grip that, and reply, "Yes, He is able to save *ME*"?

And Aeneas believed that Jesus Christ was able to save him *then and there*, just as he was. He had not taken a course in medicine. He had not been under hypnotism to strengthen his nerves and sinews and prepare him to be cured, but he believed that Jesus Christ could save him without any preparation, just as he was, then! Immediately with a present salvation! When you think what Christ is and what He has done, it ought not to be difficult to believe this. But truly, God's power must be revealed before your soul will believe this unto salvation. Yet it is true that Jesus Christ can heal and can heal at once. Whatever the sin is, he can cure it.

I mentioned a whole set of sins just now. The scarlet fever of pride, the loathsome leprosy of lust, the shivering ague of unbelief, the paralysis of avarice—He can heal all with a word, instantaneously, forever, completely, right now! Yes, Sinner, He can heal *you NOW*. Aeneas believed that. He believed and, as he believed, Jesus made him whole! Oh, I wish I could, tonight so preach the Gospel that my Lord and Master would lead many unbelievers to believe in Him! O Holy Spirit, work with the Word! Sinner, do you need forgiveness? Christ has worked it out! Every sin that you

have done shall be forgiven you for His name's sake if you trust Jesus to do it. Do you see your sins like a great army pursuing you? Do you think they will swallow you up? Jesus Christ, if you believe in Him, will make an end of them all!

You have read in Exodus how Pharaoh and his hosts pursued the tribes of Israel and the people were terribly alarmed. But early in the morning they were no more afraid, for Miriam took her timbrel and the daughters of Israel went forth with her in dance and they sang, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." One of the most magnificent notes in that marvelous song was this. "The depths have covered them: there is not one of them left." The damsels took up the refrain, and sang, "Not one, not one, not one! The depths have covered them: there is not one of them left."

Now, if you believe in Jesus, the whole army of your sins shall sink beneath the sea of His blood and your soul shall sing, "The depths have covered them: there is not one of them left!" Such shall be your song *tonight*, if you are enabled to believe in Jesus Christ, God's crucified Son. But do not think that we preach about the pardon of past sins only, because if a man could get his past sins pardoned and go on as he did before, it would be so much the worse for him. Pardon of sin, without deliverance from its power, would be rather a curse than a blessing! But wherever sin is pardoned, God breaks the neck of its power in the soul.

Mind you, we do not tell you that Jesus Christ will forgive the past and then leave you to live the same life as before—but we tell you this—whatever the sin is that is now a disease to you, Jesus Christ can heal you of it! He can save you from the habit and power of evil doing and thinking. I will not attempt to go into details. There are people coming into the tabernacle on ordinary occasions and so I dare say there may be tonight. How often has there come in a man to whom I might say, "Put out your tongue, Sir. Ah, I see red spots, and black spots, for you are a liar and a swearer." Can my Master heal such a diseased tongue as that? Yes, trust Him tonight and He will make you truthful and purge you from your profanity!

But here is another I dare not describe. Look at him! He has lived an unchaste life and strong are his passions! He says, "Can I ever be recovered from my vile desires?" Oh, Sir, my Lord can lay His hand on that hot heart of yours and cool it down to a sweet sobriety of chastity! And you, fallen woman, do not think that you are beyond His powers! He shows Himself mighty to save such as "the woman that was a sinner." Ah, if you are a slave to vile sins, Jesus can give perfect freedom from vicious habits. You, young man, there, you know that you have fallen into many sins which you dare not mention—they coil about your heart and poison your life like serpents writhing within your conscience.

My Lord can take them all out of the soul and deliver you from the results of their fiery venom. Yes, He can make you into a new creature and cause you to be born-again! He can make you love the things which you once hated and hate the things which you once loved! He can turn the current of your thoughts in quite another way. You see Niagara leaping

down its awful height and you say, "Who can stop this?" Yes, indeed, who can stop it? My Master can! If He speaks to the Niagara of your lusts and says, "Cease your raging!" they will cease at once! Yes, if He bids the waters of desire leap up instead of down, you shall be as full of love to Christ as once you were full of love to sin!

He made the sun to stand still and caused the moon to pause upon the hill of Gibeah and He can do all things. Spoke He not the world out of nothing? And can He not create new hearts and right spirits in the souls of men who have been far off from Him by wicked works? He can do so and, blessed be His name, He will! The world of your mind is as much beneath His control as that of matter. If you believe, O man, to you I may say as Peter did to Aeneas, "Jesus Christ makes you whole."

**IV.** Well, now, let us pass on to notice, next, that the MAN WAS MADE WHOLE. There was no counterfeit about it. He was made whole and made whole then and there! Just fancy, for a minute, what would have been the result if he had *not* been made whole. What dishonor it would have been to Peter! Peter said, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole"—but there lies Aeneas as palsied as before! Everybody would say, "Peter is a false witness." Well now, I will not say that the preacher of the Gospel must see souls saved or else he is a false witness. I will not say *that*, but I *will* say that if ever my ministry, under God, does not save souls, I will give it up! For it seems to me that if we do not bring souls to Christ we preachers are just good for nothing.

What are we, if we do not turn many to righteousness? We are reapers who never reap, soldiers who never win a battle, fishermen who take no fish and lights which enlighten no one! These are sad but true comparisons. Do I address any unsuccessful minister? I would not speak harshly to him, but I would speak very severely to myself if I were in his case. I remember the dream of a minister. He thought that he was in Hell and, being there, he was dreadfully distressed and cried out, "Is this the place where I am to be forever? I am a minister." A grim voice replied, "No, it is lower down for unfaithful ministers, much lower down than this." And then he awoke. Ah, and if we do not agonize till souls are brought to Christ, we shall have to agonize to all eternity!

I am persuaded of it—we must have men saved, or else we shall be like Peter would have been if he had said, "Jesus Christ makes you whole," and the man had not been made whole—we shall be dishonored witnesses. What dishonor would have been brought upon the name of Jesus if the man had not been made whole! Suppose, my dear fellow Sinner, you were to believe in Jesus Christ and yet were not saved—what then? Oh, I do not like to suppose it, for it is almost a blasphemy to imagine it! But yet, consider it for a moment. Believe in Jesus and not be saved? Then He has broken His word, or lost His power to save, either of which we are unwilling to tolerate for a minute! If you believe in Jesus Christ, as surely as you live, Jesus Christ has saved you!

I will tell you one thing—if you believe in Jesus Christ and you are damned, I will be damned with you! Come! I will risk my soul on that as

surely as you will risk yours, for if the Lord Jesus Christ ever loses a soul that trusts Him, He will lose mine! But He never will, He never can—

***“His honor is engaged to save  
The meanest of His sheep.  
All that His heavenly Father gave,  
His hands securely keep.”***

Rest in Him and you shall be saved, else were His name dishonored! And suppose that, like Aeneas, you trusted Christ—if you were not saved, what then? Why, then the Gospel would not be true! Shut up those Churches, close those Chapels, banish those ministers, burn those Bibles—there is no truth in any of them if a soul can believe in Jesus and yet not be saved!

The Gospel is a lie and a counterfeit, if it is true that any poor sinner can put his trust in Jesus and not be healed of his sins, for thus said the Lord of old, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” This is His last word to His Church, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believes and is baptized shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned.” If men believing are not saved from the power of sin, then the Gospel is not true and we are sent on a fool’s errand! But they *are* saved, blessed be the name of God, and the Gospel is the Truth of God itself!

Oh, my dear Hearer, gladly would I urge you to put your trust in Jesus Christ tonight, by the experience which I and other Believers have enjoyed. Some of us have relied on the name of the Redeemer and He has saved us. We shall never forget the day, some of us, when we left off self-righteousness and believed in Christ to the salvation of our souls. The marvel was done in a minute, but the change was so great that we can never explain it, or cease to bless the Lord for it—

***“Happy day! Happy day!  
When Jesus washed my sins away.”***

I remember the morning when salvation came to me as I sat in a little Primitive Methodist chapel under the gallery and the preacher said, “That young man looks unhappy.” He added, “Young man, you will never find peace except you look to Christ!” And he called out to me, “Look!” With a voice of thunder he shouted, “Young man, look! Look now!”

I did look, I turned the eye of faith to Jesus at once! My burden disappeared and my soul was merry as a bird let loose from her cage, even as it is now as often as I remember the blessed salvation of Jesus Christ! We speak what we know. Ours is no hearsay or second-hand testimony. We speak what we have felt and tasted and handled, and our anxiety is that you may know and feel the same! Remember, my dear Hearer, that the way to use the Gospel is to put it to yourselves like this. What is your name? I said, “John Brown,” just now, did I not? Suppose it is John Brown, then. Well, the Gospel says, “He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life.”

Then it means, “If *John Brown* believes on Jesus he has everlasting life.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “Then I, *John Brown*, believing and being baptized, shall be saved.” Lay hold of it in that way. Perhaps you say, “But may I put my name to a promise and appro-

priate it in that fashion?" Yes, you may, because there is nothing in the Bible to say that your name was left out from the list of those to whom the promise is made! If I were a beggar in the streets and were very hungry and I heard that there was a gentleman who was giving a good meal away and that he had advertised that any beggar might come, I do not think I should say, "Well, my name is not down on his list." I should go immediately unless I found that he inserted an excluding clause, "Charles Spurgeon shall not have any of the food I distribute," but not till then.

Until I read in black and white that he excluded me I should run the risk and get in with the other hungry folk. Until he shuts me out, I would go. It should be his deed and not mine that kept me from the feast. Sometimes you say, "But I am not fit to go to Christ." The fittest way to go to Christ is to go just as you are! What is the best clothes to wear when you go begging? I remember a long time ago, when I lived not far from here, in the extremeness of my greenness, I gave a man who begged at the door a pair of patent leather boots. He put them on and expressed great gratitude. But I met him afterwards, and I was not at all surprised to find that he had pulled them off. They were not at all the style of things to go about begging in.

People would look at him and say, "What? You needing shoes while wearing those handsome boots? Your tale won't do." A beggar succeeds a deal better barefoot than in fine shoes! Rags are the dress of beggars! When you go and beg for mercy at the hand of God, do not put on those pretty righteousnesses of yours, but go with all your sin and misery, and emptiness and wretchedness, and say, "Lord, here I am. You have said that Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto You by Him. I am a soul that needs saving to the uttermost and here I am. I have come. Lord, save me."

Now, summing all up. This is what you have to do, Sinner, in order to be saved tonight. Simply believe in Jesus Christ. I saw a young woman from America in the vestry some little time ago who came in great concern of soul to know the way of salvation. And I said to her, "Can't you see it? If you trust Christ, you are saved." I quoted the Scriptures which teach this great Truth of God and made them plain to her, until the Holy Spirit opened her eyes! Light came on her face in a moment and she said, "I do see it! I trust Christ with all my heart! And I am to believe that I am saved because I trust Jesus and He has promised to save Believers?" "Yes," I replied, "you are getting on the Rock, now."

"I feel," she said, "a deep peace beginning in my soul, but I cannot understand how it can be, for my grandfather belonged to the old school Presbyterians and he told me he was six years before he could get peace. He had to be put into a lunatic asylum, for he was so miserable." Ah, yes, I have no doubt such cases have happened. Some will go 17,000 miles round about merely to go across a street, but there is no need for it. There it is—"The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart. If with your heart you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and with your mouth make confession of Him, you shall be saved."

There is nothing to be done, there is nothing to be felt! There is nothing to be brought. No preparation is needed. Come just as you are and trust Christ to save you and this night you shall be saved! God's honor and Christ's Word are pledged to it!

**V.** This is the last thing. WHEN AENEAS WAS HEALED HE ACTED IN CONFORMITY THEREWITH. "Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole: arise, and make your bed." He did so. He rose directly and made his bed. Now, if any of you say, tonight, "I have believed in Jesus," remember you are bound to prove it. How prove it? Why, if you have believed in Jesus, you are made whole and you are to go home and show people how whole you are. This man was palsied and had been lying there prostrate eight years. He could never make his bed, but he proved he was healed by making his bed for himself!

Perhaps there is a man here who, when he has entered his house, has generally opened the door with an oath. If there is such a person here, and Christ saves you—He will wash your mouth out for you. You will have done with profane language forever! Your wife will be surprised, when you go home, to hear how differently you talk. Perhaps you have been used to mix with rough companions in your work and you have talked as they have done. If Jesus Christ has made you whole, there is an end to all filthy speaking. Now you will talk graciously, sweetly, cleanly, profitably. In years gone by you were angry and passionate. If Jesus Christ has made you whole, you will be as tender as a lamb. You will find the old lion lifting his head and giving an occasional roar and a shake of his mane, but then he will be chained by the restraints of Grace, while the meek and gentle lamb of the new nature will feed in pastures wide and green!

Ah, if the Lord has saved you, the drunk's ale bench will have no more of you, for you will need better company than the seats of scoffers can afford you. If the Lord saves you, you will want to do something for Him, to show your grateful love. I know this very night you will long to tell your children and tell your friends, that Jesus Christ has made you whole. John Bunyan says that when he was made whole, he wanted to tell the crows on the plowed land about it. I do not wonder that he did. Tell anybody, tell everybody, "Jesus Christ has saved me." It is a sensation, the like of which no man can imagine, if he has not felt it, to be made a new creature right away, in a moment!

That surprises all who see it and as people like to tell news—strange news—so does a new-born man long to go and tell others, "I have been born-again—I have found the Savior!" Now, mark, you will have to prove that this is so by an honest, upright, consistent, holy life—not, however, by being merely sternly honest. If Christ has saved you, He will save you from being selfish. You will love your fellow men. You will desire to do them good. You will endeavor to help the poor. You will try to instruct the ignorant. He who truly becomes a Christian becomes, in that very day, a practical philanthropist. No man is a true Christian who is not Christ-like—who can live for himself alone, to hoard money or to make himself great. The true Christian lives for others. In a word, he lives for Christ. If Christ has healed you, gentle compassion will saturate your soul from this

time forth and forever! O Master, You who did heal men's bodies in the days of Your flesh, heal men's hearts tonight, we pray You!

Still this word more. Somebody says, "Oh, I wish I had Christ!" Soul, why not have Him at once? "Oh, but I am not fit." You never *will* be fit! You *cannot* be fit, except in the sense in which you are fit even now. What is fitness for washing? Why, being dirty! What is fitness for alms? Why, being in distress! What is fitness for a doctor? Why, being ill! This is all the fitness that a man needs for trusting in Christ to save him! Christ's mercy is to be had for nothing! Bribe or purchase is out of the question!

I have heard of a woman whose child was in a fever and needed grapes. There was a prince who lived near, in whose hothouse there were some of the rarest grapes that had ever been grown. She scraped together the little money she could earn and went to the gardener and offered to buy a bunch of the royal fruit. Of course he repulsed her and said they were not to be sold. Did she imagine that the prince grew grapes to sell like a market gardener? And he sent her on her way, much grieved. She came again. She came several times, for a mother's importunity is great. But no offer of hers would be accepted.

At last the princess heard of it and wished to see the woman. And when she came, the princess said, "The prince does not sell the fruit of his garden," but, snipping off a bunch of grapes and dropping them into a little bag, she said, "He is always ready to give it away to the poor." Now, here is the rich cluster of Gospel salvation from the true Vine! My Lord will not sell it, but He is always ready to give it away to all who humbly ask for it! If you want it, come and take it and take it *now* by believing in Jesus! The Lord bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 55.  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—100 (VER. I); 982, 992.**

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# **PETER'S BLUNDER— A LESSON FOR OURSELVES NO. 1823**

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING  
ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1885,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON JULY 3, 1884.**

***“But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never  
eaten anything that is common or unclean.”  
Acts 10:14.***

“NOT SO, Lord.” This is a very curious expression. I do not care how you turn it into English from the original, it is a very strange compound. If Peter had said, “Not so,” there would have been a clear consistency in his language and tone. But “Not so, *Lord*,” is an odd jumble of self-will and reverence, of pride and humility, of contradiction and devotion. Surely, when you say, “Not so,” it ought not to be said to the *Lord* and if you say, “*Lord*,” you ought not to put side by side with such an ascription the expression, “*Not so*.” Peter always was a blunderer in his early days and he had not grown out of his old habits of honest impetuosity. He meant well and his expression was not intended to convey all that we might easily make of it. At any rate, it is not for us to condemn him. Who are we that we should sit in judgment on a saint of God? Besides, we are not without fault, ourselves, in the matter of incorrect speech.

You and I have said some very curious things in our time. We have uttered exclamations that have been so good that the Lord accepted them, but they have been so bad that He could not have accepted them if it had not been for His infinite mercy! In our utterances there has been faith mixed with unbelief, love defaced with a lack of submission, gratitude combined with distrust, humility flavored with self-conceit, courage undermined with cowardice, fervor mingled with indifference. We are as strange beings as the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream and our speech betrays the fact. When we were fashioned by nature, first of all, we were “fearfully and wonderfully made.” But when we fell and were unmade by sin, we became monstrosities, combinations of contrary actions! I will not dwell upon that topic, but every man who looks within, if the candle of God is shining within him, must often cry out, “*Lord*, what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?”

In our speech, this mixed estate of ours most plainly shows itself. We often feel as if we could eat our words, or at the least, unsay them. Speeches that have had about them real sincerity and true devotion have been greatly marred by expressions which were not fit for the occasion.

Our tongues need a sevenfold sanctification if we are always to speak that which is good and acceptable. And, surely, that is what we desire. Now, we will have a look at Peter and see what we can learn from this amazing expression of his—this strangely compounded exclamation, “Not so, Lord.”

**I.** The first Truth of God which we may easily learn is that **THE OLD MAN REMAINS IN THE CHRISTIAN MAN**. Albeit we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus and the life that is within us, the dominant life, is new, holy and heavenly, yet the old nature still survives. Though crucified, it is long in dying and struggles hard. Sin dwells in us so that we painfully discover that, though we are new men, we are yet men—and though the Grace of God reigns within us, yet there is a struggle for the kingdom—and the sin that dwells in us strives after the mastery. We are renewed sinners but we are still sinners. Our hearts and hands are cleansed by Divine Grace, but they have a sad tendency to become defiled.

*Peter was still Peter.* Why, dear Friends, I think that if I had never before seen this passage in Acts, but had read Peter's life as I find it in the writings of the four Evangelists, and somebody had newly shown me the present text and said, “I have left out the name of the Apostle, but one of them, when he had seen a vision from God and knew that God spoke to him, nevertheless said, ‘Not so, Lord’—what Apostle was that?” I would not have had to guess twice, I am sure! I would have been sure that it was Peter. So you see Peter is Peter after the Grace of God has renewed him. I think we must say the same of ourselves. You, Thomas, who used to be so thoughtful and careful—and somewhat particular and nervous—you are a child of God, but you are still Thomas! And I suspect that you will be wanting to put your finger into the print of the nails and to thrust your hand into His side, or else you will not believe.

And you, John—you always were very loving and hearty and, at the same time, hot in your zeal—and now that you have become a disciple of Christ, I am sure that you will be more loving than ever. But I would not wonder if even now you should be heard saying, “Master, send fire upon those who reject You, and destroy them.” The man is still the same man—he is greatly altered, but he has not lost his identity! Whatever change has taken place in him, Peter is Peter, and I should like you young converts to remember that, for perhaps you think that in the day when you were converted you lost your old selves altogether. I can assure you that you did not! The hasty temper, the sluggish constitution, the gloomy tendency, or the fickle humor will still be there—to be struggled with so long as you are here below! You received a new self, and a better self, but the *old self* is still there.

Your mother will be able to recognize you, I dare say, if you live at home as a young person—she will know that it is the same John, or the same Mary, for your foibles and weaknesses will crop up, if not your faults and, therefore, you must keep a watch upon yourself. You are greatly changed. God has done wonders for you—He has put a new heart within you and a new song into your mouth, but the inclination to evil is not dead—your passions, appetites and desires are, each one, prone to overleap the boundary and transgress. The best of men are men at the best! And Peter, after the Holy Spirit has fallen upon him, and he has preached a very

wonderful soul-winning sermon, is, nevertheless, Peter—and you can tell that he is the same person—the accent of his words still betrays him.

Note that *Peter here shows how readily he fell, not precisely into the same sin, but into the same kind of sin.* His tendency was still to err in a certain direction. This Peter who said, “Not so, Lord,” is he not the same man who, in his impudence *rebuked His Master* and said, “That be far from You, Lord”? Impudence, I call it. It was a piece of impertinence for which he was well rebuked when the Master said, “Get you behind Me, Satan.” Our Lord detected Satan endeavoring to work through the zealous enthusiasm of Peter, to tempt Him to turn aside from the great work that He came to do. I do not think that the other disciples would have gone as far as Peter did—they had faults in other directions, but it remained for Peter to rebuke his Master—and now we see him half rebuking his Lord, again, as he declines to kill and eat the creatures let down from Heaven. Yes, Peter actually says, “Not so, Lord.” May we never be found questioning Providence, or disputing with Revelation, lest we be taken in the same fault and receive a rebuke for rebuking our Lord!

Is not this the same man who, at suppertime, *refused His Master*? When the Lord Jesus took a towel and girded Himself, and was about to wash the disciples' feet, Peter said to Him, “Do You wash my feet?” for He was astounded at such an example of humility. When the Master came with the basin, Peter said, “You shall never wash my feet.” And then you remember what a turn Peter made when his Lord said, “If I wash you not, you have no part with Me.” Then Peter cried, “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” He was always impulsive and from this cause he rebukes his Master and he refuses his Master. He acts as if he fancied that he knew better than his Lord, though in his heart of hearts he had no such notion. Yes, this is the same Peter who cried, “Not so, Lord.” He refuses for the moment to do his Lord's bidding, for it happens to be contrary to his ideas of propriety. Oh, that we may be kept clear of this grave fault!

And this is he who *flatly contradicted his Master* on another occasion. When Jesus said to His disciples, “All you shall be offended because of Me,” Peter said, “Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended.” His Lord had told him that he would deny Him and yet he declared he would not. I know all the excuses that we make for Peter and I am quite prepared to make them, but, at the same time, that was the way of Peter—that is the part in which he was weak. He did this in his earlier days and after the Holy Spirit had come upon him and he had been baptized into His power, and had risen into quite a superior condition from that in which he was in the life of our Lord on earth, yet he still tripped in the same place where he used to fall, for he said, “Not so, Lord,” as if he would again rebuke, refuse and contradict his Lord.

I therefore put it again. What were your faults before conversion? Guard against them now. What have been your failures, your weaknesses and your errors since you have been converted? Watch against them, still, for if you have now become an experienced Christian and your Graces have been greatly developed—and you have become exceedingly useful in the Church of God—yet, beloved Brother or Sister, the points in which

there is a weakness in your natural constitution and in which you have made failures are the points at which you must set a double guard of watching and praying lest you be led into temptation by those special features of your character. Kindly notice this earnest advice, which my loving anxiety leads me to press upon you. I have seen so much of the fruits of presumption that I entreat you not to give way to it. If anybody tells you that the old man is quite dead, you may say, "Nobody but the old devil could have set you on to whisper such a lie in my ear! The truth is not in you."

You and I know that inbred sin is our daily plague, a fact past all question with our souls. We have not to go many steps on our journey before we painfully feel that the sins which we thought we had subdued and should never be subject to, any more, suddenly awaken themselves out of their graves and fight with us as if they had never been conquered! If we did not cry to God with tears and agony for hourly holding up, we should find ourselves falling into the same ditches into which we fell years ago! My venerable Friend, that point in which you feel that you are quite safe is the place where you lie most open to attack. Listen to my words and see if they are not verified. Where you say to yourself, "I am past danger on that account," there the enemy will get an advantage over you. "But I am strong," you say. Nonsense! You are weak as water! You dream of perfection, but you are a mass of needs, infirmities and conceits! And if it were not for the infinite mercy of God, who deals tenderly with you, you would soon have most painfully to know it to your own dishonor—and to the grief of your Brothers and Sisters around you. Peter is still Peter, notwithstanding what Grace has done.

You notice about Peter this thing still remaining, that *he blurts out what he feels*. Be it for bad or good, prompt deliverance of his mind is still the characteristic of Peter. He has seen the vision and he has heard the voice of God saying to him, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." And without a minute's deliberation Peter replies, "Not so, Lord." That was how he did before. He was always blundering because he was in such a hurry. If he had put his finger to his forehead for half a minute, he would not have said many things which he did. This was a man whose wisdom always lay at the back of his head, instead of at the front of it. It came in to tell him that he had made a mistake, but it never came to hand soon enough to prevent the error! And Peter *after* Pentecost had not lost this trait of his character.

I may be addressing young folk here who are very impulsive and speak out in a hurry, things which they, afterwards, are sorry for. I should not wonder if you continue to be impulsive when you grow older. Perhaps it will be one of your snares through life. Be on your guard against it! It is a strength if it is rightly managed. Give me the man who, in a good cause, does not think twice, but acts upon the warm impulses of a ready mind! Give me the man who understands that second thoughts are not always the best, for they are apt to chill—and the best thought is that which comes from a heart fired with the love of Christ! The best Christian workers to lead the van, to make a dash with a forlorn hope have been those brave, impulsive, Peter-like spirits!

But that same characteristic, if not kept in proper order by the Spirit of God, may lead you into a world of mischief. You say your say so quickly, but you cannot *unsay* it, even in years and ages. You cannot call back the words which now cause you to bite your tongue with regret. You once grew very angry. It is true that 10 minutes calmed you and you were as sorry as possible for all your bitter speeches, but that could not undo the injury, nor heal the cruel wound that you had given to your faithful friend. You must cry to God that if you are impulsive, the impulses may always come from Him—and you must ask Him, daily, to lead and guide you in the way of understanding. I pray that you may not often pull out your sword and cut off a man's ear, for Jesus is not here to work miracles, as He was at hand, fortunately, with Peter. And you may cut somebody's ear off and not be able to put it on again! Ask Him to keep you in check, that you may not be working mischief in your haste which you will have to repent of in your leisure.

But Peter is still Peter and so does the renewed man betray the infirmities which were with him before his renewal. Yet *Peter as Peter still has good points*, for he acknowledges all this. Luke could not have recorded this incident in the Acts of the Apostles unless Peter had personally told him, for no one else knew of it. And in the next chapter we find that when Peter was brought up before the other Apostles for what he had done, he narrated the whole affair and confessed, "But I said, 'Not so, Lord.'" You see he was always outspoken, honest and clear as the day. There was a trace of dissimulation in him once, but I should think that it was strange work with him. As a general rule, the bluff fisherman spoke what first came to hand and had no cunning about him.

In this let us be at one with him. If you carry that trait of character with you into the things of Grace, so much the better, for there is no Christian that is so little a Christian as the man who is great at tricks and mighty at "prudence." I think that is the name folks often give it. "Cunning," I call it. The man who blurts out his mind so that you know what he thinks, may get himself into lots of trouble, but he does not get so many other people into trouble as the double-minded man would do and, by the Grace of God, it often happens that his directness, sincerity and truthfulness work together to effect a great blessing in the midst of his Brethren. May the Spirit of God sanctify our peculiarities, that they may make us especially useful—but save us from our constitutional infirmities, that we may not, by them, be led into sin!

There is the first head—the old man still remains in the regenerate man. It was apparent in Peter and it is evident enough in us.

**II.** But now, secondly, THE OLD MAN GENERALLY FIGHTS AGAINST GOSPEL PRINCIPLES, for this was the point upon which Peter differed from his Lord. This, "Not so, Lord," applied to grand Gospel principles which had been put before him, as, for instance, *the abolition of the Ceremonial Law*. Peter was to know that those Ceremonial Laws which forbade the eating of this and that, were now to be abrogated. By Christ's coming here on earth and bearing a mortal body about with Him, He has taken away the ban from all forbidden meats, so far as they were forbidden upon *religious* grounds. God has cleansed them and what God has cleansed, Pe-

ter was not to call common. Peter, at the first, revolted from this—"I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. Not so, Lord; not so! I cannot arise and kill, and eat."

Many to this day quarrel with God's glorious Gospel on ceremonial grounds. The Scripture says that men are to be saved by faith but these formalists say, "Surely, they must be regenerated in *Baptism*—they must be further fed by the blessed Eucharist." Persons who are evangelical in their hearts and who unwittingly preach the Gospel, nevertheless muddle it up with a number of outward ordinances and thus they say, practically, "Not so, Lord." Ritualism is practically battling against that Gospel which lies in faith in Christ and not in ceremonies—that Gospel which demands *spiritual* life and not external performances! All of us are apt to err in this manner, for we incline to attach undue importance to matters which are proper and useful in their places, but which are, by no means, essential to salvation!

One person thinks a great deal of confirmation which is purely an ordinance of man! Another thinks equally much of attending class meetings which is an instructive practice, but not a subject of Divine command. Where Jesus has made no rule, *we* are not to make any! We are to receive all whom Christ receives! None are unclean whom He has cleansed! None are to be set aside if He admits them to His love. Yet this lesson is not soon learned by sticklers for propriety—they question any man's salvation who follows not with *them* and, when bid to commune with them, they start aside with Peter's cry in their hearts, if not on their lips, "Not so, Lord!"

The same battle is carried on by certain people who have never eaten anything common or unclean in the sense that they have never associated with any but very respectable people. Here the fight is concerning *the equality of men before the Law and under the Gospel*. An evangelist brings into the congregation all the poor people of the district and the very worst of characters gather to hear him. This ought to be a great joy, but in certain cases it is not. Many are offended and in effect say, "Not so, Lord. Well, really, I—I—I do not like sitting next to one who is dressed so badly and smells so vilely. I saw a woman of loose character come in and I felt as if I must leave my pew." Oh, you very respectable people, you *know* that you get into that state of mind! You do not say much about it when *we* hear you, because you know that it would not answer your purpose—yet you squeeze up against the corner of the pew to get away from the poor and needy!

Do you not? If a man with a smock-frock, or with a dirty face comes in here, you would just as soon that he would sit on the flaps in the aisle as sit in your seat, and a great deal sooner, I dare say. There is a great deal of that kind of feeling about and it may be very natural, but it certainly betrays feebleness of Christian love. Truly, it is an instinct of cleanliness to shrink from the unwashed, but then it is an instinct of the new life to rejoice in the salvation of souls and, for the sake of it, to put up with greater discomforts than can arise from contact with the fallen. I suppose that in the days of James, when he rebuked those who beckoned the *rich* to sit near them, the Roman or the Jewish pauper was quite as disliked as

any that are among us at this day, yet he makes no allowance for this. Let us prize the common and unclean so much that we never think of them in that light! Never let us set up the tyranny of caste and rebuild the middle wall of partition which our Savior *died* to throw down!

“God has made of one blood all nations of men”—we sprang of a common parent and for men there is but one Savior! Let us know no partialities, but desire, with equal earnestness, the salvation of peer and pauper, of matron and harlot, of gentleman and vagabond! To hear some people speak of their fellow men is sickening to me—they talk of them as if they were mere offal and rubbish—not worthy of their genteel notice! I bless God that I seldom hear it, for it arouses my wrath! A minister in a certain neighborhood used solemnly to warn his people against all such wicked persons as Moody and Sankey and the like, because they were the means of saving the lower orders. He said, “I see people in this district professing to be saved and yet they never before went to a place of worship at all. Therefore,” he said, “I do not believe in their salvation, for surely if God were about to save a great number, He would, first of all, save those who have for years regularly attended our places of worship.”

That was a bit of Peter-like propriety coming up and saying, “Not so, Lord.” Oh, the cruelty of respectability! If you have anything of that left in your nature, ask God to turn it out! It was in the great Father’s own house that there lived an elder brother who said, “As soon as this, your son was come, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf.” He was angry and would not go in. He was a very excellent man, indeed, a very respectable person—and *he* was not going in with such rag-tag as this prodigal brother of his. He did not like so much fuss made over a profligate. My Friend, that proud propriety is of the old man! Whenever that disposition comes up in you, it is your baser part—the part that ought to die—and in this way it shows its enmity to the Gospel of the Grace of God.

I love to believe in the perfect equality of men in the sight of God as to the work of His Grace. If they do but seek the Lord and put their trust in Him, there is no difference—and this we must all maintain, as Christian men and women, by receiving all classes with joy. Otherwise, we shall be just getting where Peter was when he said, “Not so, Lord,” for he said that he had not eaten anything common or unclean—and we say that we have not associated with any person living in a back slum.

The same kind of battle takes place when our old man fights against the Gospel *in its great principle of Free and Sovereign Grace*. You war against it yourself when you are conscious of having done wrong and, therefore, doubt the Grace of God. At once the old man says, “You have sinned and, therefore, you are out of God’s favor—He will cast you away, and you will perish.” But the Gospel principle is—

**“Whom once He loves He never leaves,  
But loves them to the end.”**

The tendency to legalism, which is natural to us, kicks against the glorious doctrine of Free Grace and unchanging love—and sometimes we say, “I am afraid that I am not good enough to pray, or fit to participate in the Grace of God”—as if God needed some *good* in us *before* He could bestow

His Grace upon us! A diseased man is fit to be healed; a poor man is fit for alms; a drowning man is fit to be rescued; a sinful man is fit to be forgiven! God would have us come to Him all empty, feeble, sinful and erring—and just receive of His free favor in Christ Jesus, spontaneously given on His part, without anything in us that can merit His esteem.

Oh, it is a grand thing to be able to spell that word, “Grace—Grace—Grace”! Somebody said the other day that to say, “Free Grace” was to use a redundancy. That is so. But there is such a real redundancy in Grace that we do not mind using a redundancy of expression when we are talking about it. “Free Grace” we still mean to say, for, as some people will not believe that Grace is free, it is still necessary to make it very clear that it is so, and to say not only, “Grace,” but “*Free Grace.*” Christ did not die for saints, but for *sinner*s. He came not into the world because of our righteousness, but He died for our *sins*.

The work of God is not to save men *deserving* salvation, but men who are altogether *undeserving* of it. The great flood of Divine Mercy overflows and drowns all our sins—rising and yet rising, 50 cubits upwards—till the tops of the mountains of our iniquity are all covered, never to be seen again. What a grand article of the creed is that—“I believe in the forgiveness of sins”! Why are we so slow to believe it? Is it not our old man rising, even as it did in Peter, to give battle to Free Grace with its, “Not so, Lord”?

**III.** Thirdly, and as briefly as I can, I would remind you that THE OLD NATURE SHOWS ITSELF IN MANY WAYS, always fighting against God. “Not so, Lord,” is often the cry of our unregenerate part. It is so against *the Doctrine of the Gospel*. Some persons do not believe the Gospel because they do not want to believe it. They studiously omit to read all such parts of Scripture as would enlighten their minds. They are not convincible because they have already persuaded themselves as to what truth ought to be. “Not so, Lord,” is their cry! Beloved, never get into that state of mind! Follow God’s Word anywhere, believing what the Spirit says—let Him teach you what He may. Whatever your notions may have been, when you come across a clear statement in the Word of God, bow your every thought to it and accept its teaching, for it is true, whatever *your* thoughts may be. It is mine to believe what the Bible teaches. It is not mine to object and cry, “Not so, Lord.”

This old nature of ours sometimes cries out against God *in matters of duty*. We can do anything except the special duty of the hour and as to that one thing, we say, “Not so, Lord.” Yonder young woman knows, that according to God’s Word, she must not marry that young man, for she would be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever. Now, she was quite willing to be baptized and she is heartily willing to give her money to the Lord and, in fact, to do *anything* except that *one* act of self-denial which would require her to cease from a fond friendship. Yet, my Friend, I do not know what sorrow you will make for yourself if you really break that salutary rule. I have seen many instances of mixed marriages, but I have had to mourn over nearly all of them as the cause of untold wretchedness. Take the precept and, knowing that it is *God’s* mind concerning you, never dare, *even for a moment*, to hesitate. “Whatever He says unto you,

do it." Never let your lips say, "Not so, Lord," for it is disobedience to go against the command of the Lord your God!

As it is with your practice, so let it be with everything else. Our corrupt nature will dare to quibble at *processes of sanctification*. We are anxious to bear fruit, but we do not care to be pruned. We are glad to be delivered from dross, but not by the fire. Rebukes are undervalued, searching Truths of God are avoided, faithful friends are shunned and awakening Scriptures are neglected—for carnal ease pleads hard for indulgence—and the flesh whines, "Not so, Lord."

Even *in the dispensation of the Kingdom* self-will comes in—we like not that God should bless men by a sect to which we do not belong! We are envious for our own Moses, lest the irregular Eldads and Medads should eclipse him. I have known old folks object to the Lord's blessing that rather obtrusive young woman, that very forward lad, that overzealous person! Let God bless *us*, certainly, but not by objectionable people! Many would prefer Apostles from Athens rather than from Nazareth—they prefer the smell of study lamp oil to that of the fishing boats of Galilee! We pray for conversions, yet certain persons would not believe in them if they happened out of the regular way. We are too masterful by half and are far from taking up our proper position as *servants*. Too much of the Peter clings to us and our tongue is much too ready to cry out, "Not so, Lord."

Our natural corruption is apt to quarrel with the Lord concerning our sufferings. Against this, also, be always watchful. Whenever you are called to endure trial, do not complain of the particular form it takes. Perhaps it is great bodily pain and you say, "I could bear *anything* better than this." That is a mistake. God knows what is the best for His child. Do not cry, "Not so." "Oh, I could bear *sickness*," says another, "but I have been *slandered*! My character is taken away and I cannot bear that." Thus our will asserts its place and we pine to be our own god and ruler! This must not be. You must, my dear Friend, bear that which the Lord appoints, or else you will make the matter a lot worse. If you need anything done well, do it yourself, with this exception—that if you need your character defended, you should always let that alone. Somebody else will take care of that for you and if slander is the rod under which you are to smart, many of us have felt it before you, and you need not complain so bitterly, as if a strange thing had happened to you. Do not cry, "Not so, Lord," but let the Lord appoint you care or calumny, sickness or slander, for He knows best.

"But I am afraid that I shall lose my wife, or a favorite child. I think that I could have suffered anything but that." Yes, you see, a rebellious spirit contends with God, one way or another—it cannot be quiet. I was greatly struck with a story a dear Sister told me yesterday. She was very nearly being removed from the Church—she had quarreled with the Lord for taking away her husband and she would not go to any place of worship she felt so angry about her loss. But her little child came to her one morning and said, "Mother, do you think Jonah was right when he said, 'I do well to be angry, even unto death?'" She replied, "O child, do not talk to me," and put the little one away, but she felt the rebuke—and it brought her back to her God and back to her Church—humbly rejoicing in Him who had used this instrumentality to set her right with her Lord!

O Friends, let us be silent before the Lord and judge His ways no longer, for in this judgment there is no benefit to ourselves or others! Do not say, "Not so," but rather, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him." When Jacob crossed his aged hands to bless the two sons of Joseph, according to the Divine will, Joseph said, "Not so, my Father"—but he could not alter his father's act. Jacob guided his hands wittingly and the blessing came as God would have it. Perhaps a great blessing is coming on you in a cross-handed manner. The Patriarch had experienced many a cross-handed blessing, himself, and, therefore, he knew what he was doing—

***"Cross-handed came the blessing down  
On Jacob's hoary head,  
When Joseph's bloody coat was shown  
As numbered with the dead."***

Many a wonderful blessing has come to us in that cross-handed way. Bow your head, therefore, and silence your tongue—and have done forever with arraigning your Maker before your petty judgment seat! Shall not the heavenly Father do that which is right and good?

Sometimes our corrupt nature quarrels with God about our service. The Lord says, "Go into the Sunday school." "I should have liked to preach," says the young man. "Go into the Sunday school." "Not so, Lord," he says, and he will not go, and thus he misses his life-work. It will not do for us to choose what work we will do. Who would employ servants who, when they are told to do this or go there, should say, "No, Sir, I prefer another engagement"? They will get their money on Saturday night with the advice to find a new master! We may well pray—

***"Dismiss me not Your service, Lord,"***

if we have been pickers and choosers of our work. Do *what* the Lord bids you, *when* He bids you, *where* He bids you, *as* He bids you, *as long* as He bids you—and do it at once! Never say, "Not so, Lord."

"But," you say, "*His Providence* is very strange to me. I am called away from the place where my heart has struck its roots. God deals with me in a terrible manner." Truly His way is in the storm. Yet, never say, "Not so, Lord." It is not a pretty position for a child of God to be in to be trying to amend the arrangements of the great Father! The Omniscient knows best! You think so, do you not? Do not act as if you thought the contrary. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, an obedient heart, a yielding spirit, a submissive mind and an acquiescence in the Divine will are the necessary elements of happiness—the spirit of, "Not so, Lord," is the mother of all the mists and fogs that darken our pathway! If you will walk contrary to God, He will walk contrary to you. "Unto the froward He will show Himself froward," but to the humble and contrite, the submissive and obedient, He will show Himself exceedingly gracious!

If you will stoop, you shall conquer. If you will yield, you shall have your desire. If you will be *nothing*, God will make much of you. If you will be lowly, God will exalt you. But if you will stand out against your Lord, as surely as He loves you, He will correct you and He will teach you better manners before He is done with you!

**IV.** Let us leave that point and close with a fourth observation—IT IS A GREAT PITY WHEN THIS KIND OF WILLFULNESS STANDS IN THE WAY

OF USEFULNESS. It would have been so with Peter if the Lord had not used the process by which He overcame him. "Not so, Lord," said Peter. "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." In some things, Peter was a great deal *too conservative*. He says, "Not so, Lord," and some read it, "Never, Lord, never, Lord, for I have never!" That is, "I must never do a thing I have never done." Many are of this mind—they cannot advance an inch! This is the hymn they sing each morning before breakfast, "As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." And until they go to bed at night, it is the tune they keep on singing, "As it was in the beginning. As it was in the beginning." They will never do what has not been done, nor learn what they have not learned!

Many will only act as others act. They must keep in the fashion. Now this is a rule which I never accepted, for it always seemed to me that I was probably to do what nobody had done before me—for was I not, in some points, different from everyone else? One likes to look about and search for methods of usefulness which have not been tried, for a novel form of labor may be like a bit of virgin soil which will yield a better crop than our own arable lands which have been drained so long. Do you not think that Christian men are apt to be stereotyped in their ways? You must always sing so many verses and no more—you must pray at a certain time and go right round Europe, Asia, Africa and America before you close your petitions. Certain people must always do what they have done, even though they fall asleep in the doing of it! This kind of routine forbids enlarged usefulness, prevents our getting at out-of-the-way people and puts a damper upon all zeal. Let us struggle against the spirit which would bind us hand and foot—where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty! Let us not say, "Never, Lord, for I have never," but, on the contrary—"Right speedily will I attempt this work of usefulness because I have neglected it so long—I will make haste and delay no longer to keep Your commandments."

*Propriety* hinders very many—decorum is their death. I do not know the precise meaning of it, but there are genteel people about who consider that the finest thing on earth is, "propriety." Mr. Rowland Hill was said to have ridden on the back of all order and decorum. "No," he said, "I cannot ride on the back of two horses, but I have two horses to my carriage and I have called one of them, 'Order,' and the other, 'Decorum,' to make the report come as nearly right as possible." Order and decorum were never put to a better use than when they drew Mr. Rowland Hill from town to town preaching the Gospel! And I, for one, am glad that he never took those horses into the pulpit! He was just as disorderly and indecorous as a Christian man ought to be—that is to say, he was perfectly natural and spoke the Truth of God from his heart and men that heard it felt the power of it—and so he became a blessing to this part of London and, indeed, to the whole world! Shake yourself up a little, my Brother! If you are too precise, may the Lord set you on fire and consume your bonds of red tape! If you have become so improperly proper that you cannot commit a proper impropriety, then pray God to help you to be less proper, for there

are many who will never be saved by your instrumentality while you study propriety!

Again, I doubt not that some are hindered in their usefulness by *their great dignity*. It is amazing what noble creatures men can grow into if they are left alone. "This great Babylon that I have built," cries Nebuchadnezzar! That is the same gentleman who, afterwards, ate grass like the oxen and whose nails grew like birds' claws. We have seen very, very, very great little people and very, very little great people who have given themselves mighty airs—but we have never seen any good come of their greatness! Few people are blessed by these gorgeous individuals. God seldom sends His Elijahs bread and meat by *peacocks*. If you ladies are very finely dressed and go visiting into the houses of the poor and you "condescend" to them, they will not want to see you any more. But if you go in and sit at their side and show them that you are their true friends, you get at their hearts.

Love *yourself* less and less and love your God more! Love the soul of every man with all the intensity of your being. Struggle and agonize to bring sinners to the Savior's feet and God will help you. But if you stand on your dignity and say, "Lord, not so; for I have never eaten anything common or unclean," it will be a serious injury to you. I said to one of our classes, "Let *I* grow very small, and let *J* grow very great," and the Brothers and Sisters did not need an explanation. May we so love our Lord Jesus that we cease to care for dignity and are willing to be *nothing* for His sake!

Are there any here who have not yet believed in Jesus? I hope they will trust their souls with Him at once and, when they have done so, let them come forward without delay and confess His name and be baptized into the sacred Three! Then let them try to grow downward lower and lower, till they sink into nothing, that Christ may be All in All!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 10:1-83.  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—23 (SONG III), 704, 708.**

### **LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:**

DEAR FRIENDS—May the peace of God abide with you. With great pleasure I perform the weekly duty of preparing the sermon and I pray our Lord to make it a blessing to all my readers. Each day I gather a measure of strength. My walking is measured by steps, few and slow, but then I *can* walk, and this is a great reason for gratitude to one who could not put his foot down without pain. I am recovering in all respects and feel that a fortnight in this place has done more for me than could have been effected by months of medicine. To Him whom I worshipped in pain be grateful praises for restoring mercy.

Yours heartily,

**C. H. SPURGEON.**

Mentone, Feb. 16, 1885.

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# NEGOTIATIONS FOR PEACE

## NO. 952

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 18, 1870,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Preaching peace by Jesus Christ; (He is Lord of all).”  
Acts 10:36.*

THESE words were addressed to an admirable congregation, all met with an earnest purpose, all conscious that they were in the Presence of God, all like good soil that had been plowed and prepared for the good seed. Happy preacher to have such a congregation! God make this congregation to be of the same sort. The preacher, also, was a right faithful messenger from Heaven. No sooner did Peter know that he was commissioned to the Gentile centurion and his household, than he came to his house. And when he found himself surrounded by the family and their friends, he girt up his loins for his work and gave his whole soul to his subject. Peter goes straight to his business. There is no beating about the bush, no prefatory apology—he begins to preach.

Jesus Christ, spoken of by Prophets, seen by Apostles, hanged on a tree, and risen again on the third day. It is well when the preacher feels that preaching is no mere display, and is not intended to be an opportunity for him to show how excellent an orator he can be. The true ambassador for Christ feels that he himself stands before God, and has to deal with souls in God's place as God's servant. He therefore has no time for considering the graces of oratory and the tricks of rhetoric—but must speak from his inmost soul the Word of the Lord.

Every preacher stands in a solemn place—a place in which unfaithfulness is inhumanity to man as well as treason to God. To be false to our charge will cast us into the deepest condemnation—to be hurled from a pulpit into Hell will be to perish, indeed! See to it, then, that both the congregation and the preacher are peculiarly in God's Presence in their solemn assemblies and feeling and acting accordingly. Pray for us and for yourselves that we both may so behave before the Lord that our assembling together may not increase our sin, but may prove to be a rich and lasting blessing.

We have in the text before us the subject upon which Peter treated in his sermon to Cornelius and his friends. He seems to have taken it for granted that men are at war with God, that even the attentive congregation before him, though consisting of the best of men, were by nature at

enmity with their Maker. He speaks, therefore, as an ambassador desirous of establishing a better state of things and tells them that he has come to preach peace by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

I shall, this evening, try to follow his example, and though I cannot do so with equal steps, yet have I in my bosom the same earnest desire for the souls of my hearers as the Apostle had. I pray that all of you may be brought to peace with God through Jesus Christ.

First, this evening, I shall give some reasons why those of you who are not reconciled to God should desire peace with Him. When we have weighed these I shall, secondly, endeavor to negotiate the terms of peace, and then, thirdly, we shall lay before you a claim or proclamation which is publicly asserted, and to be universally maintained, namely, that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

I. To begin, then, I shall endeavor to offer to the unconverted REASONS WHY THEY SHOULD DESIRE TO BE AT PEACE. May I not urge as the first reason that it is not commendable to be at enmity with any of the wise and good? It is best to be at peace with *all* men, but it is incumbent upon us to be in friendship with *holy* men. I should deeply regret to have any one for my enemy, but if he were a godly person I should consider it a calamity. If the angels of Heaven were opposed to us it would have an ill look, even those holy beings would not needlessly take offense.

But when it comes to opposition to the infinitely good, just, and holy God, who in his right mind can do other than bewail it, and desire to see it ended by a gracious peace? Strife against evil, injustice, and tyranny is honorable, but to contend with uprightness, goodness, and holiness is deplorable. No possible benefit can arise from a conflict in which we are on the wrong side. If God is for us, none can successfully fight against us. But to have God opposed to us is, in itself, the chief of evils. My hearer, "Acquaint yourself with God, and be at peace, for thereby good shall come unto you."

The second reason ought to have weight with every honest man. It is this: that the war in which you are engaged is an unjust one. It never ought to have been begun. There was never any justifiable cause for its outbreak. God was unjustly and wickedly assailed by His ungrateful creature. What ought never to have been begun had better be dropped as soon as possible. Sin is war against right, against love, against happiness. Transgression of God's Law is a transgression of commands most equitable and beneficent.

To love evil is dishonorable, wrong, unfair, unjust, and the conscience of man tells him it is so. To be at war with God is to fight against Truth and justice, and to contend for falsehood, unholiness, injustice, unrighteousness. When men love that which is right, and good, and true, and yield

themselves up to God's will, then the war is over. But inasmuch as the war against God consists in our doing the wrong, and loving the wrong, and thinking the wrong, and clinging to the wrong—such a war, in the very nature of things—ought to come to a close.

May the Holy Spirit set this in its true colors and convince every one of you that not to love God is the most shameful of evils, the most detestable of enormities. How can it ever be justifiable for the *creature* to contend against the Creator? Shall the clay rise against the potter? Will it ever become a right thing for children to rebel against their parents? The ox fed at the stall will serve its owner—shall it be right that we, being fed by God, should yet refuse Him our service? The natural order of the relationship between us and our Creator involves in all justice that we should be conformed to His will.

O Men, will you choose the ways and wages of unrighteousness and cover yourselves with confusion? Would God there were in you an honest judgment to judge uprightly. Besides, what evil has our Creator done us that we should go to war against Him? What quality is there in God that we ought to hate? What is there that we can justly challenge in the Character of God which might righteously provoke our antagonism? Is He not Kindness itself? Does He not overflow with loving kindness? Sends He not His rain upon the just and upon the unjust? Does He not command His sun to rise upon the evil as well as the good?

Has He not sent us fruitful seasons and kept His Covenant, that day and night, seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, should not cease? For which of these things should we rebel against Him? Some of you are possessed of riches—should you, for that cause, forget the God that gave them to you? Others of you are in sound, robust health—should you violate the commands of Him who gives you this choicest of blessings?

We appeal to you, Brothers and Sisters, why are you at war with your God? If He were a cruel tyrant, if He were unjust, if He trod you beneath His feet, if His government were malicious and degrading I could understand your warfare! But it is an evil, an unjust, a villainous war—because the Lord is full of mercy and His name is Love. O that men would end their rebellion at this hour while we summon them to do so in the name of God! Eternal Spirit convict them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come, and lead them to the peace-speaking blood!

A third argument for ending the war may be drawn from the fact that he who began it has been terribly defeated, and is at this moment a prisoner. He who began the war is Satan, the arch enemy. Our first parents did not first rebel—man was the dupe of an older rebel. Apollyon, once an angel, conceived ambitious thoughts, and would gladly have become equal with his Maker, but he was banished from Heaven by just decree.

And then resorting to this lower region, sought out our mother Eve, and seduced our race, hoping to maintain the war against the Lord of Hosts by inciting us to cast off our allegiance. Little has he gained by this stratagem! Overwhelming has been his defeat! Hurlled from the battlements of Heaven at first, he has worn his chain wearily these many years, seeking rest and finding none, dreading that day of wrath when he shall be dragged at the chariot wheels of our Divine Redeemer, and then consigned to the Hell of old prepared for him.

Jesus who once was slain, has led captivity captive. He whose heel was bitten by the old dragon has broken the serpent's head. Revolt, O Man, against the prince of the power of the air—follow him no longer! Take up arms against the demon monarch—refuse from now on to follow his beck and call. What right has the devil to reign over you? He neither made you, preserved you, or blessed you! He is only evil, and that continually will he do unto you. Strike for your freedom, strike at once, and shake off his galling yoke.

For him the everlasting fire has been prepared—why must you share it? The wages of sin will be death—why continue in so unprofitable a service? May God grant that you may escape the wrath to come that knows no end, by turning against your old master and enlisting beneath the banner of your Savior. Down with the black, sin-stained, sulfurous colors, and run up the red Cross! Exchange the black Diabolus for the fair Immanuel, and peace shall come unto you.

These are three good reasons, but there are many others, and among them is this one—the force which is brought against you is utterly impossible for you effectually to resist. It is well when we contemplate warfare to sit down and see whether we are equal to the combat. What man is he that with one thousand can meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand? Now, consider this, you that forget God. If you oppose God, with whom is it that you set yourselves in battle array?

Can your puny arm hope to rival the right hand of Jehovah? Can you thunder with a voice like His? Were He a creature like yourselves, you might hope for victory. Were He limited in any degree, you might summon all your strength and hold out in the day of conflict. But who can contend against Omnipotence? Who shall stand against the Almighty God? As well might the fly hope to quench the sun when he has already burned up his wings in a candle! As well might you seek to dry up the Atlantic, or bid Niagara leap up the rock instead of down! As well might you hope to stay the moon in its course, or to pluck the stars from their places, as think to stand against God!

No, if you had all Heaven, and earth, and Hell beneath your feet, yet could God overcome you, for He has made all these things and can over-

throw both them and you with His mere *will*. Let not the wax contend with the fire, nor the stubble with the flame. Let not man, who is but nothingness, think that he can contend with his Maker. You know already how foolish it is to strive against the natural laws of God—and you will find it equally so to contend against His moral government.

A man stands in the way of a steam engine rushing on at express speed—he knows that according to the laws of nature its weight and velocity effectually prevent his stopping its course. Do you call it *courage* on his part that he stands on the track and defies the iron horse? It is not courage—it is foolhardiness, it is madness, it is suicide! Yet this is nothing in comparison to what you are doing in placing yourself in opposition to the Lord. God will not alter His laws for you. Why should He? They are just and right—why should He change them? Fire will burn, and if a drunken madcap persists in thrusting his arm between the bars of a furnace, shall fire cease from its nature to secure him immunity from his folly?

If a man exposes himself to the rush of an avalanche, can he expect the rolling mass to suspend itself in mid air for him? If a mariner will go to sea in a vessel worm-eaten and not seaworthy, will the waves pity the boat and cease from their rough play and rougher warfare? No, they roll around the leaking craft as they would have done around a better vessel. They toss it—they sink it—the careless mariner perishes. If a man will act contrary to natural laws, he must suffer for it. If you dash your head against a granite rock it will not, for your sake, soften into down.

And it is just so with the moral laws of God's government—certain results follow from sinful courses of action—inevitably and as a matter of course. Yield, then, to the Divine wisdom which has rightly ordained the consequences of sin. Do not necessitate your own destruction. Submit freely where rebellion is absurd. Against Omnipotence it is folly to strive. Be wise, then, and submit to the power of the Omnipotent God.

Further, remember that any resistance which you may be able to offer to the Lord your God will be carried on at a very fearful price. You will have to bear the expenses of the war which you foolishly prolong. All the time that you resist the Almighty you are doing it at your own risk and hazard. And what is that risk and hazard? Why this—that even if you should yield to Him ultimately, so as to be saved—you will regret these sins and these rebellions as long as you live. Even when they are forgiven, your iniquities will be a source of perpetual regret to you. They will be a source of danger and weakness to you as long as you live—for though God heals the wounds of our sin—we shall carry the scars even to our graves.

Moreover, if you should never receive the saving mercy of God, remember these rebellions of yours are noted against you, and when the Great

Judge comes to deal with you and lays His justice to the line, and righteousness to the plummet—for all this you will have to give an account, for all this God will levy His Law upon you—and you shall be made to feel the weight of His terrible hand of vengeance.

Furthermore, let me remind you of one thing else, namely, that your total defeat is absolutely certain sooner or later. No man ever did set himself against God and prosper for long. His patience suffers long and is kind, but there is an end to it. Look at Pharaoh. If ever a man defied God thoroughly, it was that king of Egypt. “Who is the Lord,” said he, “that I should obey Him?” He bore up against warnings and actual plagues—each time when he was broken down he defied the Lord again as soon as the pressure of trouble was removed.

But when he fancied that the infinite God had emptied out His quiver, he found to his cost that there was yet another arrow left, and that a deadly shaft which would lodge in his heart and lay him prostrate. He said in his heart, “I have outlived the plague of the locusts, I have outlived the lightning, and the darkness, and the murrain that fell upon men and beasts. Who is Jehovah that I should care for any further plagues? I will defy Him to do His worst, and fight on to the bitter end.”

As he dashes along in his war chariots, with his mighty hosts at his side, hastening to pursue the captives who are fleeing from him, he fancies himself to be omnipotent. But when he finds his wheels dragging heavily in the depths of the sea, he turns to flee from the face of the Lord. All too late was his flight, for God gave the word and the liquid walls which had stood like solid masonry, leaped down upon him—and then the haughty king knew that Jehovah could vanquish the proud, and put down the stout-hearted.

For this cause was he raised up—that he might be a standing testimony to all generations that whosoever rebels against the Lord shall meet with a final and irretrievable overthrow. O Sinner, your fate may not be to be drowned in the Red Sea, but worse than that, you will be shut in forever where hope is shut out, and where misery abounds. The punishment of lost souls will prove to them, beyond all controversy, that it is a futile, a bitter, a *horrible* thing to be at war with the Lord of Hosts.

None can endure the terror of Jehovah’s wrath—why is it that they so lightly dare to provoke it? Yield, Man! It is folly to stand out against God—you cannot hope to win. Sue for peace tonight, and may God send it to you. Without such peace your future is darkened with thick clouds, and the presages of an horrible tempest. The Lord most surely comes, and at His coming woe will be the portion of His enemies—

***“At His Presence nature shakes,  
Earth affrighted hastens to flee,***

***Solid mountains melt like wax,  
What will then become of you?  
Who His advent may abide  
You that glory in your shame,  
Will you find a place to hide  
When the world is wrapt in flame?"***

Let me tell you, (and this is the most glad note that is in my heart tonight), let me tell you it will be altogether to your advantage to be at peace with God! It will be for your present happiness. It will be for your eternal welfare. A soul at war with God is also opposed to its own best interests—but a heart that has yielded to Divine love, that has cast down its weapons, that has closed in with Divine mercy—is a soul at peace, at rest, a soul that is ready for joy on earth, and for bliss unspeakable above! Were there no hereafter, it is profitable even for this present life to have God for our Friend. But when we think of the eternal future, even the most superficial consideration suffices to convince us of the urgent necessity of being reconciled to God.

Be wise and consider, then, take my advice and do that which will be most gainful to you—namely, seek peace, and yield to Christ who is Lord of All. Meanwhile, my heart's desire and prayer for you is that you may be saved, and to that end may the Holy Spirit visit you, soften your heart, guide your judgment and direct your will, so that Jesus may from now on be yours, and be your peace.

**II.** Now I shall turn, in the second place, to DECLARE THE TERMS ON WHICH PEACE MAY BE NEGOTIATED. I come with a white flag tonight. I ask for a parley, an armistice, a truce. God, meanwhile, holds back His thunderbolts, and bids the sinner live while mercy is proclaimed to him. Would you have peace, then? Are you in earnest for friendship with your God? Then learn that first of all, the great sine qua non is that peace be made through an ambassador nominated of God, namely, His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Here, in the text, it says, "Preaching peace by Jesus Christ." There will be no peace between God and any man who despises the Person, name and work of Jesus Christ. Reject that name and there is no other whereby you can be saved. This is the foundation for peace which was laid of old, and other foundation can no man lay. Hear, then, and let all difficulty vanish from your mind while we speak of that excellent, that all-glorious Person whom the Lord has set forth as Heaven's Plenipotentiary, the Ambassador of the Eternal.

This Jesus Christ is God Himself—God over all blessed forever—knowing the mind of God, and able to negotiate with Divine authority. But He is also Man—man such as you are—Man of the substance of His mother, most truly and really Man, and, therefore, He is fitted to deal gra-

ciously with man. Oh, then, because He is your Brother, accept Him as Ambassador. He is fit to be a Daysman, and an Arbitrator, and a Mediator since He has sympathy with you, and yet has equality with God.

If you, yourself, had the choice of an umpire you could not select one so every way fitted for the office. His love to you, His goodwill to our poor fallen race, His assumption of our Nature, His death in mortal form—all should lead you to commit your case into His faithful hands. God lead you to do so at once, for the matter is urgent. Now further, concerning the negotiation, I would say to you, O Enemy of God, that the great difficulty is put away which might have prevented peace between you and God!

The Justice of God which you have provoked has been satisfied by Jesus Christ! The sacrifice of Jesus has made recompense for the injury done by human sin. There is no difficulty now on God's part—no difficulty in forgiving any sinner that believes in Jesus Christ. Your sin was a great stone which lay at the door, but it is rolled away because Jesus died. Let that comfort you. If you are anxious to have peace, God's terms are these, (I call them *terms* for want of a better word, but I mean no legality thereby).

He asks no price of you. He demands no millions of money. No, He demands no pounds at your hands. If you had the wealth of the Indies, the Lord would despise such a bribe. If He were hungry, He would not tell you. If He were thirsty He would not come to you for drink, for Lebanon would not be sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof for a burnt sacrifice. He asks no gold from you, He asks no suffering from you—no passing through dreary penance—or horrible despairing. It would be no satisfaction to Him to see you suffer.

He delights in happiness. He is pleased to see us happy when it is safe for others that we should be so. Neither does He ask you to achieve merits to bring to Him. You could not if He should demand it. You have sinned before and will sin again. All hope for you to make up the faultiness of the past by the perfection of the future is gone. You have broken the Law. You cannot keep it. If you shall labor after life under the Covenant of Works, you must perish. God, therefore, does not ask you to save yourself by your own works, but He graciously tells you that He is full of mercy, full of compassion, delighting to forgive, ready to pass by your sins, and that at once.

Here is all that the Lord asks of you, and this He will *enable* you to do—trust sincerely in His only begotten Son. On the Cross Jesus suffered—turn your eyes to that Cross. He rose again, He ascended to Heaven—trust Him to save your soul, because He ever lives to make intercession for you—

***“All the doing is completed,***

***Now it is 'look, believe, and live.'  
None can purchase His salvation,  
Life's a gift that God must give.  
Grace, through righteousness, is reigning,  
Not of works, lest man should boast.  
Man must take the mercy freely,  
Or eternally be lost.'***

Down with your weapons of rebellion—surrender them, confess that you have erred—confess it in your Father's own bosom. Conscious of His love, be conscious of your sins. Confess that you have done wrong. Cease to do evil, learn to do well. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord. Nurture not within your bosom the viper that will be your destruction. Pluck it out and hurl it from you in the strength of Him that died to save you.

Now, is this hard? Are these severe demands? Is it a hardship to confess the wrong which you have done? Is that too much? Is it not reasonable that you should do it? You cannot be healed and continue to wound yourself. How can you hope that the poison will be extracted from your veins while you continue to drink it? No, Man, look to the Cross, and hate your sin, for sin nailed the Well-Beloved to the tree. Look up to the Cross, and you will kill sin, for the strength of Jesus' love will make you strong to put down your tendencies to sin.

"Well, but," you say, "Is there nothing for me to bring, nothing for me to do?" Answer, "There is nothing for you to bring, there is nothing for you to do, but there is much for you to *take*—for you have to receive Jesus as your All in All." It is your duty to throw down your weapons of rebellion, and to say tonight, "Great God I yield. My wanderings now are at an end. I yield my soul to You, Jesus, come and save me. And when You have saved me, help me to obey You. Behold, I give myself up to You. Infinite Mercy of God, receive me! Precious Blood of Jesus, cleanse me! Holy Spirit, sanctify me! God, my Creator, create me new! Jesus, Lover of my soul, teach my soul to love You." In this way peace is found, even peace through Jesus Christ.

**III.** And now, thirdly, and to conclude. I have to make public A CLAIM which Peter made on this occasion, when he spoke to Cornelius and his kinsfolk. I have a claim which ought to be urged wherever the Gospel is preached. "He is Lord of all." This means, first, that Jesus Christ, who died on Calvary, is in the mediatorial kingdom, which His Father has given Him, Lord of all mankind. He is Lord not of the Jew only, but also of the Gentile. Not of one race and nation, but of ALL the tribes of Adam ever born. He is Lord of all.

Remember that text, "As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to as many as You have given Him." The great ob-

ject of Christ's mediatorial kingdom is the salvation of the elect—and in order to compass that grand result, power is given to Christ over all flesh—that is, over all mankind. And this last Truth of God is the reason why we are enabled honestly to preach the Gospel to every creature under Heaven. Because Christ has power over all flesh, we preach the Gospel to all flesh. Because He is Lord of all we are permitted to preach the Gospel to all, and yes, to all who come within its hearing, "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely."

Sons of men, the Son of God is King over you! You are not ruled today so much by the iron scepter of an absolute God as by the silver scepter of the Mediator, Jesus Christ. You are under His government today. You may hate Him, you may rail against Him, but, "I will declare the decree," says the Psalmist, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." The heathens rage, the princes take counsel together, but the Lord has made Jesus Christ the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and under His reign we dwell. This is a most gladsome Truth, for thus we live under the reign of Sovereign Mercy, under the reign of the Incarnate. God Immanuel, God with us.

Look, O Sinner! You needed a Mediator between you and God, and Jesus stands in that place! You need no Mediator between you and Christ—approach Him as you now are, and His gracious heart will gladly receive you. You cannot come to God except through a Mediator! You *have* to deal with Christ, and may deal with Him now! Come to Him. You need no one to introduce you. Come just as you are. O may His blessed Spirit sweetly incline you to come, and "kiss the Son lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

The text, by declaring the reigning power of the Lord Jesus, shows us most encouragingly the most solid of reasons for yielding to Him our trust and obedience. If He is Lord of All. If all things are put under Him, then I may with safety rely upon Him. This is the Man, the exalted Man, whom we, unseen, adore! Of Whom it is written, "You made Him to have dominion over all the works of Your hands. You have put all things under His feet. All sheep and oxen, yes, and the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the sea."

Now, the Apostle rightly enough says, "But now we see not yet all things put under Him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." He is reigning in Heaven, and it is ordained that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Oh, then, trust Him, for all power is His! He is exalted on High to give repentance and remission of sins. All His power is linked with *mercy*. Grace perfumes all His attributes.

Because Jesus is Lord, I pray you, my fellow Men, to yield Him reverence and serve Him. Obey Him, for He is your Lord and Sovereign. It ought to be the easier to obey Him because He is numbered with the human race. The old history which we learned when we were children told us that the Welsh could not bear the yoke of an English king. They wanted to have a prince born in their own country. Therefore, their English conqueror brought before them his own son, born in their own principality, and they accepted him as Prince of Wales.

God reigns over us, but that we may love His reign He has anointed His own Son our own Elder Brother, Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus the Infinite deigned to be an Infant, He who sustains all things was laid upon a woman's breast. There is no Man more a man than Jesus, and yet in no respect is He other than equal with God. Let us, then accept the rule of Jesus. This is the ladder that Jacob saw—the bottom of which rests on the earth, near to you—your feeble feet may reach it.

But the top reaches to Heaven, and now between earth and Heaven, between man and God, there is a ladder that never can be broken—by which sinners may ascend to the Glory of God! O love Him, then! With all your hearts cherish the name and honor of the Incarnate God, Immanuel. Because He is so unspeakably glorious and gracious, serve Him with joy and gladness!

Be it also known that Jesus the Savior must be received as Lord in the souls of those whom He redeems. You must obey Him if you trust Him, or else your trust will be mere hypocrisy. If we trust a physician we follow his prescriptions. If we trust a guide we follow his directions, and if we fully rely on Jesus, we obey His gracious commands. The faith which saves is a faith which produces a *change of life*, and subdues the soul to *obedience* to the Lord. Be not deceived—where Jesus comes, He comes to reign. Without submission to His will and Word, you are without the safety of His Atonement.

The ship is saved from the rock because it obeys the pilot's hand as he moves the helm. If it were untrue to the steerage it would perish with the best of helmsmen on board. It is most just that He who bought us, sought us, found us, saved us, and preserves us should have our loving allegiance. And so assuredly it must be, or no peace can be established between us and God. Let us welcome His sway and pray Him to exert His power. Be this our daily prayer—

***“Almighty King of saints,  
These tyrant lusts subdue—  
Drive the old serpent from his seat,  
And all my powers renew.  
This done, my cheerful voice  
Shall loud hosannas raise;***

***My soul shall glow with gratitude,  
My lips proclaim Your praise.”***

And lastly, let me say I do not put this to you as a matter of choice as to whether you will or will not submit to the will of God and seek reconciliation with Him. Neither do I speak with bated breath when as a herald I hereby proclaim Jesus to be both Lord and God. But in the name of Him that lives and was dead and is alive forevermore, and has the keys of Hell and of death—I say, in His name—I DEMAND of you that you obey Him, and receive Him as the Christ of God. Yield yourselves to Him who is Lord of All. Do you refuse the summons that I give you now as His officer tonight?

Then take heed what you do, for as the Lord lives you shall answer for this in the Great Day of His appearing. Behold He comes with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which crucified Him—and you who despise Him must be judged by Him. If you reject Him, you shall nevertheless see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of Heaven to judge the quick and dead.

I say, again, then—I come to you not to flatter and deceive you. I come not to plead with you as though my Lord and Master were on equal terms with you. He summons you to surrender! He bids you throw down your arms and accept His mercy. He is not afraid of your opposition. Neither does He need your friendship. It is His Grace which leads Him to invite you to peace. He condescends to treat you thus, whom He might have sent into Hell with one word of His lips years ago. If you refuse Him you shall answer for it. On your heads shall be your own blood, and in that day when Heaven and earth shall pass away like a scroll, you, without a shelter—you, without an Advocate—you, without an excuse, shall be banished from His Presence to endure the wrath of God.

The Lord grant His mercy that not one of you may stand out against Him, but this night, before another sun rises, may there be peace established on a sure footing between you and God, for Christ is our peace. May you take Him and trust Him, and be reconciled to God. And to God shall be the glory forever and forever. Amen and Amen.

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# THE GREAT ITINERANT

## NO. 655

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 22, 1865,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Who went about doing good.”  
Acts 10:38.***

You will observe, if you read the chapter before us, that Peter’s sermon was short and much to the point. He preached Jesus Christ to Cornelius immediately and unmistakably. He gave a very admirable sketch of the life of Jesus of which he affirmed himself to have been an eyewitness and he brought forward, in his closing sentence, just that simple Gospel which it is our joy to preach. “To Him all the Prophets witness, that through His name whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins.”

This should be an instructive example to all professed ministers of the Gospel. We might say less about other matters without loss if we would say more about the Lord Jesus. If we should omit some other teaching, if there were more of a savor of the name and of the Person of Jesus Christ in our ministry, the omissions might be tolerated. It is a strange thing that men should profess to be sent of God and yet talk about everything except the great message which they are sent to deliver!

My errand as a minister is to preach Christ and it will avail me little to have been clear and earnest upon other points if I have neglected to set forth Christ Crucified. To put my own views of doctrine or moral practice in the place of Jesus is to put out the sun and supply its place with a farthing rush light—to take away the children’s bread and offer them a stone. We commend Peter as an example to all who preach or teach, either in the street, the sick chamber, or the House of Prayer—do as Peter did—come at once to the soul of your ministry, and set forth Christ Crucified in plain and simple language.

If any should plead that the subject should be adapted to the audience, we see from the narrative that there is sure to be something in the history of Christ applicable to the case before us. Peter purposely gave prominence to certain points in the history of the Master which would be most likely to enlist the sympathy of Cornelius. He says of Him, “He is Lord of all,” as much as to say, “He is not Lord of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles, and therefore, O Cornelius, His dominion reaches to you. He is to be worshipped and adored and He is to become a blessing and a propitiatory sacrifice, not only to Israel’s hosts, but even to Italians. And therefore you, O Centurion, may take heart.”

Perhaps the words of our text were uttered by Peter concerning Christ because they also would be sure to attract the notice of a man who was “A devout man and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people and prayed to God always.” He did as much as say, “You go about doing good, Cornelius. It is the very soul of your life to help the needy, to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked—Jesus also went about doing good in a *higher* sense and I hold Him up to you as one to be

beloved by every devout and generous heart.”

Other points are to be noticed in Peter’s address which were evidently adapted to the case before him, but we have said enough to prove that there is something in the story of Jesus suitable to win the attention and to gain the heart of any congregation, large or small. Only let the Holy Spirit help us to dilate upon the Gospel of the Lord Jesus and we have no need to wander abroad for foreign themes. We can sit at the foot of the Cross and find a perpetually profitable subject there. No need to gather the sheaves of science, or the sweet flowers of prose—Christ Jesus is both our science and our poetry and as ministers we are complete in Him!

When we come forth to preach Him and to lift Him up, we are armed from head to foot and rich with weapons for our spiritual warfare. Though learning and art have had no hand in fashioning our panoply, we need not fear that we shall meet a single foe who can withstand the terror of those celestial arms. God grant us Grace in all our teachings to keep close to Jesus Christ—for His love is a theme most fit for all cases and most sweet at all times.

The few words which we have taken for our text are an exquisite miniature of the Lord Jesus Christ. “He went about doing good.” There are not many touches, but they are the strokes of a master’s pencil. The portrait cannot be mistaken for anyone else. The mightiest conquerors may gaze upon its beauties but they cannot claim that it is intended to portray their lives. Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon—these went about conquering, burning, destroying, murdering. They went about not doing good. Prophets too, who professed to have been sent of God, have compassed sea and land to make proselytes, but the good which they accomplished none could see.

Mahomet’s career was fraught with incalculable evil. The few good men and true, who, like Howard, have perambulated the world seeking to minister to the necessities of mankind, have wept over the heavenly portrait and sighed that they are not more like it. This is what they sought to be and so far as they copied this portrait, this is what they were. But they fall short of the original and are not slow to confess their shortcomings. What Peter here draws in words, God’s Divine Grace drew, in some measure, in lines of real life in the case of Howard and some other followers of Jesus of Nazareth.

Still, in the highest and fullest sense, these words are applicable to none but the Master, for His followers could not do such good as He achieved. His is the model and theirs the humble copy. His the classic type and theirs the modest imitation. He did good and good only—but the best of men, being men at the best—sow mingled seed. And if they scatter handfuls of wheat, there is here and there a grain of rye. However carefully they may select the grains, yet the cockle and the hemlock will fall from their hands as well as the good seed of the kingdom. Of the Master and only of the Master is it true in the fullest and the broadest and most unguarded sense, “He went about doing good.”

Two things this morning—first I shall want you, dear Brethren, to consider Him. And then, in the second place, to consider yourselves.

**I.** The first occupation will be pleasing, as well as profitable. Let us CONSIDER HIM.

**1.** Consider first, His object. He went about, but His travel was no listless motion, no purposeless wandering here and there—“He went about

doing good.” O Man of God, have a *purpose* and devote your whole life to it! Be not an arrow shot at random, as in child’s play! Choose your target, and swift as the bullet whizzes to the mark, so fly onwards towards the great aim and object of your life. Christ’s object is described in these words, “doing good.” Of this we may say that this was His *only* purpose.

Long before He took upon Himself the nature of man, or even before man was formed of the dust of the earth, the heart of Jesus Christ was set upon doing good. In the Eternal Council in which the sacred Three entered into stipulations of the Everlasting Covenant, Christ Jesus became the Surety of that Covenant in order that He might do good—good in the highest sense—good in snatching His people from the misery which sin would bring upon them and good in manifesting the glorious attributes of God in a splendor which could not otherwise have surrounded them.

His delights of old were with the sons of men, because they afforded Him an opportunity, such as He could find nowhere else, of doing good. He did good, it is true, among the angels, for the heavenly harps owe all their music to His Presence. Among the devils there was no room for positive good. They were given over to evil—but even there restraining goodness found work for itself in binding them down in iron bands lest their mischief should grow too rampant. On earth, however, was the widest scope and amplest room for goodness in its largest sense—not merely the goodness which restrains evil and the goodness which rewards virtue—but that *greater* goodness which descends to sin-stricken mortals and lifts them up from the dunghill of their miserable degradation to set them upon the Throne of Glory.

It was the eternal purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ, before the lamps of Heaven were kindled or stars began to glitter in the vault of night, that He would do good. This was His practical object, when He made His ever-memorable descent from the Throne of His splendor to the manger of His poverty. Angels might well sing at Bethlehem, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men,” for Jesus Christ came not condemning the world, but doing good.

His Presence in the manger did good. As it cheered both rich magi and poor shepherd, both learned and illiterate, both Simeon and Anna, with the knowledge that God had come down to men. His childhood afterwards did good, for though it was so unobtrusive and obscure that a few words suffice to set it forth, yet He has become the very mirror of childhood’s dutiful obedience to this day. His adult life was one practical carrying-out of the solitary object which brought Him from the Throne of Glory to the abodes of sinful men. He “went about doing good.”

Nor was this His purpose merely and the object of His errand, but His official prerogative. He received the name of Jesus at His birth, “For He shall save His people from their sins.” He was named “Christ,” because the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him and He was anointed to preach good tidings to the meek and to open the prisons to them that were bound. Jesus Christ is the title which bespeaks One whose office it is to do good. Mention any name you please which belongs to the Savior and you will see that it is incumbent upon Him, *ex officio*, to go about doing good.

Is He a Shepherd? He must do good to His sheep. Is He a Husband? He must love His Church and give Himself for her, that He may cleanse and perfect her. Is He a Friend? He “sticks closer than a brother” and does

good. Is He “the Lion of the tribe of Judah?” It is not to do damage or mischief to innocence and weakness, but that, strong as a lion when he tears his prey, He may rend in pieces the foe of truth and goodness. Is he a Lamb? Here His goodness shows itself most completely, for He lays down His life that His Israel may go free when the destroying angel smites Egypt. Everywhere it was His peculiar prerogative and His special business to go about doing good.

But more, it was not only His intention and the object of His errand and His prerogative, but His actual performance. He did good in all senses. Jesus Christ worked physical benefit among the sons of men. How many blind eyes first saw the light through the touch of His fingers! How many silent ears heard the charming voice of affection after He had said, “Be open”! Even the gates of death were no barrier to the errands of His goodness. The widow at the gate of Nain felt her heart leap within her for joy when her son was restored. And Mary and Martha were glad when Lazarus came forth from his grave. Jesus Christ did good physically.

We have thought that our Lord did this not merely to show His power and universality of His benevolence and to teach spiritual Truth by acted parables, but also to say to us in these days, “Followers of Jesus, do good in all sorts of ways. You may think it is your special calling to feed souls, but remember that your Master broke loaves and fishes to hungry *bodies*. You may deem it your chief object to instruct the ignorant, but remember that He healed the sick. You may make it your chief joy to pray for the healing of sick spirits, but remember that He rescued many bodies from incurable disease.”

As much as lies in us, let us do good unto all men, and good of all kinds, too, though it is specially to the household of faith, and specially in a spiritual sense. Let no act of mercy seem beneath him who is a follower of the Man that went about doing good. There is a spirit springing up among us which is very dangerous though it wears the garb of excessive spirituality. It is impractical and unchristlike—a spirit which talks in this fashion—“The sons of men tried to improve the world and make it better, but as for Enoch, the man of God, he knew that the world was so bad that it was of no avail to attempt to better it and therefore he left it alone and walked with God.”

It may be well, they say, for such carnal-minded Christians as some of us to try and improve society and to give a better tone to morals, but these dear spiritual Brethren are so taken up with Divine things and so assured that the mission is of a supercelestial character that they will have nothing to do with blessing mankind, being quite sufficiently occupied with blessing themselves and one another. I pray God that we may never fall into the impractical speculations and separations of certain Brethren whose superior sanctity they must allow us to suspect. The large-heartedness of the Lord Jesus Christ is one of the most glorious traits in His Character. He scattered good of all sorts on all sides. Let us, if we profess to be His followers, never be straitened even by pretended spirituality. Do good “as much as lies in you,” to the utmost extent of your power and let that be of every sort.

It strikes me that the Lord Jesus also did much moral good. Where He did not save spiritually, yet He elevated. I am not sure that that poor adulteress was ever truly converted and yet I know that He said, “Neither do I

condemn you: go, and sin no more.” And I can well believe that in this respect, at least, she would sin no more. I do not know that the Pharisees ever became followers of the Man of Nazareth, and yet I cannot conceive that they could have listened to His stern rebukes against their hypocrisy without being in some measure humbled, if not enlightened. Or if they were not better, at any rate, their professions would not be so readily allowed.

Society would receive, as it were, a tonic from those sharp and bitter words of the Master and become too strong and masculine to receive any longer the lofty boastings of those mere pretenders. Jesus Christ, when He sat down on the mount, did not deliver a spiritual sermon of the style commonly classed under that head. That sermon on the mount is, for the most part, morality—good high, heavenly morality—higher than any teacher ever reached before. But there is very little in it about justification by faith or concerning Atonement! Very little about the doctrine of election, the work of the Holy Spirit, or final perseverance.

The fact is the Master was doing moral as well as spiritual good. And coming among a degraded people who had set darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, He thought it a part of His vocation to preach to them truth on that subject as well as upon the higher themes concerning His advent and His salvation. Dear Friends, this admonishes us to seek the moral good of the people among whom we dwell! The Christian minister must not lay aside his ministry to become the mere moralist lecturer, but he may and should lecture upon morals—and he can say some things in lectures which he could not say in sermons. Let him, by all means, occasionally leave the pulpit for the platform if he can do service to society!

Let him do good in every possible shape and way. I think that it is the Christian minister’s place not simply to preach the high and glorious doctrine of the Cross, but also to deal with the current sins of mankind as did the Prophets of old—and to inculcate those virtues most needed in the State—as did men God sent in the ages which are past. Jesus Christ went about doing good, we say, of a moral kind as well as of a spiritual order, but still the Savior’s great good was *spiritual*. This was the great end that He was driving at—the bringing out of a people prepared to receive Himself and His salvation—He came preaching Divine Grace and peace.

His great object was the spiritual emancipation of the bondaged souls of men. Beloved, how He sought after this! What tears and cries went up to God from the mountain’s bleak summit! With what earnest intercession did He plead with men when He addressed them concerning repentance and faith! “Woe unto you, Bethsaida! Woe unto you, Chorazin!” were not words spoken by One who had a tearless eye. “Woe unto you, Capernaum!” was not the desolating curse of One who had a hard, unsympathetic heart.

The Savior, when He wept over Jerusalem, was only doing once before men what He did all His life before God. He wept over sinners! He longed for their salvation! “Never man spoke like that Man.” Having the highest Truth, He spoke it after the highest fashion. Never the ostentation of eloquence, never the affectation of oratory—but ever the earnest, still, small pleading voice which “does not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.” He went about in His daily preaching instructing the people

because He found them as sheep without a shepherd, and therefore “He taught them many things.”

Physical, moral, spiritual good, good of all sorts the Savior did—and while I close this point as to His object of life, let me say that He did something more than all this—He worked enduring good which abides with us now. The good that holy men do is imperishable. The Scripture says, “Their works do follow them,” but not to the grave—their works ascend upward. If our works followed our bodies, they would rot in the tomb. But they follow our *souls* and therefore mount up to immortality. Look upon the world and see whether Jesus Christ is not still in Spirit going about doing good! He has gone up to Glory, but the Spirit of His life and of His teaching is still among us.

And what is His religion doing? Ask of our sires and they will tell you how this land was translated from a region of savages into the abode of peace and joy! Look yourselves, in your own day, to the far off islands of the south and see how they have been transformed from dens of the wild blood-loving cannibals into abodes of civilized men! Jesus Christ’s Gospel flies like an angel through the midst of Heaven proclaiming good news to men! And wherever its foot rests but for an hour, it transforms the desert into an Eden and makes the wilderness blossom as the rose! May the Savior help us so to live that when we die we may have sown some seeds which shall blossom over our tomb.

Thus we have given an outline of the Savior’s doing good. May we add this sentence as a comfort to any here who are seeking Jesus. If it were His eternal purpose and His life’s mission to do good, and He went about to find out the objects of it, why should He not do good to you? If He healed the blind. If He gave spiritual sight, why should He not give it to you? O may the desire be breathed by you, poor seeking Soul, breathed solemnly but hopefully to Him—“O You who in the days of Your flesh did take pity upon misery and wretchedness in every shape, take pity upon me! Save me with Your great salvation!”

Rest assured, beloved Hearer, that prayer will not go up to Heaven in vain! His ears are still open to hear the cry of woe and His hands are still ready to giving the healing touch and the voice to say, “I will, be you clean.” May He do good in you this morning!

**2.** A short time may be profitably spent in considering the mode in which this object was accomplished. We are told that He “went about doing good,” which seems to suggest several points. First of all He did the good *Personally*. He “went about doing good.” He might, if He had chosen, have selected His place and having seated Himself, He might have sent out His Apostles as ambassadors to do good in His place. But you will recollect that when He sent them out, it was not that they might be *proxies*, but that they might be *heralds*. He sent them two and two unto every place where He Himself would go.

They were to be to Him what John the Baptist had been at His first coming. Jesus Christ entered the field of labor in Person. It is remarkable how the evangelists constantly tell us that He touched the leper with His own finger. That He visited the bedside of those sick with fever and in cases where He was asked to speak the word only at a distance, He did not usually comply with such a request, but went Himself to the sick bed and there *Personally* worked the cure. A lesson to us if we would do good

well—do it ourselves.

There are some things which we cannot do ourselves. We cannot remain among our families in England, for instance, and preach the Gospel in Hindustan. We cannot be engaged this morning in listening to the Word and at the same time visiting the lodging house or den of iniquity in some back street. There are some works of mercy which are best performed by others—but we can make these more personal by looking after the worker and taking a deeper interest in him—and by attending him with our prayers. I wish that much more benevolence were performed by men themselves.

I do not care to speak against Societies! But it is such an odd thing that if I have twenty-one shillings to give away, I cannot give them to a deserving family myself. I must make it into about fifteen shillings before it goes at all by paying it into a royal something or other Society! And then it proceeds by a roundabout method and at last is delivered to the poor by a mere hand without a soul. And it is received by the poor, not as a gift of *charity*, but rather as a *contribution* from an unknown something with a secretary which needs a place in which to drop its funds.

Why should you not go and give away the twenty-one shillings yourself, lovingly and tenderly? It will be better than letting somebody else pare it down to fifteen and give it away coldly and officially. So much depends upon the way of doing good. The look, the word, the prayer, the tear will often be more valuable to the widow than that half-crown which you have given her. I heard a poor person once say, “Sir, I went to So-and-So for help and he refused me. But I would sooner be refused by him than I would have money given to me by So-and-So,” mentioning another who gave it with a sort of, “Well, you know I do not approve of giving anything to such as you are, but here it is—you must have it I suppose, so be off with you.”

Give your alms away yourselves and you will learn, by so doing, it will enable you to exercise Christian virtues. You will win a joy which it were not worthwhile to lose, and you will confer, in addition to the benevolence that you bestow, a blessing which cannot be conferred by the person who is your substitute. He went about doing good. He did it Himself. Oh, some of you—preach yourselves, I pray you! Talk to the Sunday school children yourselves! Give away tracts—that is well enough if you cannot speak—but do try and talk yourselves. The influence of that hand laid upon your friend’s shoulder, those eyes of yours looking into his eyes as you say, “Friend, I wish you were converted, my soul longs for your salvation”—there is more in that influence than in a whole library of tracts!

Seek souls yourselves! Fish with your own hooks. You cannot help being successful if you imitate your Master and do good yourselves in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Savior not only “went about doing good” Personally, but His very Presence did good. The Presence of the Savior is, in itself, a good, apart from the blessings which He bestowed. At the sight of Him courage revived! Drooping faith grew strong! Hope brushed a tear from her eye and smiled! The sight of Jesus Christ as once it calmed the waves and hushed the winds, did so a thousand times in men souls.

Even devils, when they saw Him, cried out and trembled. Sinners wept at the sight of His pitying goodness. The woman who broke the alabaster box of precious ointment felt that the only fit place to break it was near to

Him. His Presence made her sacred action yet more sweet. What cannot men do when Christ is there? And, O Beloved, if we are anything like our Master, our presence will be of some value. There are some of my Brethren, when I see them, I feel strong. You go into a little Prayer Meeting and numbers are not there—but such a saint is there and you feel, “Well, if he is there, there is a Prayer Meeting at once.”

You have work to do. It is very hard and toilsome, and you cannot prosper in it. But a Brother drops into your little Sunday school, or into your class and looks at it and you feel, “Well, if I have that man’s sympathy, I can go on again.” Therefore be careful to give your presence as much as you can to every good work and do not isolate yourself from those actually engaged in labors of love. Does not our Lord’s going about doing good set forth His incessant activity? He did not only the good which was round about Him, which came close to hand—He did not only the good which was brought to Him as when men were brought on their beds and laid at His feet—he “went about.” He could not be satisfied to be still. Throughout the whole land of Judea, from Dan to Beersheba, He trod its weary acres. There was scarcely a village or a hamlet which had not been gladdened by the sight of Him. Even Jericho, accursed of old, had been blessed by His Presence and a great sinner had been made a great saint. He went everywhere casting salt into the bitter waters and sowing with sunshine the abodes of sadness. He was ever active in God’s service!

Oh, the creeping, crawling manner in which some people serve the Lord! The very way in which some people mumble through religious exercises is enough to make one sick at heart, to think that the solemn offices of religion should be entrusted to such inanimate beings! If God of old said of Laodicea that He would spew that Church out of His mouth, what will He do with those professors in modern times who are the very pink of propriety, but who were never touched with fire from Heaven and know not what the word “zeal” means? Our Master was here and there, and everywhere! Let us gird up the loins of our mind and be not weary in doing well, but be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.”

Does not the text also imply that Jesus Christ went out of His way to do good? “He went about doing good.” There were short cuts which He would not take because there were persons dwelling in the roundabout way who must be met with. “He must needs go through Samaria.” It is said that that city lay in the straightest way to Jerusalem. So it was, but it was not the right way, because the Samaritans so hated those whose faces were towards Jerusalem, that they maltreated them whenever they could. Yet the Master did not care for perils of waylaying enemies. He did not select the smoothest or the safest road, but He selected that in which there was a woman to whom He could do good.

He sits down on the well. I know it was not merely weariness that made Him sit there. And when He said, “I thirst: give Me to drink,” it was not merely that He was thirsty! He had another weariness—He was patient over that woman’s sin and longed to reveal Himself to her! He had another thirst—He did not mean merely, “Give me water out of that well.” When He said, “Give me to drink,” He meant, “Give Me your heart’s love. My soul pants for it. I want to see you—a poor adulterous sinner—saved from sin.”

How else do we understand the words which He said to His disciples,

when they wondered that He spoke with the woman? He said, "I have meat to eat that you know not of, for it is My meat and My drink to do the will of Him that sent Me." He had received meat and drink in seeing that woman leave her water pot and go away to tell her fellow sinners, "Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?" He went round about after the objects of His gracious desires. So must the Christian. You must not be content to do good in the regular circle of your movements—that is so far so good, but go beyond your old line! Break through the bounds of propriety every now and then and do an odd thing.

I believe that sometimes these odd expedients achieve more than regular methods. That was a quaint expedient of those who broke up the roof to let down a palsied man that Jesus might heal him. There has been a good deal said about that roof. According to some people it was not a roof at all but a sort of awning! But this morning we will stick to our old version which tells us, "they broke up the tiling." This must have made it a very bad predicament for those down below! but I dare say those up top argued—"Well, the Savior is there and if anybody shall be hurt by a tile or two He can easily heal them. Anyhow we will get this man before Him, for this is the case in which we feel most concerned." Ah, dear Friends, many people are so particular about making a little dust or breaking up a few tiles! But our mind is, "never care about that," there will be time to clean the repair after souls are saved and for so great an end as salvation we may neglect some few niceties and punctilios and be most of all vehemently desirous that we may do good.

We have not quite done with the text yet. It means, too, that Jesus Christ went *far* in doing good. The district of Palestine was not very large, but you will observe that He went to the limit of it. He was, as it were, the bishop of the Holy Land and He never went out of the diocese, for He said He was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But He went to the outer limits of it. He went to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. If He might not go over the mark, yet He will go up to the edge. So if there should happen to be any limit to your doing good in any particular place, at least go to the end of the limit.

However, I rather like Rowland Hill's thought—when he was blamed for preaching out of his parish, he claimed that he never did so, for the whole world was his parish. Make the *world* the sphere of your occupation, according to the parable, "the field is the world." I admire the Lord's going about not simply for the miles He traveled, but for the space of character over which He passed. He "went about." It is nothing wonderful that He went as far as Tyre and Sidon, but it is much that He went as far as publicans and sinners! I do not wonder that He went from Dan to Beersheba, but I have wondered often that He went so far as to save harlots by His Grace.

We may in this sense go about doing good without traveling across the sea. A minister once announced to his congregation one Sunday morning, "I am going on a mission to the heathen." Now he had not told his deacons about it and they looked at one another. The good people in the congregation, some of them, began to take out their pocket handkerchiefs. They thought their minister was going to leave them—he was so useful and necessary to them that they felt sad at the bare idea of losing him. "But"

he added, "I shall not be out of town."

So you may go on a mission to the heathen without going out of this huge town of ours. You might almost preach to every sort of literal heathen within the bounds of London—to Parthians, Medes and Elamites—and the dwellers of Mesopotamia. There are men of every color, speaking every language under Heaven, now living in London. And if you want to convert Muslims, Turks, Chinese, men from Bengal, Java, or Borneo, you may find them all here! There are always representatives of every nation close at our door. If you want men who have gone far in sin, great foreigners in that respect, you need not certainly leave London for that! You shall find men and women rotten with sin and reeking in the nostrils of God with their abominations. You may go about doing good and your railway ticket need not cost you one farthing!

No doubt Christ's *perseverance* is intended in our text, for when rejected in one place, He goes to another. If one will not hear, another will. The unity of His purpose is also hinted at. He does not go about with two aims, but this one absorbs all His heart—"doing good." And the success, too, of His purpose is here intended. He went about and not only *tried* to do good, but He did it—He left the world better than He found it when He ascended to His Father God.

**3.** One moment concerning the *motive* of Christ's doing good. It is not far to seek. He did good partly because He could not help it. It was His Nature to do good. He was all goodness and as the clouds which are full of rain empty themselves upon the earth, even so must He. You will have observed that all the good things which God has made are diffusive. There is light—you cannot confine light within narrow limits. Suppose we were to grow so bigoted and conceited as to conceive that *we* had all the light in the world inside this Tabernacle. We might have iron shutters made to keep the light in—yet it is very probable that the light would not agree with our bigotry and would not come in at all—but leave us in the dark for wanting to confine it.

With splendid mirrors, Turkish carpets, jewelry, fine pictures and rare statuary you may court the light to come into palatial halls. It comes, it is true, but as it enters it whispers, "And I passed through the iron grating of a prison, just now. I shone upon the poor cottager beneath the rude thatched roof. I streamed through the window out of which half the glass was gone and gleamed as cheerily and willingly upon the rags of poverty as in these marble halls." You cannot clip the wings of the morning, or monopolize the golden rays of the sun! What a space the light has traversed doing good! Millions of miles it has come streaming from the sun and yet further from yonder fixed star.

O Light! Why could you not be contented with your own sphere? Why journey so far from home? Missionary rays come to us from so vast a distance that they must have been hundreds of years in reaching us and yet their mission is not over, for they flash on to yet remoter worlds. So with the air—as far as the world is concerned the air will throw itself down the shaft of the deepest coal pit, climb the loftiest Alp—and although men madly strive to shut it out—it will thrust itself into the fever lair and cool the brow of cholera.

So with water. Here it comes dropping from every inch of the cloudy sky, flooding the streets, flushing the foul sewers and soaking into the dry

soil. Everywhere it will come, for water claims to have its influence felt everywhere. Fire, too! Who can bind its giant hands? The King cannot claim it as a royal perquisite. Among those few sticks which the widow woman with the red cloak has been gathering in the woods, it burns as readily as in Her Majesty's palace. It is the Nature of Jesus to diffuse Himself—it is His life to do good. His grand motive, no doubt, is the display of the glorious attributes of God.

He went about doing good in order that Jehovah might be revealed in His splendor to the eyes of adoring men. He is the manifestation of Godhead. He is the express image of His Father's Person. "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." And through Heaven and earth, and sky and sun and stars, all show forth something of the goodness of God, yet the life of Jesus is the fullest and clearest manifestation of the beneficence of Deity that ever will be accorded to the sons of men. This is an object worthy of God, to manifest Himself and such an object Christ set before Him when He came to do good among the sons of men.

I have not said enough about the Savior, but still as much as time allows us and I will close this point with this one thing—if Jesus Christ went about doing good and if His motive was simply God's Glory—poor troubled Sinner—cannot He glorify God in *you*? You need pardon—you will be an illustrious instance of God's Grace if He should ever save you! Have hope. If Jesus Christ goes about, you are not too far off. If He looks upon the most forlorn, you are not in too desperate a plight. Cry to Him when your spirit is overwhelmed! Look to the Rock that is higher than you! "From the ends of the earth have I cried unto You, O God and You heard me." May it be your joy today to find Him your Friend, who "went about doing good."

**II.** We were in the second place to CONSIDER OURSELVES. This is the application of the subject. Consider ourselves, then, as to the past, with sorrow and shamefacedness. Have we gone about doing good? I fear there are some here who *never* did any spiritual good! The tree is corrupt and it cannot bring forth good fruit. The fountain is bitter and it cannot yield sweet water. You must be born again before you can go about doing good! While your nature is as father Adam left it, good cannot come from you. "There is none that does good, no not one."

How clearly this is true in some persons, as proved by their very profession. The profession of some men is one in which they cannot *hope* to do good. There are some in all callings who either do positive harm, or at any rate cannot imagine that they are doing any good. Let them repent! "Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." God grant that neither our character nor our vocation may stand in the way of our doing good!

But you who have new hearts and rights spirits and are saved by faith in the precious blood of Jesus, have you done all the good you could? I dare not say yes—I wish *I* could dare it! No, Master, there must have been many times when I might have served You when I have not done it. I have been an unprofitable servant. I have not done what was my duty to have done.

Ah, some of you have missed a world of joy in having done so little good. You have not given, therefore you are not increased. You never gave to others much, and so they have not given back to you full measure,

pressed down and running over. You have not borne the burdens of others and so your own burden has become heavy and intolerable. Christians, in looking back upon the past, must you not drop tears of regret? And do you not bless that preserving love which still follows you? Yes, which will never let you go! And in spite of your barrenness and unfruitfulness, it will not cease to work upon you till it has made you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light—who day without night serve God in His Temple!

As to the future. The old question comes up—if any man today says, “I am resolved to go about doing good”—is he able to do it? And again, the reply comes—we must first *be* good, or else we cannot *do* good. The only way to *be* good is to seek to the good One, the good Master! If you have a new heart and a right spirit, then go your way and serve Him! But if not, pause awhile. Unto the wicked, God says, “What have you to do to declare My statutes?” He will have clean-handed men to do His work! Wash first in the bronze laver if you would be a priest. God will not have men for His servants who would defile the sacred place. “Be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.”

God give us to rest implicitly upon the Lord Jesus Christ by a living faith and so to be cleansed in His precious blood. And then we may resolve to go forth and live for Him. Have we any work to do now that we can set about at once? If we have, whatever our hands find to do, let us do it. Let us not be asking for greater abilities than we have. If we can get them, let us do so—but meanwhile let us use what we have. Go, Housewife, to your house, and from the lowest chamber to the top go about doing good—here is range enough for you!

Go, Teacher, to your little school and among those boys or girls, let your example imitate Christ, and there is range enough for you! Go, Worker, to your shop and among your fellow workmen. Let fall here and there a word for Christ! Above all, let your example shine, and there is work for you. You domestic servants, the kitchen is sphere enough for you. You shall go about doing good from the dresser to the fireplace and you shall have width enough and breadth enough to make it a kingdom consecrated to God!

Without leaving your position, any one of you—without giving up the plow, or the cobbler’s lap stone, or the needle, or the plane, or the saw, *any* business—without any of you good sisters wanting to be nuns, or any of us putting on the serge and becoming monks—in our own calling let us go about doing good! The best preparation for it will be to renew our dedication to Christ, be much in earnest prayer, seek the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit and then go forth in our Master’s strength with this as our resolve—that as imitators of Jesus Christ it shall be said of us, “He went about doing good.”

May God add His blessing for the Savior’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 10.**

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# THE MODEL HOME MISSION AND THE MODEL HOME MISSIONARY NO. 929

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 14, 1870,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

*In aid of the Funds of the Baptist British  
and Irish Home Missionary Society.*

*“Who went about doing good.”  
Acts 10:38.*

OUR Lord's public ministry on earth was a Home Mission. He Himself said to His disciples, "I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He went to the very borders of the Holy Land. But there He stayed, and north and south, east and west, in all directions, in towns and in villages, He itinerated preaching to His own countrymen. Afterwards there sprang out of His home work what may be called the foreign Mission, when they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Gospel.

And thus the blessing of Israel became a blessing to all nations. It was always the Lord's intention that the Gospel should be preached to every creature under Heaven, but, so far as His own work was concerned, He began at home. And herein we see His wisdom, for it will be of little avail to attempt much abroad unless there is a solid basis at home, in an earnest sanctified Church, affording a fulcrum for our lever. We want to see England converted to Christ, and then shall she become the great herald of Christ's Gospel to other lands.

As things now are, our soldiers and sailors are, too often, witnesses *against* the Gospel. And our travelers of all grades in foreign countries too frequently give an impression very unfavorable to the Cross of Christ. We want to have this nation saturated through and through with the Spirit of Jesus Christ. We want all its darkness chased away and the true light made to shine—then Missionary operations will receive a wonderful impetus. God will make His Truth to be known in all nations when He has first caused His face to shine upon His chosen.

We shall now speak about Home Mission work under two heads. First, we have before us a Model Home Mission. And secondly a model Home Missionary. When we have talked about these two things, we shall press a third point, namely, the duty of imitating the works of the great Master.

**I.** First, then, we have before us A MODEL HOME MISSION. We see sketched in the text the great Home Mission which was conducted by the Lord Jesus Christ, "who went about doing good." I am sure we shall learn much if we consider the way in which He conducted that enterprise.

In commencing His work He selected as His great instrument the preaching of the Gospel. The Lord had anointed Him to preach the Gospel.

He performed thousands of gracious actions. He officiated in many ways for the good of His fellow men, and for the glory of God. But His Throne on earth, if I might so speak, was the *pulpit*. It was when He began to declare the Gospel of the kingdom that His true glory was seen. "Never man spoke like this Man."

Brethren, He would have His followers depend upon the same agency. The scattering of religious books and the institution of schools and other godly efforts are not to be neglected. But first and foremost it pleases God by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them that believe. The cardinal duty of the Christian Church is thus laid down, "Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

Notwithstanding all that may be said about the advance of the times, and the non-adaptation of the pulpit to this present age, we shall be very foolish if we imagine that we have found a better instrumentality than that which Jesus selected and which His Father so highly blessed. Let us stand to our preaching like soldiers to their guns. The pulpit is the Thermopylae of Christendom where our foes shall receive a check. The field of Waterloo on which they shall sustain a defeat. Let us preach, and preach evermore. Let us continue sounding, even if it is but the rams' horns, for by-and-by the walls of Jericho shall fall flat to the ground. Preach, preach, preach! The Master's life clearly tells us that if we would save souls and glorify God we must constantly proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom.

In connection with His own personal preaching, we find the Master forming a seminary for the training of ministers. Those who have, at any time, thought properly conducted collegiate institutions to be unscriptural can hardly understand the action of our Lord in retaining under His own eyes a band of scholars, who afterwards became teachers. After He had called Peter and John, and some few others, He at first admitted them, as it were, into His evening classes. For they pursued their ordinary business, and came to Him at fitting seasons for instruction.

But after awhile they separated themselves from all the pursuits of business, and were continual with their great Teacher. They learned how to preach as they marked how He preached. He even taught them to pray, as John also taught his disciples. Many dark subjects which He did not explain to the people, we are told He opened up to the disciples. He took them aside and gave them the mysteries of the kingdom, while to the rest of the people the Truth was only spoken in parables.

Now, this has been too much forgotten in the Church, and needs to be brought to our remembrance. Among the Vaudois and the Waldenses, every pastor of the Church was always intensely earnest to find out others who would become pastors—therefore each one had a young Brother under his care. In the journeys of the shepherds of the Vaudois Church, as they passed from crag to crag, each one of the venerable men was usually accompanied by some strong young mountaineer, who, in return for the physical help which he gave to the venerable father, received instruction from him in the doctrines of the Gospel, in Church government, and in other things which appertained to the ministry.

In this way the Israel of the Alps was enabled to perpetuate its testimony, and the office of the preacher of the Gospel never fell into disuse.

When in the days of the blessed Reformation, Calvin and Luther exerted an influence over Europe, it was not only through their own preaching, mighty as that was—nor through their writings—though these were scattered broadcast like the leaves of autumn. It was also through the innumerable young men who swarmed at Wurtenburg and came together at Geneva to listen to the great Reformers' teaching and then afterwards went forth themselves into other lands to tell abroad what they had learned.

Our Master sets before us the fact that no fitter instrument for spreading the Gospel can be devised than a man raised up by God to speak the Gospel who is able to attract to his feet others who shall catch his spirit, profit by his example, receive his doctrines, and go forth to preach the same Word.

It would be correct to add that the Master also connected with His preaching and His college the invaluable agency of Bible classes. Indeed, I believe that the whole machinery of a zealous Christian Church can be found in embryo in the doings of Christ. And if His blessed life of holy labor were more thoroughly studied, new organizations for enlightening the world and for building up the Church would soon be thought of, and the best results would follow. Our Lord talked to His disciples—occasionally one by one, sometimes when He found them in pairs. And at other seasons He addressed the Apostles as a whole, “expounding unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

The Apostles were evidently well acquainted with the Scriptures, and yet I do not suppose that all the population of Palestine were so well trained. They must, therefore, have learned of Jesus. Peter's first sermon shows his acquaintance with the Old Testament, and the speech of Stephen manifests remarkable familiarity with Scripture history. Such knowledge was not, I think, general, but was the result of constant communion with a Teacher whose references to the Inspired Volume were so constant. His readings of the holy Book, His interpretations, His quotations, His illustrations all tended to make His disciples men well instructed in the Law and the Prophets.

And the inmost meaning of the Word was laid bare to them in the Person of their Lord Himself. If any Home Mission would see its work established, so as to endure the test of years, next to the ordinance of preaching, its ministry must be careful to exercise diligence in training up the converts in the knowledge of the written Word. The Bible must be read intelligently and its meaning clearly set forth. The memory must become familiar with its very words, and the heart with its inner spirit. We must seek gracious men and women who will labor in this needful ministry.

No minister can afford to neglect the constant Scriptural tuition of his people, and if he is negligent of it, do not be surprised if grievous wolves enter into the Church and devour the flock. That our young men and women may not be carried about with every wind of doctrine, but may be steadfast, unmovable—is our bounden duty to instruct them in the Divine Word with laborious care and constancy. Notice, moreover, that our Lord's Mission work did not overlook the children. Our noble system of Sunday school work is not only justified, but even enforced by the example and

precept of our Lord when he said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

And also by His saying to Peter, "Feed My lambs." The injunctions which bid us look after our adult converts who come under the denomination of "sheep," are no more valid than the command which bids us look after the young, and the tender, who are intended by the term "lambs." True Mission work, therefore, if any of you will undertake it, must carefully regard children. Moses would not leave even the little ones in Egypt. Even the youthful Israelites ate of the paschal lamb. Our work is sadly faulty if it has no bearing upon the young men and maidens, the boys and the girls.

I am afraid that much of our public preaching is blameworthy in this respect. I feel, myself, that I do not say as much in my general sermons as I ought to do to the children of my congregation. I do insert stories and parables here and there, but if I shall ever reach my own ideal of preaching, I shall far more frequently let fall handfuls on purpose for the young. Sermons should be like a Mosaic, and the sparkling pieces which catch the infant eyes should abound. Our discourses should be as Isaiah says, "wine and milk"—wine for men and milk for babes. Out of our pulpits we must be the friends of the children, for then we trust they will grow up to be friends to us and to our Master. Our model Mission bends its strength to the cultivation of juvenile piety, and makes this department of effort second to none.

We now proceed a step farther. Of late there has been frequently used by earnest Evangelists in the more populous parts of London the plan of free teas, free breakfasts, and free dinners—at which the poorest persons are brought together and fed, and are then affectionately exhorted to seek salvation. It is remarkable that this method has been so long disused, because it is, with a small difference, a plan adopted by our Lord. On two occasions at least, He spread a free repast for thousands of the famishing, disdaining not to provide food for the bodies of those whose souls He had blessed with the Word of Life.

On those two occasions the generous Master of the feast gave His crowd of guests a good substantial meal of bread and fish. I have often wondered why those two viands were in each case selected, perhaps it was that both land and sea should be declared to be the storehouse of Providence. He gave not bread alone. His fare was not stingy. He would not merely stay their hunger, but He would afford them a relish to their bread, and therefore He gave them bread and fish. Agreeable, sufficient, healthful and satisfying refreshment the Lord dispensed at His table in the wilderness.

Though many, no doubt, followed Him because they did eat of those loaves and fishes, yet I do not doubt that some who were first attracted by the earthly food remained to eat of the Bread of Heaven, and embraced those precious Truths which at first were foolishness unto them. Yes, my Friends, if we want to get at our starving people, if we would reach the most degraded and the poorest of the poor, we must use such means as these, for Jesus did.

A Mission would also find great strength in imitating Jesus by combining medical aid with religious teaching. Our Lord was a medical Mission-

ary—He not only preached the Gospel, but He opened the eyes of the blind, cured those who were afflicted with fevers, made the lame to leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing. You may say that all this was miracle. I grant it, but the mode of performing the cure is not the point in hand. I am speaking of the thing itself. True enough is it that we cannot work miracles, but we may do what is within human reach in the way of healing, and so we may follow our Lord, not with equal footsteps, but in the same track.

I rejoice to see in Edinburgh and in Glasgow, and also in London, the establishment of Medical Missions. I believe that in some parts of London nothing would be so likely to do good to the people as to make the vestry a dispensary, and the godly surgeon a deacon of the Church, if not an Evangelist. It may one day be thought possible to have deaconesses whose self-denying nursing of the sick poor shall introduce the Gospel into the meanest hovels. At any rate, there should be associated with the City Missionary, with the Bible-woman, and with Home Missions everywhere, to as great a degree as may be possible, the earnest aid of beloved physicians and men learned in the healing art, who should seek to do good to men's eyes, and ears, and legs, and feet, while others of us look to their spiritual infirmities.

Many a young man who goes forth as a minister of Christ would do much more good if he understood a little anatomy and medicine. He might be a double blessing to a remote hamlet or to a district crowded with the poor. I pray for a closer connection between the surgeon and the Savior. I would invoke the aid of truly believing members of the faculty. May there be many who, like Luke, are both physicians and Evangelists. Perhaps some Christian young man walking the hospitals, and fearing God, may find in these hints a guide as to his future career.

In addition to this, let me say that our Lord Jesus Christ also associated with His Mission-work the distribution of alms. He was very poor. Foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but He, the Son of Man, had not where to lay His head. Out of the gifts of the faithful who ministered to His necessities there was but little to spare. These gifts were put into a bag and entrusted to Judas, and we discover, incidentally, that the Master was likely to distribute from this slender store to the poor around Him. Brethren, it is to be feared that some Churches fall behind in this matter of almsgiving, a matter which at the Judgment Day will occupy a very conspicuous place, "I was hungry and you gave Me meat."

The Romish Church has abounded in the practice of almsgiving, and if her mode of distributing were as wise as her manner of contributing is generous, she would deserve much commendation in this respect. Brethren, because we feel that we are justified by faith and not by works, are we to cease from good works and suffer the giving of alms to drift into the background? Such is now the rage for centralization, and so eager are some for the suppression of all personal charity that it may one day become an indictable offense to give away a sixpence to a starving woman until you have consulted the police, the Poor Law Board, or some association for giving away paper tickets instead of bread.

Public opinion demands the publication of all our gifts, and ignores the old-fashioned command, "Let not your right hand know what your left hand does." We are all to be made wheels in the engine of a society to give our alms by clock work, and relieve the poor by machinery. For one, I shall always recommend Christian people to be a little eccentric in their benevolence. Without decrying societies, I shall urge godly men to judge for themselves as to the poverty of each case, and to give for themselves, apart from those various associations which cut and dry benevolence till it becomes a mere skeleton.

I am a firm believer in the Gospel of the barley loaves and fishes. I believe in the Gospel of feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. I like the story that I heard the other day of a poor man who was found in the street one Sunday morning as he was about to commit suicide. Two of our Brethren met him, and led him to this Tabernacle, but they knew better than to bring him to hear a sermon while he was hungry. On the road they took him to a coffee shop, and gave him a cup of hot coffee and some bread and butter. And *then* they brought him to hear the discourse. I had a far more likely hearer in the man whose hunger was relieved than I could have had in the poor famishing sinner.

Then, after the sermon was over, they took care to find him a good dinner, and so detained him till they brought him here again in the evening and God was pleased to bless the Word to him. Rest assured that the Master's opening blind eyes, the Master's feeding the multitude, and the Master's relief of the poor were all indications to the Christian Church that clothing societies and soup kitchens, and benevolent associations, are legitimate aids to the spread of the Gospel.

Our Master's Mission had one point in it which we ought never to forget, namely, that it was carried on very largely through open-air preaching. I remember well the time when it really seemed an outrageous novelty for a man to preach in the streets. I remember proposing, twenty years ago, to my good deacons in the country that I should preach on the Sunday evening by the riverside, and the remark was made by one of them, "Ah, I do not like it, it is imitating the Methodists." To him as a sound Calvinist it was a dreadful thing to do anything which Methodists were guilty of. To me, however, that was more a recommendation than otherwise, and I was happy to run the risk of being called Methodist.

All over England, in our cities, towns, villages, and hamlets, there are tens of thousands who never will hear the Gospel while open-air preaching is neglected. I believe that God allows us to preach in Churches and chapels, but I do not believe that we have any Apostolic precedent for it, certainly none for confining our ministry to such places. I believe that we are allowed, if it promotes order and edification, to set apart buildings for our worship. But there is no warrant for calling these places sanctuaries and Houses of God, for all places are alike holy where holy men assemble. It is altogether a mischievous thing that we should confine our preaching within walls.

Our Lord, it is true, preached in the synagogues, but He often spoke on the mountain's side, or from a boat, or in the court of a house, or in the public thoroughfares. To Him an audience was the only necessity. He was

a fisher of souls of the true sort, and not of the modern order who sit in their houses and expect the fish to come to them to be caught. Did our Lord intend a minister to go on preaching from his pulpit to empty pews, when by standing on a chair or a table outside the meeting house he might be heard by hundreds? Of course, if the crowd fills the house, and it is as large as the human voice can fill, there is the less need for us to go out into the streets. But, alas, there are places of worship in London by scores, not one-fourth or even one-tenth filled, and yet the preacher goes on contentedly!

A minister is living in positive sin who constantly preaches to a mere handful within walls, while outside there are crowded courts and lanes, and alleys, where men are perishing for lack of knowledge. The minister who does his duty goes out into the highways and hedges. He goes into all the world. He preaches whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, and delights to make hills and woods ring with the message of peace!

Our Lord also set an example to Home Missionaries, in the fact that He had pity on the villages. Small villages are often thought to be too insignificant for the founding of Churches in them. But the villages help to make the large towns, and the character of the citizens of this great London of ours depends very much upon the character of the village homes from which so many of our fellow citizens are drawn. We must never neglect the smallest hamlet, but seek as far as we can, to reach even the little knots of cottages that stand by twos and threes on lone heaths and desolate moors.

At the same time, the Master also gave much attention to the towns. Capernaum and Bethsaida were not forgotten. Jerusalem frequently echoed with His voice. Where the crowds assembled at the solemn festivals, which were something like the gatherings at our markets and fairs, Christ was heard lifting up His voice, and crying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." The Home Missionary must avail himself of all gatherings of his fellow men for whatever objects they may have come together. And in every place he must proclaim the Gospel, seeking by any means to save some. This and much more may be gathered from the life of Jesus of Nazareth, "a Prophet mighty in deed and word."

**II.** I shall now pass on to notice, in the second place, THE MODEL HOME MISSIONARY. My Brethren, after all, the success of a work depends very little upon the system which is adopted in carrying it out—almost everything rests under God—not upon the man. There have been men who, with systems unwise and imperfect, have, nevertheless, accomplished noble results, while others with admirable organizations have done nothing, because they were not the right men. Who, then, is the fittest man to be a Missionary for Christ? Who is the woman that can best serve her God?

Behold the Model Missionary in the Person of the Lord Jesus. The man who is to serve God as a leading Missionary must be a man of teaching power and of personal influence. It is of no use to send out as a Missionary a man who cannot speak. And yet there are many places where the people are without a minister, if speaking power is an essential qualifica-

tion for that office. Why, you may frequently hear the preacher mumble so dreadfully that you can hardly follow his words. Or he is a mere reader, or else a prosy reciter of very heavy matter.

In the Established Church, the very last thing that is looked into when a young man enters “holy orders,” as they call them, is whether he has gifts of utterance, or in other words, whether he is qualified by nature and by Divine Grace to be a preacher. That some very admirable and excellent persons enter the Church is cheerfully granted, but none the less we believe such a system to be essentially bad. If you want a man to spread the Gospel among his fellow men, he must be one who can preach. He must be apt to teach. He must have a way of making plain what he means, and of winning attention, so that men may be willing to listen to him.

Our Lord had this grand capacity in the highest degree. He could bring the most sublime truths down to the level of His hearers’ comprehension. He knew how, with a Divine simplicity, to tell a story that would win even a child’s attention. And though the Truth He spoke was such that archangels might well marvel at it, yet He put it into such a form that the little children gathered around Him, and the common people heard Him gladly. Aptness to teach—this is what we need. Pray, my Brethren, the Lord of the Harvest to send us many who have this choice gift. The pulpit, the Sunday school, and every form of Christian service need earnest workers who have the power of translating their thoughts into the language of those with whom they come in contact, so that they may be interested and impressed.

But there were higher qualifications than these. Our Lord as a Missionary was a Man who fraternized with the people. I do not think He ever passed a person on the road concerning whom He said to Himself, “I am so much above that man that I will not speak to him.” I could hardly dare to imagine Him saying such words. It would so lower the Savior to imagine such a thing. And yet, and yet, and yet—some of His ministers have thought so! How many of us, if we had seen a poor harlot coming to the well would have remained sitting by it purposely to converse with her? If we had seen her coming, knowing her character, we should probably have moved off, and have eased our conscience with the notion that hers was a case more suitable for someone else to deal with. In fact, a matter to be left to an agent of the Rescue Society.

Our Lord made no affectation of condescending or of patronizing the poor Samaritan sinner, but as naturally as possible, with every appearance of ease, He at once began to talk with her. If she had been a noble lady in the land He could not have fraternized more thoroughly with her, and yet He in no way connived at her sin. Our Lord received sinners and ate with them. They must have seen how different He was from themselves, but He affected no distance. He pretended to no caste. He drew no lines of social demarcation. He was not a Pharisee, who stood apart in his pious eminence—pride and assumed dignity had no attractions for Him. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners in the highest and best of senses, but in other respects He was the friend of publicans and sinners.

If we are to have London blessed, it will never be by ministers who are too great to speak to the poorest of the people. Nor will your benevolent societies work much good if your lordships and ladyships cannot mingle with the humbler classes. We must be one with those whom we would bless. We must not be ashamed to call them Brethren. We must without being conscious of stooping, reach out a fraternal hand to the fallen and the degraded, that we may lift them up for Christ's sake. O for men and women of the true brotherly and sisterly spirit—bone of the people's bone and flesh of their flesh!

Our Lord, again, was a man who could toil. He was by no means a gentleman at large, amusing His leisure with lecturing. He never preached a sermon without weaving His soul into it. He was by no means the kind of Evangelist who finds His task a light one. He could not, as some do, preach by the year without disturbing the placid current of His own emotions. No, my Brethren, never preacher worked more intensely than Jesus did—by day preaching, by night praying, oftentimes faint through weariness, and yet not finding time so much as to eat bread. Whoever did not labor, Christ did. He is the Master Worker of all the sons of men.

If we all must eat bread in the sweat of our faces, much greater was His toil when He brought the Bread of Life to us by the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, and by the life-sweat of every day of His three years' ministry. His life was a scene of unrivalled labor. We can hardly conceive how thoroughly our Redeemer laid Himself out for us. Now, if the Church would see souls saved, the work will never be achieved by agents who are half asleep. Christ's kingdom will never be extended by persons who are afraid of labor. God will bless His Church by the power of the Holy Spirit, for all the power lies there—but He will have His Church travail—or the blessing will not come.

For a Home Missionary we want a man who can pray as the Master prayed. What a proficient in the art of prayer was Jesus! He was as great with God in prayer as He was with man in preaching. I heard a Brother speak the other day of our Lord's coming from the mountainside with the wild flowers on His garments, and the smell of the heather on His vesture, for He came fresh from the lone spot where He had spent the night in prayer. Ah, my Brethren, here is the center of power! Prayer breaks hearts. These granite rocks will never yield to our hammers till we go down on our knees to smite. If we prevail with God for men, we shall prevail with men for God. The main work of the minister must be done alone. Let him do as he pleases when the multitude are listening, he shall not bring them to Christ unless he has pleaded for them when none heard him but his God. Our Home Mission needs men who can pray.

And, Brethren, if we are to secure useful men and women we must choose those who can weep. That is a fine faculty, that emotional power of the heart which makes the passions boil, and rise within like steaming vapors, till at last like the waters of dropping wells, they are condensed and fall in showers from our eyes! I do not covet that moistness of the eyes which some exhibit as the result of optical weakness or effeminacy of constitution—but manly weeping is a mighty thing. Our Lord Jesus was thoroughly a Man—far too masculine to fall into sentimentalism and affec-

tation—but when He beheld the city, and knew all the sufferings that would come upon it from the siege as a punishment for its sin, He could not restrain the floods. His great soul ran over at His eyes.

If He had not been a man who could weep Himself, He could not, humanly speaking, have made others weep. You must feel yourselves if you would make other men feel. You cannot reach my heart till first of all your heart comes to meet mine. Lord, send into Your field men of strong emotional natures whose eyes can be fountains of tears.

To crown all, our blessed Lord was one who knew how to die! Oh, when shall we have men and women sent among us who are prepared to die in order to accomplish their lifework? I have shuddered, and all the more so because I might do no better myself, when I have heard excuses for avoiding risks of life, and reasons for escaping hardships in foreign lands. It has been even questioned in some quarters, whether a man would be right in exposing himself to danger of life in order to preach the Gospel. I could say much, but would be sparing of censure. Only this I must say—until Divine Grace shall restore to us the ancient Apostolic self-sacrifice, we may not expect to see the Gospel conquering to any high degree.

Zeal for God's House must eat us up. Love of life must yield to love of souls. Trials must be counted as nothing for Christ's sake, and death must be defied, or we shall never capture the world for Jesus. They who wear soft raiment will never win Ireland, or Africa, or India for Christ. The man who considers himself, and makes provision for the flesh, will do little or nothing. Christ revealed the great secret when it was said of Him, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." In proportion as a man saves himself he cannot save others. And only in proportion as he is carried away with self-sacrifice, willing to renounce luxuries, comforts, necessities, and even life, itself—only in that proportion will he succeed.

I trust that no Missionary's life may be lost, but I trust that if the Church can only bring the world to Christ by the deaths of her ministers, all our lives may be sacrificed—for what are we, my Brethren, what is any one of us—compared with the accomplishment of our Redeemer's work? Our sires went to the stake with songs upon their lips. Our ancestors were confessors who dared the barbarous cruelties of Northern hordes, and the refined persecution of Southern superstition. They were men who could die but could not refrain from witnessing for the Lord. We must quit ourselves like men for Christ. And though we may not all be called to make the extreme sacrifice, we must be ready for it. And if we shrink from it we are not the men for such a time as this.

We want men who can toil, men who can pray, men who can weep, men who can die. In fact, we need for Christ's work men all ablaze with consecrated fervor, men under a Divine impulse, like arrows shot from the bow of the Almighty flashing straight to the target. Men like thunderbolts launched by the Eternal to go crashing through every difficulty with irresistible energy of aim. We want a Divine enthusiasm to fire us, an Almighty impetus to urge us on. Only men thus filled with the Holy Spirit shall accomplish largely the work of God.

**III.** My last point was to be, if Christ lived thus, and worked thus, LET US HEAR HIS CALL AND IMITATE HIM. I shall say but a few sentences,

but let them be remembered. Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is your *privilege* to be a worker together with God. Therefore keep close to the footsteps of the great Master worker.

Remember that before He went to work He was Himself personally obedient to that Gospel which He had to preach. He did not bid others believe and be baptized, and neglect to be baptized Himself. "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness," said He. And in the waves of Jordan, the Baptist immersed Him. How little will you be fitted for service if you leave any command of Christ not obeyed! How can you exhort others to do your Lord's will if you yourself are disobedient to it? The first thing, therefore, before you go to that form of service which now invites you, is to see to it that you have obeyed the Master's will, for "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

This being done, let me say to you, Is there not some department of Mission work at home that you could undertake? Most probably you could not do all those things which I have mentioned as having been done by Christ. But you know that young artists will often be instructed by their masters to sketch not the whole of a great statue by Phidias, but one single limb, an arm, a hand, or a foot. Have you not often seen in the artist's studio the foot of some great masterpiece used as a model? Just so it shall be enough to teach you service if, being unable to attempt the whole of the great scheme which I have brought before you now, you will undertake zealously to labor in one department of it.

But, whatever you do, do it thoroughly, do it heartily. If it is worth doing at all, it is worth doing well. For such a Master there must be no second-rate work, and with such a gracious reward before you, there must be no offering of that which costs you nothing. You must throw yourselves into whatever you undertake for Jesus.

Will you now take one word which is often used by Mark as a motto for yourselves? The idiom of the Gospel of Mark is *eutheos*, "straightway." He is always saying of Christ, that straightway He did this, and straightway He did that. Now, if you have work for Christ before your eyes, straightway hasten to do it. The most of Christians miss the honor they might have in service by waiting till a more convenient season. Do something tonight before you go to bed, if it is only the giving away of a tract. Do something as each moment flies. If up to now you have not been a worker, begin now. Or if you have been a worker up till now, do not pause, but end the evening with another good word to sister, or child, or friend. Evermore breathe out consecration to Christ.

And let me bid you, dear Friends, if you love my Lord and Master, to have comfort in trying to serve Him, because there is an all-sufficient power which you may obtain for this service. Our Lord is declared in this very verse to be One who was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. That same Holy Spirit is given to the Church, and that same power lingers in the assemblies of the faithful. Ask for this anointing, and pray that as in this verse we are told that God was with Jesus, so God may be with you. Remember last Sunday evening's text, "Fear you not. For I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I

will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.”

Being now a pardoned sinner, ask to be an anointed saint. As one who is reconciled to God, ask that you may be strengthened by God, so that from this day forward you may serve your Master mightily. I do not know that I ever felt happier in my life than I did last Tuesday night when I was listening to my dear Friend, Mr. Orsman, the pastor of the poor but gracious Church in Golden Lane, in the City. He is a good Brother, who, some years ago, was converted to God under our ministry, and he was there and then converted all over. Some of you, when you believe in Christ appear to have only a sprinkling conversion, but I love those men and women who get an immersion conversion.

They, go down into the deeps of the love of Christ, and give themselves altogether up to their Lord. Why, that dear man, though working all day long in the Post Office, yet finds in the evening opportunity to preach Christ. And if you were to go to Golden Lane, you would find there all the forms of organization which I have described at the commencement of this sermon in active exercise. Among the poorest, lowest and most degraded of the people, Divine Grace has found out precious jewels. Some seven or eight who are now ministers of the Gospel, first began to preach to his poor people there. He has now spiritual children scattered all over the world by emigration, and the good man, having consecrated himself fully to his work, is most happy in it.

I believe from the bottom of my soul that these single-handed men, who give themselves up to a special district and work it well, are the very greatest blessings that London can have. And if there is a young man here endowed with abilities, and perhaps with a little money and time, what better could I propose to him, as a lover of Christ, than to begin some such work for his Master? The same applies to Christian women. Oh, what good Christian women can do! There are those in this place whose names, if I were to mention them, would be had in honor by us all for what they have accomplished!

Without obtruding themselves as preachers into public assemblies, they are working away for Christ privately, and bringing many into the Church of God. O Christian men and women, time is flying, men are dying, Hell is filling, Christ is waiting to see of the travail of His soul. I beseech you by the heart of God’s mercy, by the heart of Christ, by His love for souls—bestir yourselves and proclaim salvation. May the Lord’s blessing be with you. Amen.

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# JESUS, THE JUDGE

## NO. 1476

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 25, 1879,  
*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And He commanded us to preach unto the people and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead.”*  
*Acts 10:42.*

You will notice throughout this short address by Peter how very careful he is to speak not at all upon his own authority, but wholly upon the authority of the Most High. He commences his conversation by saying that God had shown him that it would be right for him, as a Jew, to commune with Gentiles. God had shown it to him—he had not, therefore, broken through Jewish law as the result of his own judgment, but under *Divine* direction. He goes on to commence his sermon by saying, “The Word which God sent unto the children of Israel.” He had come, therefore, not with a Word of his own inventing, but with a Word of God’s sending. “That Word, I say, you know.” Then he speaks of Jesus of Nazareth Himself as anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. And he speaks of himself and his fellow Apostles as “witnesses,” bearing testimony to what the Lord Jesus had done.

Now, this way of speaking was, perhaps, rendered the more necessary by the mistaken reverence which Cornelius had rendered to his person, for he fell down at the Apostle’s feet and worshipped him, but it should be the constant habit of all the ministers of Christ. It is ours to keep within the boundaries of our commission and shield ourselves behind its authority. What are we that we should, of ourselves, have anything to say unto you, my Brothers and Sisters? What is our authority and by what right can we speak of ourselves? Verily, we have no such power over you and if we come unto you in our own name, bid us not God speed!

Every true minister must speak because he is *commanded* to speak. He must speak *what* he is commanded to speak and he must be prepared to fall back upon the authority of the Word of God continually. “If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.” Only if the testimony of any man is in accordance with the Word of God, is God with him and it would be perilous to reject his testimony. The Apostle was not long in his address before he came to the doctrine of the judgment of all men by Jesus Christ. He says that he was commanded to preach it and, therefore, he did preach it. It may not be called, “the Gospel,” but it is certainly a most important accessory Truth to the Gospel—it is one of those doctrines without which a Gospel ministry would not be complete. I mean that if in any testimony

concerning Christ the doctrine that He shall come a second time to judge the world were utterly neglected, such a testimony would not be a complete Gospel.

Hence you find that Paul, when he preached to the famous congregation of the Areopagites, took care to insist upon this Truth of God. In Acts 17:30, 31, he says, “The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to repent because He has appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He has ordained; whereof He has given assurance unto all men, in that He has raised Him from the dead.” This was also a part of Paul’s subject when he stood before Felix—“he reasoned of righteousness, temperance and *judgment to come*”—and this made Felix tremble, for there is great force of conviction in that solemn Truth of God.

The doctrine of the judgment of the world by Christ was used by Peter and Paul and other Apostles as a sort of preliminary Truth which they insisted upon before they came to the essence of the Gospel which consists in preaching Jesus Christ as a Savior. They plowed with this doctrine before they sowed the invitations of the Gospel. They did not, however, lay the axe to the root and then forget to proclaim the Word of Grace—they preached the terrors of the Lord, not in a legal, but a Gospel manner! Peter does so in this case, for he first speaks of Christ in the judgment and then in verse 43 he adds, “To Him give all the Prophets witness, that through His name whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins.”

This morning, in obedience to the same command, I shall try to speak, first of all, upon the message. And, secondly, upon the evident importance to be attached to it which we shall, in a great measure, gather from the words of our text. May the Holy Spirit, who in Peter’s day fell on all those who heard his word, fall, also, upon you as you are led to believe in the Lord Jesus!

I. First, let us consider THE MESSAGE which God commands all His servants to declare. That message begins with the assurance that *there is a moral government*. There is a Judge over the race of men—we are not as the locusts, of whom Solomon says that they have no king. The world is not left unobserved of God to be as a den of wild beasts, or a pond of fish where everyone devours his fellow and none calls them to account. Men are not permitted to do whatever is right in their own eyes, but there is a Law and a Governor over them. God has committed all authority unto His Son and Jesus Christ, at this moment, reigns and rules over the whole race of men, taking account of all the actions that are done in their bodies and making note of everything in order to the summing up of all things by-and-by. There is a Law, there is a rule, there is a government over the human commonwealth. The race is not left to anarchy—Jesus Christ is Head of all.

That being announced, we have to go on to say that *there will be a judgment*. “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” As the result of there being a government over mankind, an assize will be held where cases will be tried and justice will be administered. This, indeed, is the sanction and support of the Law, that it will call men to account. Its voice of power proclaims, “O you house of Israel, I will judge you everyone after his ways.” There will be

a day of final account. I need not stop to quote the numerous passages of Scripture which assert that every one of us must give an account of himself before God, for we are fully persuaded that “we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”

But, my Brothers and Sisters, we think that all reasonable persons will conclude that there must be a judgment if they will only consider the Character of God. Being the Ruler of the world, He must do justice. We should count any man who was made a king but a miserable counterfeit of a monarch if he never administered justice at all. If we had a state without laws, or laws without punishments for those who broke them, we should be, indeed, in a wretched condition and our king would be the mimicry of royalty! But such is not the case in the kingdom of Him who rules over all! It is said of our Lord, “You love righteousness and hate wickedness”—this makes us feel that He wills to do justice. And as assuredly as He has power to punish transgression, we feel certain that He will do so.

There will come a day in which He will judge the acts of men because His Character is not such that He could or would trifle with evil. “Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” “The Father who, without respect of persons, judges according to every man’s works” will not permit offenders to insult His Laws with impunity! It is wrapped up in the very idea of God that He is Judge of all the earth and must do right—and to do right He must hold a final court in which He will “render to every man according to his deeds.” The character of man equally involves a judgment, for he is evidently a responsible being and this is dear to anybody who cares to open his eyes.

We count not the cattle of the hills or the fish of the sea responsible—let them do what they may. No one blames the wolf that he howls, or the lion that he devours. But when we come to think of *man*, we regard him as a creature whose actions have a moral quality about them and are either right or wrong. In fact, he is a responsible agent. Surely, where there is responsibility there is a law and where there is a law there must, some day or other, be rewards for well-doers and punishments for malefactors. The constitution and nature of man inevitably require this, or else his responsibility is given to him in vain.

Now, the present tangled condition of the world’s history requires that there should be a day of rectification at the end of time. At this moment we often see the wicked prosper while the righteous are abased. At this day the mirth and the jollity are often connected with sin, while sorrow and grief go hand in hand with godliness in many and many an instance. Remember how the wise man argued and be persuaded by his reasoning—“Moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked.” Since the actions of men are evidently now left unpunished and high-handed sin holds power, there must come a righting of the wrong and a clearing of the just. The Judge of all the earth must do right and how can this be but by a final adjustment in which it shall be clearly seen that though the wicked prosper for a

while, they are as bullocks fattening for the slaughter—and though the righteous suffer for a while, it is but as the gold suffers in the furnace—that it may come forth purified.

Every heart that has ever groaned under the oppressor's wrong; every soul that has ever writhed under the proud man's arrogance must feel that there must be an end to the reign and riot of evil and a time in which innocence shall be avenged. Every Job may lift himself up before his false accusers and say, "I know that my Avenger lives and that He will stand in the latter day upon the earth." Moreover, there is in the consciences of most, if not of all men, a testimony to a coming judgment. I will not say of *all* men, for I believe that some manage to drug their self-consciousness as at last to quiet all their fears. But the most of men believe in a judgment to come and in their more thoughtful moods are alarmed.

There is more faith as to the judgment than we dream of in those who are most profanely daring in their speeches against God. The reason why they speak so exceedingly proud is because their consciences make them cowards—and to veil their cowardice they use bombastic words. These are the men that tremble first—the men that first cry out for mercy when the hand of God begins to touch them! How very seldom do you find a man die in stolid unbelief! At some time or other, reason will speak and conscience will be heard—and then that "dread of something after death" makes men cling, even, to the most wretched state—choosing, rather, to bear the ills they have than fly to others! They know not of the universal conscience, or *almost* universal conscience, that speaks like a prophet within the soul and tells of a throne of judgment, a Heaven and a Hell!

Now, whether we had or had not this argument to support us would make not one jot of difference to those of us who believe in the Word of God. What God says would always be enough for us, even if the nature of things and the apparent force of reason should flatly contradict His Word. Yes, I will even put it in that harsh way! We are always glad when we get the subordinate help of arguments fetched from the nature of things and so forth, but we care very little about them. We have accepted the Bible as God's Revelation. We believe the teaching of this Book to be Infallible and inasmuch as the Scriptures declare that there is a judgment to come, we confidently look for it.

Now, according to the Revelation of the Gospel, *this judgment will be conducted by the Man, Christ Jesus*. God will judge the world, but it will be through His Son whom He has ordained and appointed to actually carry out the business of that last tremendous day. He who shall sit upon the Throne is "the Son of Man." He will be thus enthroned, I suppose, partly because it is involved in His mediatorial office in which the Lord has put all things in subjection under His feet. He is at the right hand of God—"angels and authorities, and powers being made subject unto Him." God has been pleased to put the world, not under the direct government of personal Deity, but under the government of the Mediator, that He might deal with us in mercy.

That Mediator is Prophet, Priest and King—and His kingship would be robbed of its Glory if the King had not the power of life and death—and the power of holding court and judging

His subjects. Jesus Christ, therefore, being mediatorial King and Sovereign and all power being given unto Him in Heaven and in earth, will take unto Himself His great power at the last and will judge the nations. This high position is also awarded to our Lord as an honor from the Father by which shall be wiped away every trace of the shame and dishonor through which He passed among the sons of men. The kings of the earth stood up to judge *Him*, but they shall stand before Him to be judged! The rulers took counsel together to condemn *Him*, but the rulers shall stand at His bar to be, themselves, condemned!

Pontius Pilate and the chief priests shall all be there. And Caesar and all Caesars and Czars and emperors and kings and princes shall do homage before Him in the lowest manner by standing before His judgment seat as prisoners to be tried by Him. There will be no remembrance of the scepter of reed, for He shall break His enemies with a rod of iron! There shall be no marks of the crown of thorns, for on His head shall be many a diadem! Men shall not, then, be able to think of Him as the Man of tears with His visage sadly marred by grief and shame, for His eyes shall be as flames of fire and His Countenance as the sun shining in its strength!

O Cross, whatever of shame there was about you shall be wiped out forever among the sons of men, for this Man shall sit upon the Throne of Judgment! The Father designed to put this honor upon Him and He has right well deserved it. Jesus Christ as God has a Glory which He had with the Father before the world was. But as God-Man, He has a Glory which His Father has given Him to be the reward of that labor of life and death by which He has redeemed His people. “Give unto the Lord glory and strength” is the ascription of all His saints and God, the Everlasting Father has done this unto His Son, concerning whom He has sworn that every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord to the Glory of God the Father!!

“Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” I want you especially to remember that in the Holy Scriptures we are perpetually reminded, in reference to the Judgment, that it is a judgment by *the Man Christ Jesus*. There must be special reason for this honor done to the Manhood of our Lord, or it would not be so continually insisted upon. Daniel, in his prophecy, (7:13), says—“I saw in the night visions and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.”

The coming One in his vision was “the Son of Man” and we all know to whom that title belongs. Hence our Lord Himself very early in His ministry took care to claim for Himself this power of governance and judgment. Turn to John 5:22 where He says, “The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.” Then, in verse 27, He gives us the reason for His being thus ordained to be the Judge—“And He has given Him authority to execute judgment, also, because He is the Son of Man.” So that not only does Daniel see Him as the Son of Man, but Jesus Christ, Himself,

declares that the authority to judge is given to Him because He is the Son of Man—there being in that fact a peculiar reason why He should be Judge of all mankind.

Your memories will at once allow you to recollect that in the famous pictures drawn by our Lord wherein He describes the Judgment, (Matt. 25:31, 32), He takes care to begin by saying, “When the Son of Man shall come in His Glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the Throne of His Glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.” He does not call Himself the Son of God in this case, but says, “The Son of Man shall come in His Glory.” So is it, too, in Matthew 13:41—“The Son of Man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend.”

This it was which seems to have struck the Apostle Paul so much when he quoted from the Psalms and applied the language to Christ, in Hebrews 2—“What is man, that You are mindful of him? Or the son of man, that You visit him? You made him a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of Your hands: You have put all things in subjection under his feet.” Whereon he says, “We see Jesus crowned with glory and honor.” It is as Son of God as well as Man—having an intense sympathy both with the King and with the subjects—having manifested His Grace even to the rebellious and being yet filled with intense love to the Father and His Law. If we could have the election of a judge, what being could we suppose more impartial or so impartial as the Lord, who, though He counted it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh?

O blessed Judge, be You at once enthroned by the choice of the whole creation! This Person is peculiarly suitable to be Judge because He has a perfect knowledge of the Law. Yes, Your Law is My delight, He says. He put on righteousness as a garment. The Lord Jesus Christ, from His youth up, was an exceedingly deep scholar of the Law of God. He grew, as a Child, in wisdom concerning the will of God. His ears were opened to hear as He learned, that He might know how to speak a word in season to them that are weary. He knows the Law, for He made Himself subject to it and kept it in all its parts. This is the first requisite of a judge—to be thoroughly acquainted with the statute-book.

Yet further, He knows, also, the evil of law-breaking. What a Judge is this whom God has appointed, who, strange to say, has Himself suffered for sin though in Him was no sin, for He was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners! Yet the sting of sin, which is death, He has endured and the curse of sin has passed upon Him, as it is written, “Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.” With what precision, then, can He judge who, being both God and Man and knowing well the Law, has also an intimate acquaintance with all the heinousness and wickedness of law-breaking! Well did the Father choose Him to be the Judge of the quick and the dead! It puts judgment beyond a fault when He who is the Friend of sinners is made the Judge of

sinner. Thus much, then, concerning the fact that there will be a judgment and that this judgment will be conducted by the Man, Christ Jesus.

Now, observe, that *this judgment will concern all mankind*. He will judge the quick and the dead, that is, those who will be alive at His coming He will judge as well as those who have already died. He may come before some of us shall die. The time of His advent we cannot guess, but we shall certainly appear before His Judgment Seat whenever He shall fix the assize. The summons will exempt no man—from the utmost ends of the earth they shall come! None will be able to hide themselves in solitary places, or to find shelter among the crowded cities. Here and there a criminal escapes the vigilant eyes of human law. Though it is difficult to do so, there have been cunning men who, year after year, have managed by various disguises to escape recognition and have continued their depredations and evaded the police. But there shall be no such instance among all that shall be alive and remain at the coming of the Lord!

And as for the dead who have died in past ages, they shall all rise again. What prodigious multitudes! What crowds that baffle all arithmetic! Yet shall they all be arraigned and tried—all the living and all the dead of Christian lands and heathen lands—of antediluvian ages and of ages upon which the ends of the earth have come. Kings, princes and every bondman, rich and poor, small and great, shall all stand in that Last Great Day in Christ's great Judgment Hall. It concerns you, my Brothers, as it does me. It concerns you, my Sisters, and your children as well as those who have gone before. As surely as the Lord lives, the things that are seen shall pass away—mountains and hills shall flee before Him and rocks shall be melted down at His Presence—but His Word shall never pass away! And behold, He comes! “Behold, He comes with clouds and every eye shall see Him! And they, also, which pierced Him and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.”

Just a few words concerning this Judgment. When He does come, that *judgment will be a very eminent one*. It will be a judgment fixed by the peremptory ordinance of God, for the text says that He has “ordained” Jesus to sit as Judge. It is by ordinance and decree that Jesus Christ will take the Throne. He takes not this honor upon Himself on His own authority, but He claims the Throne as One that was ordained of God as was Aaron. In all His offices He quotes the Divine decree and for this, the last of all, He has the ordinance of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead. Everything done will be by Divine authority—there will be the stamp and seal of the everlasting God set upon everything that shall be transacted on that grand occasion. The whole trial will be most solemnly conducted. I shall not, for a single moment, attempt a description of the scene. There is room, indeed, for imagery and poetry, but we have none of these and need them not this morning. This will suffice—“For the Lord, Himself, shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thess. 4:16).

There shall be shouts when He comes, as if all the angelic bands lifted up their voices in acclamation and, above them all, one voice shall ring out most majestically, the voice of the

archangel! And yet above all other sounds a trumpet call shall thunder forth, most dreadful to the ears of ungodly men. Louder than ten thousand thunders shall it peal over earth and sea and none shall be able to resist the summons. Then, in His descent, the Judge shall pass into the region of the clouds. He shall sit upon a Great White Throne and every eye shall see Him—and also they which crucified Him. His coming will be with great pomp of angelic splendor, fit for the state of such a King and for the solemnity of such a day!

That judgment will be very searching, for the Apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:10 that we shall give an account for the deeds done in the body, each one according to what he has done, whether it is good or whether it is bad. And our Savior, in Matthew 12:36, informs us that for every idle word that man shall speak he must give account in the Day of Judgment—*words*, therefore, will be put in evidence as well as *actions*. Yes, and there will be an account taken in that day of things which never reached the publicity of words, for you know how Solomon closed up the book of Ecclesiastes by saying that, “God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil.” Paul also says, “God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel.”

Such things as were never known by our fellow creatures and were forgotten by ourselves shall be revealed and judged. Imaginations, lusts and desires of the soul, secret thoughts and passions and murmuring shall be laid open before all men—and before God shall a reckoning be made. That Judgment will be of a very exact kind. It will proceed upon evidence and documentary testimony—slander and hearsay will not be mentioned. No condemnation will come upon good men through the whisperings of malicious tongues, but everything shall be done in due order and according to the rules of the Court of Heaven.

Listen to this—“And I saw a Great White Throne and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them: and I saw the dead, small and great stand before God, and the books were opened”—documentary testimony brought into court as evidence—“and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” Don’t you see that the judgment will be done by record and solemn affidavit, in that great Court of King’s Bench? There will be no hurry, no passing over judgment with a light hand—all will be done in truth, equity and according to facts recorded by the Infallible Omniscience of God.

And what severity of justice will then be seen, for things will not be judged by their outward appearance, but put to thorough test and trial! Hear the words of the Lord—“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.” Well may we cry with Malachi, “But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like a fuller’s soap.” The sentences which will then be pronounced will be so just as to be indisputable and even the condemned will admit the justness. At the Last Great Day not

one of the condemned shall be able to deny his guilt nor the justice of the sentence! Though sent to Hell, he will feel it is what he deserves.

You remember when the king came in to see the guests and found a man that had not on a wedding garment, the intruder could make no excuse, but stood speechless? There shall be an assent in every human mind to the sentence of the Christ of God—it shall flash such awful conviction into the soul of every sinner that, though he is damned, his own soul shall say, “Amen,” to the condemnation! Oh, what a Judgment Day will that be in which everyone shall be certain, even in his own sad case, that the verdict of the Judge is bright as the sun with righteousness and cannot be appealed against! This, surely, will be the Hell of Hell—that it is *deserved* even in its utmost pang and bitterest pain. Oh, my Hearers, will any of you have to say, “Amen,” to your own condemnation? I pray the Lord to save you from such a fate.

That verdict will be final and irreversible. When Jesus has once pronounced it, there will be no appeal, no suing out of a writ of error, no reversal of the decree. He Himself has said it—“These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” There will be no delay in execution, nor escape from the doom! There will be no steeling of the heart to endure it and no outliving the doom! It will last on in all its terror, the final verdict of the Judge of all the earth, pronounced by the Christ of Love! I know not how to speak upon such a theme as this, but must leave it as it stands before you. May the Holy Spirit impress it upon your minds.

II. I desire, in the second place, to call your attention for a little while to THE EVIDENT IMPORTANCE OF THIS MESSAGE. Its importance may be gathered from the text because it says, “He commanded us to preach this.” Did the eternal God give a command for us to preach this Truth of God? Then He must know, in His infinite wisdom, that there is a great necessity for its being declared. But please notice the way in which the command is to be executed. “He commanded us to *preach*.” Now, to preach means to herald, to proclaim. Lo, we this day precede the great Judge as the trumpeters go before our judges on assize day and this is our cry, “He comes! He comes! He comes! The Man of Nazareth, Jesus, the Crucified, is coming, appointed Judge of the quick and the dead!”

And we are to cry this with all the loudness of voice and earnestness of tone and solemnity of manner which become the heralds of the King of kings! Whether you believe it or not, He comes! Whether you trifle with it or not. Whether you are rebels or loyal subjects, He comes and that speedily! He comes to judge the world in righteousness and the people in equity. Thus we make solemn proclamation in His name, declaring to you a fact which you will do well to hear with serious hearts and thoughtful minds.

But then it is added that we are “*to testify* that it is He.” Having given the proclamation, we are then to solemnly bear witness and to speak the fact over and over again for God, adding our own belief that it is surely true. In the Greek, this word, “testify,” is very forcible, something like the affirmation which those of us who account it wrong to take an oath are known to make in courts of law. We give our solemn affirmation and truthful testimony that it is so. It is the

truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth that we declare when we tell you that Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Son of Man, is coming upon the clouds of Heaven to judge the quick and the dead. We are to speak of this as a thing we know and are certain of—and we are to stand before men and whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear—testify that it is so. That which is to be both proclaimed and testified in obedience to the Divine command is no mean matter. Listen and take heed, I beseech you.

And this is to be done “*unto the people*”—not to some few, but to *all* the people—to the Gentiles, to the nations. Wherever we go, this is to be part of our proclamation as the heralds of Christ, “Behold, He comes to judge mankind.” To you, my Hearers, even to you is this word of warning sent! Will you not regard it? Now, Brethren, there is importance in this, not only according to the text, but from other reasons. If you think awhile, you will see that it sheds a great light upon the future of the ungodly. Whatever you, my Brother, choose to say of the wrath of God which is revealed concerning the impenitent, please think of this! It may be you feel troubled about its dread severity and eternity—but let this ease your perplexity that the Judge upon whom the sentence depends is Jesus Christ, the *Savior* of men!

I feel perfectly safe in leaving the future of the wicked in such hands as His! And however terrible may be His own words—and they are terrible to the last degree—about the future of the lost, I, for one, can never quarrel with Him. If it were Moses that spoke, if he spoke for God, I dare not challenge him, yet there might be the temptation. But when *He* speaks who is the Son of Man, let all the earth keep silence before Him! The severity which He exercises must be inevitable severity—you can be sure of that. If there is pain, anguish and wrath to every soul of man that does evil, then, since it is the Christ who will pronounce it, it will be because it *must* be and cannot be helped, but must be so in the nature of things. Therefore we bow before this dreadful doctrine of Scripture and, instead of trying to quiet men in their sins, we know the terrors of the Lord and we beseech them, in Christ’s stead, that they be reconciled to God—

*“You sinners, seek His face,  
Whose wrath you cannot bear!  
Fly to the shelter of His Cross  
And find salvation there.”*

Fly into the clefts of that rock which otherwise will grind you to powder when it falls upon you!

This doctrine, too, that Christ is Judge, ought never to be forgotten because it reflects great Glory upon Him. Ah, sons of men, you may despise Him, but He is your Master! You may say, “Let us break His bands asunder and cast His cords from us,” but Jehovah’s own decree has set Him as King upon His holy hill of Zion! You may, if you will, bite your lips and rage and rave against the Incarnate God, Jesus our Lord and King, but you shall stand before Him as surely as you live, to confess the blindness and the futility of your opposition and to be made to bow your knees in terror if you will not bend them, now, in reverence! Yes, He is King! The world may say what it wills and there may come darker times than these, but the lone star gleams afar with undying brightness—the Star of the morning which ushers in the eternal day! Jesus comes and

when He comes, light breaks for all that are on His side—and the black and murky darkness of an endless night shall descend on all that are His foes.

I close by noticing that the importance of this doctrine is very great if we remember its beneficial effect upon our everyday life. I constantly hear silly people, wicked persons, say, “Tell the people about something that has to do with today—about cleanliness and honesty and all that!” As if we did not do that and as if we were not the first to exhort men to fulfill all manner of social duties, do we not bid them think on whatever things are pure, honest, temperate and of good repute? And if I want men to live righteously, soberly and honestly, I know of no motive that can have greater weight with them than this of a judgment to come! Take that away from us and what have we to urge upon the sons of men at all? If they are to die like brutes, they will live like brutes! If there is no hereafter, they do well to say, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

This, though it looks like a future thing, is one of the present-day questions of every hour. You are stewards—you will have to give your account. Your Lord will come and question you as to your use of His goods. Will anybody in his senses tell me that this is unpractical? Surely every reasonable man will admit that for the promotion of right, truth and holiness, this is one of the most practical considerations that can possibly be found. If God will judge men at the last, it behooves men to see how they live today. Another special benefit of this Truth of God is its convincing and awakening power. Men tremble when they hear of judgment to come and they are led to cry, “What must we do to be saved?” Men begin to confess their sins when they are told that the Law by which they will be judged is spiritual and reaches even to the thoughts and intents of the heart. “Then,” they say, “who can stand before His Presence when once He is angry? If even to *think* an evil thought, or to lust an evil desire brings condemnation, who among us can stand when the heart-searching God shall sift the sons of men?”

This is the reason why it ought to be preached, for only penitents convinced of sin are likely to accept the remission of sins. This is the plow which makes furrows for the good Seed! This is the surgeon’s knife which prepares for the reception of the healing balm. And O, my Brothers and Sisters, you all know how quickening this doctrine is to Christians! We do not fear the Day of Judgment—we do not dread the thought of standing before our Lord Jesus because we have a plea which we know will answer every purpose! Our plea is this—we have been tried, condemned and punished already! Judge of all, You know when we were tried, judged and condemned! Look! In Your hands are the nail prints which are the witnesses that You bore our sins in Your own body on the tree! Look! On Your side You wear the ruby gem which tells how Your own heart made expiation for the guilt of all that trust in You!

We are not afraid, for there is *no judgment* for him who is judged already! There is no punishment for him who is punished already in a Substitute whom God has accepted! Yet this expectation of judgment quickens us to holy duty—we feel that since the Master comes, we

would be as men that look for their Lord and stand with our loins girded, doing service, expecting to hear His footstep at any moment—

*“O watch and pray! The Judge is at the door!  
Before His flaming bar you soon must stand.  
O watch! And keep your garments spotless pure,  
And then shall you be found at His right hand.”*

I shall be glad if any word that I have spoken upon this Truth of God shall strike and stick and abide in your hearts—and make those think who have been most thoughtless concerning the world to come. Years ago a gentlewoman had been spending an afternoon at cards and the evening at a ball and such-like amusements. She came home very late and found that her maid, who was sitting up waiting for her, was reading a book. “Ah,” she said, “are you still poring over your dull books? They make you moping and melancholy.”

The lady retired to her chamber but she couldn’t sleep. In the night she was troubled and fell a-weeping. Sleep forsook her. She tossed to and fro and at length she called her maid, who asked, “Madam, what ails you? I thought I left you very merry and well.” “Oh,” she said, “but I looked over your book and I only saw one word and that word stings me. I cannot sleep. I cannot bear it!” “What word was it, Madam?” “It was that word, ‘ETERNITY.’ Oh, Maid,” she said, “it is very well for me to sport and play and waste my time as I have done, but oh, eternity, eternity, eternity! How can I face eternity?”

And so that night was turned to weeping and to prayer. I could wish the same might happen, now, to many of you. The Judge is at the door! Jesus comes to judge you—will you have Him, now, to be your Savior? If not, His coming will cause you to weep and wail—and that throughout eternity! Remember that word, ETERNITY. God bless you all. Amen.

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

# THE MEDIATOR—JUDGE AND SAVIOR NO. 1540

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 30, 1880,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And He commanded us to preach unto the people and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins.”  
Acts 10:42, 43.*

THESE two verses are an extract from a very remarkable sermon, a sermon preached by Peter in the house of Cornelius upon the occasion of the Gentile Pentecost. I think we are entitled to call the event by that name, for then the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Gentiles. Peter preached at the first Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit fell upon the company of Jewish Believers and it is remarkable that he should be the preacher at the second Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon those of the uncircumcision while they were listening to the Gospel. Philip was at Caesarea and might have been called in, but God had determined that the strict Peter, the minister of the circumcision, should himself open the door of faith to the Gentiles.

Paul was, at that time, converted and it might have seemed to be more appropriate to have used him in enlightening this Italian officer, but the Lord thought not so—He would send the Spirit upon the Gentiles in connection with the same person who preached when this visitation blessed the converts of Israel. Peter preached, as it were, upon the ruins of the middle wall of partition which once divided the sons of men. The occasion was very special and hence the sermon is the more worthy of our earnest consideration. What kind of discourse is that which is likely to be sealed by the Holy Spirit? We may learn something upon that point from the instance before us.

Notice that it was a sermon “preached by request.” I have seen those words printed upon the title page of very poor sermons—as a sort of apology for their being printed. I have wondered who it was that requested them and whether the requesters were pleased with what they got by their petition. I should think that they would hardly have asked that the same words should be spoken to them again. But this request was a very honest and hearty one, for Cornelius sent many miles to fetch the preacher and the preacher came a long day's journey in order to deliver his discourse. It were devoutly to be wished that many such sermons would both be preached and published by request. When men are anxious to hear such discourses and count the preacher to be their benefactor, there is every hope that the Truth of God will work their salvation.

This discourse was delivered to a model congregation. One might be satisfied to preach in the middle of the night to such an assembly, for a devout family had come together at the earnest request of a leading kinsman to have the Gospel preached to them. To that assembly not a single person came in late—everyone was there before the speaker arrived. Late attendance frequently means heartless worship, disturbance and distraction. “Now, therefore,” said Cornelius before Peter began, “we are all here present before God.” This was well—O that all hearers were punctual, that all worship might be undisturbed! Better, still, would it be if all our audiences felt that they were “before God”—this would create a solemn feeling and ensure devout attention.

The hearers were all in a waiting and expectant mood and all in a receptive condition, desiring, as Cornelius said, “to hear all things that are commanded you of God.” Never was the ground better plowed, nor in a finer condition for receiving the living Seed. Peter gave them a very plain and simple sermon—you cannot find a flourish in it, nor a metaphor, nor even the least attempt at oratory as, indeed, you do not find in the sermons of Inspired men. Those gentlemen who preach grandiloquently are uninspired, you may depend upon that, or else they would not attempt their high and mighty style. The Inspiration which the Holy Spirit gives, leads men to use great plainness of speech. Not in words, only, was Peter plain, but the Truths of God which he taught were the first principles of the faith and it is generally by these that men are saved—points of difficult theology are not often the means of conversion.

What have we to do with the fireworks of rhetoric, or the playthings of controversy when men are anxious to know the way of salvation? Simple as the discourse was, it was a very powerful one. So powerful, indeed, that all that heard it were converted! I do not see any intimation that one of them remained unconvinced, for the 44<sup>th</sup> verse says, “The Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the Word.” What a very remarkable occasion was this, when all who heard the Truth of God felt the power of the Holy Spirit! What would I not give to be enabled to preach after that fashion and to see such a result! Peter’s sermon, however, was never finished—it remains forever a homiletical fragment, a broken column of the temple of wisdom, a discourse of which we shall never know the conclusion intended by its author.

I am sure that Peter felt full of matter that day, for so a minister usually feels when he knows that he is sent by the Lord, Himself, with a special commission and sees a people with open hearts receiving all that he utters. He then feels like a vessel needing vent, his heart is inditing a good matter, his tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Yet the sermon was never finished, but closed abruptly. Oh that our sermons were incomplete for the same cause that Peter’s was, for the Holy Spirit, who speaks better by Himself than by the most earnest voice, caused a divinely joyful interruption—“The Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the Word.”

The sermon was stopped while they heard the converts speak with tongues and magnify God and the preacher did not return to his sermon but, together with his converts, attended to Baptism and then enjoyed holy fellowship. Oh that the Spirit of God would, in the same manner, in-

errupt us! We have too much talk and too little of those blessed silences which He is sure to cause. It were better for our lips to be sealed by the hour than for us to speak except as He opens our mouth to show forth the praises of the Lord. A sacred irregularity would be far better in our public services than the prim monotony of death. For all these reasons I think I have a claim upon your very earnest attention while we look at Peter's sermon more intently—surely a sermon produced under such circumstances—leading up to such results and interrupted so Divinely deserves to be reverently studied!

What was the subject? What was Peter preaching upon? He was preaching Christ and Him Crucified! No other subject ever produces such effects as this. The Spirit of God bears no witness to Christless sermons! Leave Jesus out of your preaching and the Holy Spirit will never come upon you. Why should He? Has He not come on purpose that He may testify of Christ? Did not Jesus say, "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Me and shall show it unto you"? Yes, the subject was Christ and nothing but Christ and such is the teaching which the Spirit of God will acknowledge. Be it ours never to wander from this central point! May we determine to know nothing among men but Christ and His Cross.

I think there were six heads in the sermon, though he spoke only of one Subject, that is, Christ. The Apostle spoke of the Lord's Person. I will not enlarge, but simply give you his words. He said, "Preaching peace by Jesus Christ: He is Lord of all." He did not teach the Socinian Gospel, which sets forth a Christ who is not God. We love "the Man Christ Jesus," but we cannot endure the doctrine that He is no more than Man! How could He save us? Could a mere *man* redeem us? "He is Lord of all" and because He is thus supreme, we feel we can trust Him with the salvation of our souls. Peter is very clear upon the Sovereign Godhead of Jesus. His Words are few, but they are exceedingly explicit.

Having spoken of His Person, he then spoke of His life and what a pithy summary it is—"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power." There was the spring of His life's power—His anointing from the Holy Spirit, who bore witness of Him in Jordan and at other times. He says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, for the Lord has anointed Me." The tenor of His life is set out in the next sentence, "Who went about doing good." That one stroke gives a full portrait of Christ! You have summed up, in that sentence, the biography of Jesus as He lived among men! He was an itinerant Missionary, a traveling Preacher, a general Benefactor and "He went about doing good."

Then Peter passed on to his third point, which was the Savior's death, of which he says, "Whom they slew and hanged on a tree." He does not take away the offense of the Cross, nor put it in smooth language, as some would have done. He confesses that they hanged Him on a tree. Hanging or crucifixion was an accursed and shameful death in the judgment of all mankind and Peter confesses that His Lord thus died—there is no concealing, or even veiling of the matter—he acknowledges that He died by hanging upon a tree. I rejoice in this bold telling of the Doctrine of the Cross in what some may call its boldness, but in what we will regard as its sublime simplicity. In Christ's death the shame is honor and the

disgrace renown—to deck the Cross with flowers and make crucifixion honorable is to rob the august transaction of its leading element, namely, the endurance of shame because of man's shameful sin.

Then Peter passed on to our Lord's Resurrection, for that is an essential part of the Gospel and the Gospel is not preached where a risen Christ is forgotten. "Him God raised up the third day and showed Him openly." It was no fiction! He was openly shown on many occasions to those best able to recognize Him. The risen Christ was seen and seen clearly. Yes, and spoken with and touched with fingers and hands by His disciples. He was not shown to all the people, for He was not to be exhibited to gratify curiosity, but to secure faith. The evidence of 500 persons is quite sufficient to the establishment of an historical fact and perhaps better for the purpose than the witness of unnumbered crowds. If you suppose those 500 to have been deceived, you would just as readily believe that a whole nation was mistaken.

Had the nation of the Jews received the truth of Christ's resurrection they could not have given us better evidence than we have, already, that Christ is risen! It would have been said—"This is all an Israelite fable! The Jewish nation, prejudiced in their own favor, have banded together to maintain the fiction of a risen Messiah in order to add to their own national reputation." There is something far more convincing in the testimony of men who, themselves, were persecuted and put to death for bearing such witness and died adhering unanimously to the truth of their common testimony. God gave to the whole world sufficient evidence to establish the Resurrection of Christ, for many did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead.

Then Peter came to the last two points of his sermon, which were the judgment, which he felt it necessary to preach—declaring that Jesus Christ who died and rose again is now designated the Judge of all mankind. And lastly, as the gem of all, Peter preached salvation by the Lord Jesus most fully and graciously when he said, "Through His name whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins." This was what he was driving at and when he had reached this point, enough Truth of God had been taught to save a soul and God, the Holy Spirit, at once used it! I propose, this morning, to confine your attention to those last two points of Peter's sermon, for I am sure that there is much profitable matter in them. Not that I intend to bring out the meaning of each of these verses separately so much as the connection of the two, to show how Christ's being made Judge of all mankind has a connection with His being the Savior of all those who believe in Him, to whom He forgives their sins. May God bless the meditation to our souls' profit.

**I. OUR DIVINE MEDIATOR'S POSITION INVOLVES TWO OFFICES.** We are not now living under the immediate government of God, but under the reign of Jesus Christ the Mediator, for God has committed all judgment unto the Son. Jesus now reigns, according to the Word of the Psalmist, "You have put all things in subjection under His feet." We are living under a mediatorial dispensation in which all power is delivered unto Jesus in Heaven and in earth. God shines upon us, now, through the Person of His dear Son and not, therefore, with those fierce and strong beams which in

justice would have consumed us, but through the medium of the accepted Person of Jesus—with mild, soft, genial radiance for our comfort and our salvation.

Inasmuch as Christ has thus received mediatorial power in its fullness, there are two offices in it. The first is that of Judge and the second is that of Savior. First, Jesus Christ as Mediator has become our Judge. “The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son.” “To this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and the living, for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” Mark that—“of Christ.” Jesus of Nazareth has become “Judge of the quick and the dead.” In this capacity He has judicial authority over all mankind. Offenses now are offenses against *Him*—transgressions against the royal Son of God. He has authority over men and He will try all of us at the Last Day, as He is, even now, sitting in judgment upon all our acts and thoughts and intents.

We shall all have to stand before Him, “that everyone may receive the things done in the body, according to that he has done, whether it is good or bad.” He will sum up the evidence and decide the doom of all. We shall, each one, appear before His Great White Throne and He shall divide the nations as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. If any are condemned, His lips shall say, “Depart, you cursed!” If any are glorified, from His lips shall proceed the sentence, “Come, you blessed of My Father and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Yes, He that hung upon the Cross sits now as King upon the holy hill of Zion and He must reign till all His enemies are made His footstool and He must come a second time without a sin-offering unto the judgment of mankind.

That judgment of our Savior’s will be authoritative and final and it will concern all the race of Adam. It is of Divine appointing and can never be questioned, for God “has appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He has ordained; whereof He has given assurance unto all men, in that He has raised Him from the dead.” The Lord Jesus is Judge of the quick, that is, of the living and of the dead. All that will be alive at His coming, kings and peasants, professing saints and avowed sinners must, alike, stand before His Throne. And all the myriads whose moldering bodies have turned the world into one huge graveyard must live again and all answer to His trumpet summons.

The Jews that accused Him; the Romans that executed Him; the ancient Gentiles that persecuted His Apostles; the scoffers of modern times who ridicule His claims—all kings and patriarchs before the flood with all the numerous host destroyed by the deluge and the myriads upon myriads of all the nations that have come and gone since then and all that shall come and shall yet go—all must, without exception, put in a personal appearance before the bar of the Nazarene, who is also the Son of God! This is part of His work as Mediator between God and man and well will He discharge the solemn trust.

The second part of His office is to be a Savior, “that through His name whoever believes in Him should receive remission of sins.” He is a Prince and a Savior! Power in Him attends His Grace. He has the sovereign right

of condemnation or justification—the final judgment is with Him. He says, “Behold I come quickly and My reward is with Me to give every man according as his work shall be.” The powers of life and death are entrusted to Jehovah Jesus, the Son of God. He has authority to pass by transgression, iniquity and sin in His own name, as in the name of the Eternal God. His Atonement has made it possible for Him to do this in perfect consistency with His Character as Judge. He pardons and when He pardons it is as just an act as when He condemns.

If this seem a paradox to you, read the New Testament and see how He can be just and yet the Justifier of him that believes. See how it is that in the atoning Sacrifice, “righteousness and peace have kissed each other,” and how God is severely just in all that He does and yet abounds towards Believers in richness of Grace in passing by their sin. It seems to me to be a very blessed thought that the same universality which pervades the Mediator’s dignified proceedings as Judge is to be seen in His condescending operations as Savior, for it is not to the Jews, alone, that He has come, though to them He is preached. Would God they did receive Him, but He is come to the Gentiles, also, that “whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins.”

Now, there is neither black nor white, male nor female, rich nor poor with Him—humanity is one great fallen family and out of it shall arise a great restored family who come and trust the Savior! Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him. As well of the ages past was He the Savior of Believers and of this age and of ages yet to come. He is mighty always to save—the anointed Savior, yesterday, today and forever the same. See you then, because Christ is the Interposer and has intervened between God and man and has royal authority to so do, He therefore takes upon Himself the double work of judging and of pardoning. Let the two works dwell together in your minds—

***“He is a just God and a Savior.”***

**II.** Kindly follow me in the next consideration—BOTH THESE OFFICES REGARD MEN AS SINNERS. I am sick to death of hearing men talk about the goodness which is latent in human nature. I read, the other day, an instruction to missionaries that when they go to a foreign land they should always believe that men are good, that there is a natural religiousness in them, which, like sparks in the embers, only needs blowing up a little and will certainly flame up into a wonderful fire of true devotion and so on. Pooh! There is not a word of the Truth of God in all this flattery! No doctrine could be more untrue to the very existence of Christ! If natural religion would have sufficed, why need a Divine Savior to have descended among us? The best that the light of Nature can do falls short of righteousness.

The case of Cornelius in the chapter we have been reading makes it evident that the best natural religion needs to be illuminated by Revelation and instructed by the Doctrine of the Cross, for there is Cornelius, a man worshipping the true God devoutly and living correctly and yet what must be done for him? Is he to be saved without Christ? Is he to find his own way to Eternal Life by the development of his good qualities? No, but he must be told to fetch Peter to tell him about Jesus, the Savior, and if

no other means will answer, an angel must descend to guide him to the appointed teacher! When he had gone as far as he could go, it became essential that he should hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Now, it is clear as noonday that if for this best of cases the Gospel was absolutely necessary, it must assuredly be required by the myriads who are not so excellent. Brothers and Sisters, Jesus Christ comes to judge mankind because there are sinners to be judged! If you find me a nation which has no tribunals, no punishments, no courts of justice, no judges—it must either be the scene of utter anarchy or else a nation where all obey the law and such a thing as a criminal is unknown! The setting up of the last great assize and the making of that assize to have reference to all men, the quick and the dead and the appointment of the most supreme Person in existence, even the Son of God, to conduct that assize—all these facts imply guilt somewhere and abundance of it! If it is not thereby proved that every one of the quick and the dead have offended, it at least implies that they are all under suspicion! But that they are all actually guilty we learn from other portions of God's Word. The judgment held by the Mediator is proof that the mediatorial office has reference to sin and deals with men as transgressors of the Law of God.

The second part of our Lord's mediatorial office implies this most certainly, for He comes as *Savior* and such an office would be needless if there were no sin and ruin. It is idle to talk of saving those who have never fallen. He comes to remit sin, but there can be no remission of sins to those who have never transgressed. The largeness of the promise here used that, "whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins," goes to prove that there is sin in *everybody*. However wide the, "whoever," is, it is wide, depend upon it. The remedy measures the disease. Remission is promised upon belief in Jesus Christ because fallen man needs to be pardoned. Putting the two things together, the very fact that there *is* a Mediator at all regards man as fallen.

God could have dealt with us immediately, without an Intercessor had we been as the first Adam was before the Fall. It is by reason of sin's influence upon the race, the Fall and corruption of the progeny of Adam, that it became necessary there should be a "Daysman that might lay His hand upon both" and deal with God in His Divine Person and yet deal with fallen man in his humanity. Yes, Christ as Mediator deals with sinners on God's behalf and the point I want you practically to note is this—do not let us get away from the consciousness of being sinners because we must then move away from Christ the Mediator! In proportion as you set up *any* righteousness of your own, in that proportion you become independent of the Savior and are divided from Him.

If you deny that you are liable to be judged and condemned, you will deny, also, the necessity of your being forgiven—and while denying your guilt you never can be forgiven—for confession of guilt is a necessary preliminary to pardon. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Put yourselves, then, with broken hearts, beneath the cover of the Savior's wings! Come and stand before His majestic Judgment Seat and plead guilty! Then and there cry, "Remit my sin through Your great Sacrifice and precious blood." Do not try to disprove the accusation

or to extenuate the guilt, but plead guilty and, as guilty, beg for a free pardon. Do not labor against your conscience to deny your sin, but take the publican's place and cry, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"

That is the second point of the text and it is clear enough. May we be wise enough to put it into practice. May the Holy Spirit work in us a tender, humble and contrite spirit.

**III.** Notice a third consideration—THE QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED BY OUR LORD AS MEDIATOR TO FULFILL HIS FIRST OFFICE OF JUDGE MATERIALLY COMFORT US IN LOOKING AT HIM UNDER HIS SECOND OFFICE AS SAVIOR. Note, then, first, that as Judge, the Lord Jesus has full authority. He is fully commissioned of God to acquit or to condemn. Oh, then, if He gives me pardon through His blood, it is an authorized pardon! It is a free pardon under the King's own hand and seal! I rejoice to think of this. If Jesus the Judge had said, "Depart, you cursed," I should be certain that it was true and sure though I sank into unutterable despair forever.

And even so, when He says, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins," I am equally certain that His sentence is sure and fixed. Therefore, being justified by such a Justifier, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord! The pardon is as authorized as the condemnation would have been. Is not this sweet to think about? Is not this a solid pillar for hope to rest upon? In order that our Lord might be a competent Judge, He possesses the amplest knowledge. A judge should be the most instructed among men, or otherwise he is not fit to decide in matters of great difficulty and importance. Jesus Christ as Judge is incomparably fit to judge men, for He knows men thoroughly. He is, Himself, a Man and, therefore, He knows our temptations and our weaknesses. In fact, He knows all about us by experience as well as by observation. He carries a man's heart within Him to the Judgment Seat and in man's Nature He sits there to weigh us in the balances of the Truths of God. This fits Him to judge the world with equity.

Next, He knows the Law. Has He not said, "Yes, Your Law is within My heart"? No one knows the Law of God as Jesus did, for He kept it in every point—He did not merely read it and learn it, but *obeyed* it to the fullest. The Law is written out in living characters in His holy life and obedient death. How qualified He is to judge, since He is Master of every line in the royal statute book! Moreover, He knows what sin is—not that He ever sinned—but He has lived among sinners as a Physician and studied their complaints, making a specialty of the disease of sin. Though He had no sin of His own, yet all sin was laid on Him. "He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

The Lord Jesus also knows the punishment of sin. A judge must know what penalties to award. Jesus knows this well enough, for He, Himself, has once suffered for sin, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. He knows the deserved penalty of human guilt, for on His shoulders the plowers made deep furrows and His very soul was crushed within Him in the winepress of Divine Wrath. Pause here and think awhile. Inasmuch as this knowledge qualifies Christ to be your Judge, O my Soul, it equally qualifies Him to pardon you, for He knows you thoroughly and can

cleanse you thoroughly! He knows sin, dear Brothers and Sisters—your sin and mine—so that when He gives pardon it will be for all our sin. He will forgive all manner of transgressions, iniquities and crimes of which all are open before Him.

He knows the Law and, therefore, He knows how legally to acquit, so that no further question can be raised. He will make no mistake about the matter, for He knows the ways of the courts of Heaven. Since He knows the penalty—because He has *borne* it all—He will take care that none of it shall ever fall on us. The pardon of Believers is not given by a blind God, nor granted in error—there are no flaws in the Divine Judgment—no schemes and quibbles by which to evade the meaning of the statute in that case made and provided, but all is done in justice and equity. The Lord does not keep to the ear that which is avoided in fact, but all His judgments are done in truth. The Judge of all the earth must do right. If You have pardoned me, my Lord, You have known what You have done and You have done it thoroughly and well and wisely and it will stand in the highest court against all gainsayers!

I shall not be condemned when I am judged, but shall be cleared and justified even before the bar of God, for Jesus Christ, the Judge, Himself, has put away my sin! See here the full remission granted to my faith. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect since God has justified? Do you see this? Do you not also see, dear Friends, that all the personal qualifications of our Lord to act as Judge, remarkably tend to make the pardon of His people the more blessedly clear for, first of all, as a Judge He is very just. "You love righteousness and hate wickedness, therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows." "He is called Faithful and True and in righteousness He does judge and make war."

He is impartial and unchanging and sitting on the Judgment Seat the highest and noblest qualities of humanity and Deity are conspicuous in Him. Well, then, when He forgives it must be *just* to forgive and when He pardons us it must be consistent with the holiness of God for us to be pardoned! Such an One as He whom God accounts worthy to judge the sons of men at the Last Great Day, when He says, "your sins are forgiven you," has not perverted judgment, nor turned aside from right. Our pardon is affirmed and established by the Wisdom and Truth of the Divine Judge and its authenticity and correctness are proven by the same attributes. Who can dispute our acquittal since it comes from the Judge Himself?

If you have caught my thought and seen the Truth of God, it must tend to your comfort and delight—all the pomp of judgment, all the authority of the Throne, all the justice of the statute book, all the power of the mediatorial government and all the holiness of the Judge, Himself, are engaged to maintain the verdict of His Grace and make it as firm as the sentence of His wrath. Herein is ground for quiet assurance.

**IV.** Let us next notice the fact that OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE FIRST OFFICE OF THE MEDIATOR IS EXCEEDINGLY NECESSARY TO OUR ACCEPTANCE OF HIM IN HIS SECOND CAPACITY. This was why Peter preached it. This was why Paul before Felix reasoned concerning right-

eousness, temperance and judgment to come. This is why the Holy Spirit, Himself, convinces the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. Dear Hearer, if you do not believe in Christ as your *Judge*, you will never accept Him as your Savior! Unless you set yourself before that awful Throne, that Great White Throne, as John calls it, and realize yourself as standing there to give an account of your sins, you will not fly to the Savior for mercy!

I would have every unconverted person set before his mind the hour of his death, the moment of the appearance of his naked spirit before the tribunal of Christ and then the resurrection and the solemnities of that great day for which all other days are made, when Heaven and earth shall pass away and all things melt like dreams and the only real thing shall be the man, his deeds, his Judge, his future. Oh, think of this! Some of you are unpardoned this morning and as sure as you live, unless you repent, you will stand before God to receive nothing but condemnation—condemnation irreversible and eternal! Let those who would bewitch you say what they will, you will receive a condemnation which will thunder after you throughout ages without end! It will wither all your hopes and dry up the springs of comfort within your nature and leave you in eternal desolation!

I cannot speak upon this topic at any length, the theme is too dreadful. May none of you ever incur the doom of the Last Day. May it never happen that one who sat in the Tabernacle while we tried to preach the Gospel shall be driven by the whirlwind of Divine Justice away from the Presence of God and the glory of His power! And yet it will be so with some of you, I am afraid, for you do not turn to God. You do not seek the Savior and you are as likely as not to die in your sins and, if you do, “there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation” which must devour you. Oh that you would feel this and now, under a sense of it, come and trust in Jesus Christ the Savior!

He is never dear to any but to sinners. Christ is never valued by any but the guilty. He came into the world to save sinners—it is well He did, for no one else will have Him but those who feel their sin and condemnation. Oh, come and take Him as your Savior and let that blessed word, “Whoever believes in Him,” be like a wide door to let you in! “Whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins.” Why should you not, at this moment, obtain that full remission? Here are some lines which I would have you think upon when you are in your own chambers at home—may their concluding prayer be yours—

***“That day of wrath, that dreadful day,  
When Heaven and earth shall pass away,  
What power shall be the sinner’s stay!  
How shall he meet that dreadful day,  
When, shriveling like a parched scroll,  
The flaming heavens together roll?  
When louder yet and yet more dread,  
Swells the high trumpet that wakes the dead?  
O, on that day, that wrathful day  
When man to judgment wakes from clay,  
Be YOU the trembling sinner’s stay,***

***Though Heaven and earth shall pass away!***

**V.** The last Observation is that THE SAVING WORK OF CHRIST'S MEDIATORIAL OFFICE IS THAT WHICH CONCERNS US MOST AT THIS PRESENT TIME. What does Jesus do as Mediator? He judges, but He also forgives. Note the words, "Shall receive remission of sins." What is remission of sin? Hear it and be astonished that it is possible! It is the causing of sin to cease to be! Granted that you have sinned—lamented that you have sinned. Granted, also, that your sin deserves the utmost punishment, yet God, in wondrous mercy, is prepared to forget your sin, to blot it out, to cast it behind His back, to cast it into the depths of the sea! Many Scriptural expressions go to set forth that He will put it quite away so that He will regard you as if you had never offended at all.

Guilty man, do you hear this? You that are not guilty—you self-righteous people—I do not care whether you hear it or not, for Christ did not come to call you since the whole have no need of a physician, but O, you guilty ones who know that you are guilty, listen to this! There is remission and it is preached to you in Jesus Christ's name! God is a God of mercy and He passes by iniquity, transgression and sin and the guilty can be justly treated by Him as if they were perfectly innocent! Note this grand fact and then observe that this is to be done in Christ's name! There is *no other name* in which pardon can be bestowed—but it can come in the name of Jesus! Without shedding of blood there is no remission and this blood is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, which cleanses us from all sin.

It is in the name of Jesus, the Nazarene—despised and rejected of men, who is also Lord of all—it is in His name that pardon is freely presented to the most guilty of the human race! Be they where they may, God is ready to kiss away their sins and to accept them through Jesus Christ. According to the text this is to be had through *faith*, for the text says, "He that *believes* on Him." The plan is very simple. Every great discovery is very simple when it is complete. Did you ever notice that when a machine is complicated you feel sure that it is only in its infancy? The more perfect it becomes the more simple it becomes till, at last, when there is no improvement to be made, you can see it is so because all complications have been removed. Such is the Gospel. It is not a science which needs to be learned at universities. It is not a mysterious doctrine which needs the intellect of a doctor of divinity to grasp it. It is just an A B C Gospel which babes often receive when wise men miss it. It is—trust Jesus Christ—trust God in Jesus Christ and you are reconciled to Him and your sins are blotted out for Christ's sake!

Lastly, this blessed news has reference to everyone in the whole world that will believe in Jesus. That great, comprehensive word, "whoever," is worthy of your devout notice. "Whoever believes in Him." This excludes no race of men, neither the most degraded Hottentot, nor the most intellectual Hindu. This shuts out no king and no beggar, no moralist and no whoremonger, no adulterer, no swearer, no thief, no murderer! Blessed be the God of all Grace, it does not shut out me! I greatly rejoice in this. I am one of the "whoevers," for I believe in Jesus with all my heart! I have no hope but in Him and, therefore, I know that I have remission of my sins. I

long for you all to have it, too—not because of any merits of yours; not because of any feelings of yours; not because of any works of yours—but for His dear sake who was hanged on a tree you shall have remission if you believe in Him!

Oh, trust Him! Trust Him and you shall have pardon! My heart longs that you should, at this moment, accept Jesus and live. Why not? Often, when we have spoken like this, the Holy Spirit has cheered the hearts of men and brought them to Christ and why should He not do it this morning? Pray for it, Believers! This moment offer your intense prayers to Heaven in silent cries. The Spirit of God is here in this assembly and He will work in answer to our warm desires. I have preached the Gospel. I know it is the very Gospel of the blessed God! Will He not bear witness to His own Truth? Has He not pledged Himself to do it? I have preached His Truth as well as I can, relying only upon His help and I have earnestly avoided all tawdry speech of human wisdom. I have told you in all simplicity the old, old story of my blessed Lord and therefore I confidently expect to see the Word prosper.

The Holy Spirit must bless the preaching of the Cross—it is His office, His Nature, His usual way to do so. He has not changed, nor ceased to be what He used to be and, therefore, He will bless His people and make His Gospel the power of God unto salvation! O my dear Hearer, seize the blessing by an instant faith! God help you to do it, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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# THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

## NO. 201

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 20, 1858,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell  
on all them which heard the Word.”  
Acts 10:44.***

THE Bible is a book of the Revelation of God. The God after whom the heathen blindly searched and for whom reason gropes in darkness is here plainly revealed to us in the pages of Divine authorship. He who is willing to understand as much of Godhead as man can know, may here learn it if he is not willingly ignorant and willfully obstinate. The doctrine of the Trinity is specially taught in Holy Scripture. The *word* certainly does not occur, but the three Divine Persons of the One God are frequently and constantly mentioned. Holy Scripture is exceedingly careful that we should all receive and believe that great truth of the Christian religion—that the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Spirit is God—and yet there are not three Gods but one God. Though They are each of them very God of very God, yet three in One and One in three is the Jehovah whom we worship.

You will notice in the works of *Creation* how carefully the Scriptures assure us that all the three Divine Persons took their share. “In the beginning Jehovah created the heavens and the earth.” And in another place we are told that God said, “Let *Us* make man”—not one Person, but all three taking counsel with each other with regard to the making of mankind. We know that the Father has laid the foundations and fixed those solid beams of light on which the blue arches of the sky are sustained. But we know with equal certainty that Jesus Christ, the eternal *Logos*, was with the Father in the beginning and “without Him was not anything made that was made.”

Moreover we have equal certainty that the Holy Spirit had a hand in Creation, for we are told that “the earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the earth. And the Spirit of the Lord moved upon the face of the waters.” And brooding with His dove-like wings, He brought out of the egg of chaos this mighty thing, the fair round world. We have the like proof of the three Persons in the Godhead in the matter of *Salvation*. We have abundant proof that God the Father chose His people from before the foundations of the world. That He did invent the plan of salvation and has always given His free, willing and joyous consent to the salvation of His people.

With regard to the share that the Son had in salvation, that is apparent enough to all. For us men and for our salvation He came down from Heaven. He was incarnate in a mortal body. He was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Hades. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into Heaven. He sits at the right hand of God, where also He makes intercession for us. As to the Holy Spirit, we have equally sure proof that the Spirit of God works in conversion. For everywhere we are said to be begotten of the Holy Spirit. Continually it is declared that unless a man be born again from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

All the virtues and the graces of Christianity are described as being the fruits of the Spirit, because the Holy Spirit does from first to last work in us and carry out that which Jesus Christ has beforehand worked for us in His great redemption, which also God the Father has designed for us in His great predestinating scheme of salvation.

Now, it is to the work of the Holy Spirit that I shall this morning specially direct your attention. And I may as well mention the reason why I do so. It is this. We have received continually fresh confirmations of the good news from a far country which has already made glad the hearts of many of God's people. In the United States of America there is certainly a great awakening. No sane man living there could think of denying it. There may be something of spurious excitement mixed up with it, but that good—lasting good has been accomplished—no rational man can deny.

Two hundred and fifty thousand persons—that is a quarter of a million—profess to have been regenerated since December last—have made a profession of their faith—and have united themselves with different sections of God's Church. The work still progresses, if anything, at a more rapid rate than before and that which makes me believe the work to be genuine is just this—that the enemies of Christ's holy Gospel are exceedingly wroth at it. When the devil roars at anything, you may rest assured there is some good in it. The devil is not like some dogs we know of. He never barks unless there is something to bark at. When Satan howls we may rest assured he is afraid his kingdom is in danger.

Now this great work in America has been manifestly caused by the outpouring of the Spirit, for no one minister has been a leader in it. All the ministers of the Gospel have co-operated in it, but none of them have stood in the van. God himself has been the leader of His own hosts. It began with a desire for prayer. God's people began to pray. The Prayer Meetings were better attended than before. It was then proposed to hold meetings at times that had never been set apart for prayer—these also were well attended. And now, in the city of Philadelphia, at the hour of noon every day in the week, three thousand persons can always be seen assembled together for prayer in one place.

Men of business, in the midst of their toil and labor, find an opportunity of running in there and offering a word of prayer and then return to

their occupations. And so, throughout all the States, Prayer Meetings, larger or smaller in number, have been convened. And there has been real prayer. Sinners beyond all count, have risen up in the Prayer Meeting and have requested the people of God to pray for them—thus making public to the world that they had a desire after Christ. They have been prayed for and the Church has seen that God verily does hear and answer prayer.

I find that the Unitarian ministers for a little while took no notice of it. Theodore Parker snarls and raves tremendously at it, but he is evidently in a maze. He does not understand the mystery and acts with regard to it as swine are said to do with pearls. While the Church was found asleep and doing very little, the Socinian could afford to stand in his pulpit and sneer at anything like evangelical religion. But now that there has been an awakening, he looks like a man that has just awakened out of sleep. He sees something. He does not know what it is. The power of religion is just that which will always puzzle the Unitarian, for he knows but little about that.

At the form of religion he is not much amazed, for he can to an extent endorse that himself. But the supernaturalism of the Gospel—the mystery—the miracle—the power—the demonstration of the Spirit that comes with the preaching is what such men cannot comprehend. They gaze and wonder and then become filled with wrath—but still they have to confess there is something there they cannot understand, a mental phenomenon that is far beyond their philosophy—a thing which they cannot reach by all

their science nor understand by all their reason.

Now, if we have the like effect produced in this land, the one thing we must seek is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. I thought, perhaps, this morning in preaching upon the work of the Holy Spirit, that text might be fulfilled—“Him that honors Me I will honor.” My sincere desire is to honor the Holy Spirit this morning and if He will be pleased to honor His Church in return, unto Him shall be the glory forever.

“While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word.” In the first place, I shall endeavor to describe *the method of the Spirit’s operation*. Secondly, *the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit’s influence* if we would see men converted. In the third place I shall suggest the ways and means by which under Divine grace we may obtain a like falling down of the Spirit upon our Churches.

**I.** In the first place, then, I will endeavor to explain THE METHOD OF THE HOLY SPIRIT’S OPERATIONS. But let me guard myself against being misunderstood. We can explain what the Spirit does but *how* He does it—no man must pretend to know. The work of the Holy Spirit is the peculiar mystery of the Christian religion. Almost any other thing is plain, but this must remain an inscrutable secret into which it were wrong for us to attempt to pry. Who knows where the winds are begotten? Who knows, therefore, how the Spirit works, for He is like the wind. “The wind blows

where it likes and you hear the sound thereof but cannot tell from where it comes and where it goes. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.”

In Holy Scripture certain great secrets of nature are mentioned as being parallel with the secret working of the Spirit. The procreation of children is instanced as a parallel wonder, for we know not the mystery thereof. How much less, therefore, shall we expect to know that more secret and hidden mystery of the new birth and new creation of man in Christ Jesus. But let no man be staggered at this, for they are mysteries in nature—the wisest man will tell you there are depths in nature into which he cannot dive and heights into which he cannot soar.

He who pretends to have unraveled the knot of creation has made a mistake. He may have cut the knot by his rough ignorance and by his foolish conjectures—but the knot itself must remain beyond the power of man’s unraveling, until God Himself shall explain the secret. There are marvelous things, that, as yet, men have sought to know in vain. They may, perhaps, discover many of them—but how the Spirit works—no man can know.

But now I wish to explain what the Holy Spirit does, although we cannot tell *how* He does it. I take it that the Holy Spirit’s work in conversion is two-fold. First it is an awakening of the powers that man already has. Secondly, it is an implantation of powers which he never had at all.

In the great work of the new birth, the Holy Spirit first of all *awakens the mental powers*. The Holy Spirit never gives any man new *mental* powers. Take for instance reason—the Holy Spirit does not give men reason—for they have reason prior to their conversion. What the Holy Spirit does is to teach our reason, right reason—to set our reason in the right track, so that we can use it for the high purpose of discerning between good and evil—between the precious and vile.

The Holy Spirit does not give man a will—for man has a will before. But He makes the will that was in bondage to Satan free to the service of God. The Holy Spirit gives no man the power to *think*, or the organ of belief—for man has power to believe or think as far as the mental act is concerned. But He gives that belief which is already there a tendency to believe the *right* thing. He gives to the power of thought the propensity to think in the right way so that instead of thinking irregularly, we begin to think as God would have us think and our mind desires to walk in the steps of God’s revealed Truth.

There may be here, this morning, a man of enlarged understanding in things political—but his understanding is darkened with regard to spiritual things. He sees no beauty in the Person of Christ—he sees nothing desirable in the way of holiness. He chooses the evil and forsakes the good. Now the Holy Spirit will not give him a new *understanding*, but He will *cleanse* his old understanding so that it will discern between things that differ and shall discover that it is but a poor thing to enjoy “the pleasures of sin for a season,” and let go an “eternal weight of glory.”

There shall be a man here, too, who is desperately set against religion and wills not to come to God. And do what we will, we are not able to persuade him to change his mind and turn to God. The Holy Spirit will not make a new will in that man, but He will turn his old will. Instead of willing to do evil He will *make* him will to do right—He will *make* him will to be saved by Christ—He will *make* him “willing in the day of His power.” Remember, there is no power in man so fallen but that the Holy Spirit can raise it up. However debased a man may be, in one instant, by the miraculous power of the Spirit, all his faculties may be cleansed and purged. Ill-judging reason may be made to judge rightly. Stout, obstinate wills may be made to run willingly in the ways of God’s Commandments. Evil and depraved affections may in an instant be turned to Christ. And old desires that are tainted with vice may be replaced by heavenly aspirations.

The work of the Spirit on the mind is the *remodeling* of it. The new forming of it. He does not bring new material to the mind—it is in another part of the man that He puts up a new structure—but He puts the mind that had fallen out of order into its proper shape. He builds up pillars that had fallen down and erects the palaces that had crumbled to the earth. This is the first work of the Holy Spirit upon the mind of man.

Besides this, the Holy Spirit gives to men *powers which they never had before*. According to Scripture, I believe man is constituted in a three-fold manner. He has a *body*—by the Holy Spirit that body is made the temple of the Lord. He has a *mind*—by the Holy Spirit that mind is made like an altar in the temple. But man by nature is nothing higher than that. He is mere body and soul. When the Spirit comes, he breathes into him a third higher principle which we call the *spirit*. The Apostle describes man as man, “body, soul and spirit.”

Now if you search all the mental writers through, you will find they all declare there are only two parts—body and mind. And they are quite right, for they deal with *unregenerate* man. But in regenerate man there is a third principle as much superior to mere mind as mind is superior to dead animal matter—that third principle is that with which a man *prays*. It is that with which he lovingly *believes*—or rather it is that which compels the mind to perform their acts. It is that which, operating upon the mind, makes the same use of the mind as the mind does of the body.

When, after desiring to walk I make my legs move, it is my mind that compels them. And so my spirit, when I desire to pray, compels my mind to think the thought of prayer and compels my soul also. As the body without the soul is dead, so the soul without the spirit is dead and one work of the Holy Spirit is to quicken the dead soul by breathing into it the firing spirit. As it is written, “The first man, Adam, was made a living soul, but the second Adam was made a quickening *Spirit*”—and, “as we have borne the image of the earthy, so must we bear the image of the heavenly.” That is, we must have in us, if we would be converted, the quickening spirit, which is put into us by God the Holy Spirit.

I say again, the spirit has powers which the mind never has. It has the power of communion with Christ—which to a degree is a mental act—but it can no more be performed by man without the spirit, than the act of walking could be performed by man, if he were destitute of a mind to suggest the idea of walking. The spirit suggests the thoughts of communion which the mind obeys and carries out. No, there are times, I think, when the spirit leaves the mind altogether, times when we forget everything of earth and one almost ceases to think, to reason, to judge, to weigh, or to will. Our souls are like the chariots of Amminadab, drawn swiftly onwards without any powers of volition. We lean upon the breast of Jesus—and in rhapsody Divine and in ecstasy celestial—we enjoy the fruits of the land of the blessed and pluck the clusters of Eschol before entering into the land of promise.

I think I have clearly put these two points before you. The work of the Spirit consists, first, in awakening powers already possessed by man—but which were asleep and out of order. And in the next place in putting into man powers which he had not before. And to make this simple to the humblest mind, let me suppose man to be something like a machine—all the wheels are out of order, the cogs do not strike upon each other, the wheels do not turn regularly, the rods will not act, the order is gone.

Now the first work of the Holy Spirit is to put these wheels in the right place, to fit the wheels upon the axles, to put the right axle to the right wheel, then to put wheel to wheel, so that they may act upon each other. But that is not all His work. The next thing is to put fire and steam so that these things shall go to work. He does not put fresh wheels—He puts old wheels into order—and then He puts the motive power which is to move the whole. First He puts our mental powers into their proper order and condition. Then He puts a living quickening spirit, so that all these shall move according to the holy will and Law of God.

But, mark you, this is not all the Holy Spirit does. For if He were to do this and then leave us, none of us would get to Heaven. If any of you should be so near to Heaven that you could hear the angels singing over the walls—if you could almost see within the pearly gates—still, if the Holy Spirit did not help you the last step you would never enter there. All the work is through His Divine operation. Hence it is the Holy Spirit who keeps the wheels in motion and who takes away that defilement which, naturally engendered by our original sin, falls upon the machine and puts it out of order. He takes this away and keeps the machine constantly going without injury, until at last He removes man from the place of defilement to the land of the blessed—a perfect creature—as perfect as he was when he came from the mold of his Maker.

And I must say, before I leave this point, that all the *former* part of what I have mentioned is done instantaneously. When a man is converted to God, it is done in a *moment*. Regeneration is an instantaneous work. Conversion to God, the fruit of regeneration, occupies all our life, but regen-

eration itself is effected in an instant. A man hates God. The Holy Spirit makes him love God. A man is opposed to Christ, he hates His Gospel, does not understand it and will not receive it. The Holy Spirit comes, puts light into his darkened understanding, takes the chain from his bandaged will, gives liberty to his conscience, gives life to his dead soul, so that the voice of conscience is heard—and the man becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. And all this is done, mark you, by the instantaneous supernatural influence of God the Holy Spirit working as He wills among the sons of men.

**II.** Having thus dwelt upon the method of the Holy Spirit's work, I shall now turn to the second point, THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN ORDER TO CONVERSION. In our text we are told that, "while Peter spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word." Beloved, the Holy Spirit fell on Peter first, or else it would not have fallen on his hearers. There is a necessity that the preacher himself, if we are to have souls saved, should be under the influence of the Spirit.

I have constantly made it my prayer that I might be guided by the Spirit even in the smallest and least important parts of the service. For you cannot tell but that the salvation of a soul may depend upon the reading of a hymn, or upon the selection of a chapter. Two persons have joined our Church and made a profession of being converted simply through my reading a hymn—

***"Jesus, lover of my soul."***

They did not remember anything else in the hymn, but those words made such a deep impression upon their mind that they could not help repeating them for days afterwards. And then the thought arose, "Do I love Jesus?" Then they considered what strange ingratitude it was that He should be the lover of their souls and yet they should not love Him.

Now I believe the Holy Spirit led me to read that hymn. And many persons have been converted by some striking saying of the preacher. But why was it the preacher uttered that saying? Simply because he was led thereunto by the Holy Spirit. Rest assured, Beloved, that when any part of the sermon is blessed to your heart, the minister said it because he was ordered to say it by his Master. I might preach today a sermon which I preached on Friday and which was useful then—but there might be no good whatever come from it now—because it might not be the sermon which the Holy Spirit would have delivered today.

But if with sincerity of heart I have sought God's guidance in selecting the topic and He rests upon me in the preaching of the Word, there is no fear but that it shall be found adapted to your immediate wants. The Holy Spirit must rest upon your preachers. Let them have all the learning of the wisest men and all the eloquence of such men as Demosthenes and Cicero—still the Word cannot be blessed to you, unless first of all the

Spirit of God has guided the minister's mind in the selection of his subject and in the discussion of it.

But if Peter himself were under the hand of the Spirit, that would fail unless the Spirit of God, then, did fall upon his hearers. And I shall endeavor now to show the absolute necessity of the Spirit's work in the conversion of men.

Let us remember what kind of thing the work is and we shall see that other means are altogether out of the question. It is quite certain that men cannot be converted by physical means. The Church of Rome thought that she could convert men by means of armies. So she invaded countries and threatened them with war and bloodshed unless they would repent and embrace her religion. However, it availed but little and men were prepared to die rather than leave their faith. She therefore tried those beautiful things—stakes, racks, dungeons, axes, swords, fire—by these things she hoped to convert men.

You have heard of the man who tried to wind up his watch with a pickax. That man was extremely wise compared with the man who thought to touch mind through matter. All the machines you like to invent cannot touch mind. Talk about tying angel's wings with green withes, or manacling the cherubim with iron chains—and then talk about meddling with the minds of men through physical means. Why, the things don't set. They cannot act. All the king's armies that ever were and all the warriors clothed with mail, with all their ammunition, could never touch the mind of man. That is an impregnable castle which is not to be reached by physical agency.

Nor, again, can man be converted by moral argument. "Well," says one, "I think he may. Let a minister preach earnestly and he may persuade men to be converted." Ah, Beloved, it is for want of knowing better that you say so. Melancthon thought so, but you know what he said after he tried it—"Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon." So will every preacher find it, if he thinks his arguments can ever convert man. Let me give you a parallel case. Where is the logic that can persuade an Ethiopian to change his skin? By what argument can you induce a leopard to renounce his spots? Even so may he that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well.

But if the Ethiopian's skin is changed it must be by a *supernatural* process. And if the leopard's spots be removed, He that *made* the leopard must do it. Even so is it with the heart of man. If sin were a thing *ab extra* and external, we could induce man to change it. For instance, you may induce a man to leave off drunkenness or swearing, because those things are not a part of his nature—he has added that vice to his original depravity. But the hidden evil in the heart is beyond all moral persuasion. I dare say a man might have enough argument to induce him to hang himself, but I am certain no argument will ever induce him to hang his sins—to

hang his self-righteousness—and to come and humble himself at the foot of the Cross.

For the religion of Christ is so contrary to all the propensities of man that it is like swimming against the stream to approach it. The stream of man's will and man's desire is exactly the opposite of the religion of Jesus Christ. If you wanted proof of that, at the lifting of my finger there are thousands in this hall who would rise to prove it, for they would say, "I have found it so Sir, in my experience. I hated religion as much as any men. I despised Christ and His people. I know not to this day how it is that I am what I am, unless it is the work of God."

I have seen the tears run down a man's cheeks when he has come to me in order to be united to the Church of Christ. He has said, "Sir, I wonder how it is I am here today—if anyone had told me a year ago that I should think as I now think and feel as I now feel—I would have called him a born fool for his pains. I used to say I never would be one of those canting Methodists. I liked to spend my Sunday in pleasure and I did not see why I was to be cooping myself up in the house of God listening to a man talk. I said the best Providence in all the world was a good strong pair of hands—and to take care of what you got. If any man talked to me about religion, why I would slam the door in his face and pretty soon put him out.

"But the things that I loved then, I now hate. And the things that then I hated, now I love. I cannot do or say enough to show how total is the change that has been worked in me. It must have been the work of God. It could not have been worked by me, I feel assured. It must be Someone greater than myself who could thus turn my heart." I think these two things are proofs that we want something more than nature and since physical agency will not do—and mere moral persuasion will never accomplish it. There is an absolute necessity for the Holy Spirit.

But again, if you will just think a minute what the work is, you will soon see that none but God can accomplish it. In the Holy Scripture conversion is often spoken of as being a *new creation*. If you talk about creating yourselves, I should feel obliged if you would create a fly first. Create a gnat. Create a grain of sand—and when you have created that—you may talk about creating a new *heart*. Both are alike impossible, for creation is the work of God. But still, if you could create a grain of dust, or create even a world, it would not be half the miracle—for you must first find a thing which has created itself. Could that be? Suppose you had no existence, how could you create yourself? Nothing cannot produce anything. Now, how can man re-create himself? A man cannot create himself into a new condition, when he has no being in that condition, but is, as yet, a thing that is not.

Then, again, the work of creation is said to be like the resurrection. "We are alive from the dead." Now, can the dead in the grave raise themselves? Let any minister who thinks he can convert souls, go and raise a corpse.

Let him go and stand in one of the cemeteries and bid the tombs open wide their mouths and make room for those once buried there to awaken. He will have to preach in vain. But if he *could* do it, *that* is not the miracle—it is for the *dead* to raise *themselves*—for an inanimate corpse to kindle in its own breast the spark of life anew. If the work is a resurrection, a creation—does it not strike you that it must be beyond the power of man? It must be worked in him by no one less than God Himself.

And there is yet one more consideration and I shall have concluded this point. Beloved, even if man could save himself, I would have you remember how averse he is to it! If we could make our hearers all willing, the battle would be accomplished. “Well,” says one, “If I am willing to be saved, can I not be saved?” Assuredly you can, but the difficulty is we cannot bring men to be *willing*. That shows, therefore, that there must be a constraint put upon their will. There must be an influence exerted upon them which they have not in themselves, in order to make them willing in the day of God’s power.

And this is the glory of the Christian religion. The Christian religion has within its own heart power to spread itself. We do not ask you to be willing first. We come and tell you the news and we believe that the Spirit of God working with us will make you willing. If the progress of the Christian religion depended upon the voluntary assent of mankind it would never go an inch further—but because the Christian religion has within an omnipotent influence, constraining men to believe it, it is therefore what it is and must be triumphant, “till like a sea of glory it spreads from shore to shore.”

**III.** Now I shall conclude by bringing one or two thoughts forward with regard to WHAT MUST BE DONE AT THIS TIME IN ORDER TO BRING DOWN THE HOLY SPIRIT. It is quite certain, Beloved, if the Holy Spirit willed to do it, that every man, woman and child in this place might be converted now. If God, the Sovereign Judge of all, would be pleased now to send out His Spirit, every inhabitant of this million-peopled city might be brought at once to turn unto the living God. Without instrumentality, without the preacher, without books, without anything—God has it in His power to convert men.

We have known persons about their business, not thinking about religion at all, who have had a thought injected into their heart and that thought has been the prolific mother of a thousand meditations. And through these meditations they have been brought to Christ. Without the aid of the minister, the Holy Spirit has thus worked and today He is not restrained. There may be some men, great in infidelity, staunch in opposition to the Cross of Christ—but, without asking their consent—the Holy Spirit can pull down the strong man and make the mighty man bow himself. When we talk of the Omnipotent God, there is nothing too great for Him to do. But, Beloved, God has been pleased to put great honor upon *instrumentality*.

He could work without it if He pleased but He does not do so. However, this is the first thought I want to give you. If you would have the Holy Spirit exert Himself in our midst, you must first of all look to *Him* and *not* to instrumentality. When Jesus Christ preached, there were very few converted under Him and the reason was because the Holy Spirit was not abundantly poured forth. He had the Holy Spirit without measure Himself—but on others the Holy Spirit was not as yet poured out. Jesus Christ said, “Greater works than these shall you do because I go to my Father, in order to send the Holy Spirit.”

And remember that those few who were converted under Christ’s ministry were not converted by Him, but by the Holy Spirit that rested upon Him at that time. Jesus of Nazareth was anointed of the Holy Spirit. Now then, if Jesus Christ, the great Founder of our religion, needed to be anointed of the Holy Spirit, how much more our ministers? And if God would always make the distinction even between His own Son as an instrument and the Holy Spirit as the agent—how much more ought we to be careful to do that between poor puny men and the Holy Spirit?

Never let us hear you say again, “So many persons were converted by So-and-So.” They were not. If converted they were not converted by *man*. Instrumentality is to be used, but the Spirit is to have the honor of it. Pay no more a superstitious reverence to man. Think no more that God is tied to *your* plans and to *your* agencies. Do not imagine that so many city missionaries, so much good will be done. Do not say, “So many preachers. So many sermons—so many souls saved.” Do not say, “So many Bibles, so many tracts—so much good done.” Not so, *use* these, but remember it is not in that proportion the blessing comes. It is so much Holy Spirit, so many souls in-gathered.

And now another thought. If we would have the Spirit, Beloved, we must each of us try to honor Him. There are some Chapels into which if you were to enter, you would never know there was a Holy Spirit. Mary Magdalene said of old, “They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him.” And the Christian might often say so, for there is nothing said about the Lord until they come to the end—and then there is just the benediction—or else you would not know that there were three Persons in one God at all. Until our Churches honor the Holy Spirit, we shall never see Him abundantly manifested in our midst. Let the preacher always confess *before* he preaches that he relies upon the Holy Spirit. Let him burn his manuscripts and depend upon the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit does not come to help him, let him be still and let the people go home and pray that the Spirit will help him next Sunday.

And do you also, in the use of all your agencies, always honor the Spirit? We often begin our religious meetings without prayer. It is all wrong. We must honor the Spirit—unless we put Him first, He will never make crowns for us to wear. He will get victories, but He will have the honor of them and if we do not give to Him the honor, He will never give to

us the privilege and success. And best of all, if you would have the Holy Spirit, let us meet together earnestly to pray for Him.

Remember, the Holy Spirit will not come to us as a Church unless we seek Him. "For this thing will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." We purpose during the coming week to hold meetings of special prayer, to supplicate for a revival of religion. On the Friday morning I opened the first Prayer Meeting at Trinity Chapel, Brixton. And, I think, at seven o'clock, we had as many as two hundred and fifty persons gathered together. It was a pleasant sight. During the hour, nine brethren prayed, one after the other. And I am sure there was the spirit of prayer there.

Some persons present sent up their names, asking that we would offer special petitions for them. And I doubt not the prayers will be answered. At Park Street, on Monday morning, we shall have a Prayer Meeting from eight to nine. Then during the rest of the week there will be a Prayer Meeting in the morning from seven to eight. On Monday evening we shall have the usual Prayer Meeting at seven, when I hope there will be a large number attending. I find that my brother, Baptist Noel, has commenced morning and evening Prayer Meetings and they have done the same thing in Norwich and many provincial towns, where, without any pressure, the people are found willing to come.

I certainly did not expect to see so many as two hundred and fifty persons at an early hour in the morning meet together for prayer. I believe it was a good sign. The Lord has put prayer into their hearts and therefore they were willing to come. "Prove Me now here, says the Lord of Host, and see if I do not pour you out a blessing so that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Let us meet and pray and if God does not hear us, it will be the first time He has broken His promise.

Come, let us go up to the sanctuary. Let us meet together in the house of the Lord and offer solemn supplication. And I say again, if the Lord does not make bare His arm in the sight of all the people, it will be the reverse of all His previous actions—it will be the contrary of all His Promises and contradictory to Himself. We have only to try Him and the result is certain in dependence on His Spirit. If we only meet for prayer, the Lord shall bless us—and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him. O Lord, lift up Yourself because of Your enemies. Pluck Your right hand out of Your bosom, O Lord our God, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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# SCALES TAKEN FROM THE EYES

## NO. 3205

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*“And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales.”*  
*Acts 11:18.*

THIS means that the film upon Saul's eyes was comparable to the scales of a fish, or else that it fell off as scales might fall. When the blinding film was gone, light broke into the darkness of Saul. In different men, sin manifests its chief power in different parts of their nature. In the case of many, sin is most apparent in their eyes. That is to say, ignorance, error and prejudice have injured their mental sight. Some have the withered hand of conscious inability, others have the deaf ear of mental obtuseness, but there are far more who hear the joyful sound and display much energy, but they hear without understanding and are zealous without knowledge, for they are blind. This was Saul's condition. He was thoroughly honest—we might say of his heart, when it was at its worst, that it was always true to its convictions. He was no deceiver and no timeserver. He went in for what he believed to be right with all his might—lukewarmness and selfish policy were alien to his nature. He dashed with all his might against the Doctrine of the Cross because he thought it to be an imposition. His fault lay in his eyes and so, when the eyes were set right, Saul was right. When he perceived that Jesus was, after all, the Messiah, the man became just as earnest a follower of Christ as before he had been a persecutor!

We will talk about scales falling from men's eyes. I want to address those who would be right if they knew how. Those who are earnest, but in the wrong direction, for they do not see the truth. If the Lord, in His Infinite Mercy, will but touch those sightless eyeballs and remove the film, so that they discern the right way, they will follow it at once. May the Lord remove many scales while we are proceeding!

First, we will speak of *scales which men fail to perceive because they are inside*. Secondly, we will *show what makes these scales come to the outside so that men do perceive them*. Then, thirdly, *what instrumentality the Lord uses to take these outside scales away*. And, fourthly, *what did Saul see when the scales were gone?*

**I.** First, then, THERE ARE SCALES WHICH MEN DO NOT PERCEIVE. Saul had scales upon his eyes when he was on the road to Damascus, but if you had looked at his face, he would have appeared to have as bright an eye as any man. Scales on his eyes? Why, he was a sharp-sighted philosopher, a Pharisee and a teacher of others. He would not have believed you for a minute if you had said to him, “Saul, you are

blind.” Yet blind he was, for his eyes were shut up with inside scales—the worst sort of scales that can possibly cloud the sight.

Saul had the scale of *self* to darken his eyes. He had a great idea of Saul of Tarsus. If he had written down his own character, he would have begun it, “A Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the Law of God, a Pharisee.” And then he would have gone on to tell of countless good works, fasts, prayers and have finished with, “concerning zeal, persecuting the church.” He was far too great in his own estimation to become a disciple of Jesus Christ! How could the Rabbi who sat at the feet of Gamaliel become a follower of the despised Galilean? Poor peasants might follow the Man of Nazareth, but Doctor Saul of Tarsus—a man so educated both in the knowledge of the Hebrew literature and of the Greek philosophy—it was not likely that he would mingle with fishermen and peasants in adoring the Nazarene! This is the reason why a great many people cannot see the beauties of Christ and cannot come to Him that they might have life, namely, because they are so great in their own esteem! Ah, my lord, it might have been a good thing for you if you had been a pauper! Ah, good Moralist, it might not be amiss for you if you would sit by the side of those who have lost character among men and discover that after all, there are not many shades of difference between you and them! Great “I” must fall before the great Savior will be seen! When a man becomes nothing in his own estimation, then Jesus Christ becomes everything to him, but not till then. Self is an effectual darkener of the windows of the soul. How can men see the Gospel while they see so much of themselves? With such a noble righteousness of their own to deck themselves with, is it likely that they will buy of Christ the fine white linen which is the righteousness of saints?

Another scale on Saul’s inner eye was *ignorance*, and learned ignorance, too, which is by far the worst kind of ignorance! Saul knew everything but what he ought to have known. He was instructed in all other sorts of learning, but he did not know Christ. He had never studied the Lord’s claim and Character—he had picked up the popular rumors and he had thought them to be sterling truth. Ah, had he known, poor Soul, that Jesus of Nazareth really was the Christ, he would never have hauled men and women to prison! But the scale of ignorance was over his eyes. And how many there are in this city of London, in what we call this “enlightened” 19<sup>th</sup> Century, who know a great deal about a thousand things, but nothing about the one thing necessary! They have never troubled to study Christ and so, for lack of knowledge, they grope about as the blind!

With ignorance generally goes another scale, namely, *prejudice*. The man who knows nothing about truth is usually the man who despises it most. He does not know and does not want to know. “Don’t tell me,” he says, “don’t tell me.” He has nothing but a sneer for you when you have told him the Truth of God to the best of your ability. The man has no candor. He has made up his mind, *he* has! Besides, his father before him was not of your religion and do you think he is going to be a turncoat and leave the old family faith? “Don’t tell me,” he says, “I don’t want to know anything of your canting Methodism,” or, “Presbyterianism,” or

whatever it is that he likes to call it. He is so wise! He is wiser than seven men that can render a reason! O Prejudice, Prejudice, Prejudice, how many have you destroyed! Men who might have been wise have remained fools because they thought they were wise. Many judge what the Gospel ought to be, but do not actually enquire as to what it is. They do not come to the Bible to obtain their views of religion, but they open that Book to find texts to suit the opinions which they bring to it. They are not open to the honest force of the Truth of God and, therefore, are not saved by it! Oh, that this scale would fall from every eye which it now closes!

Saul's soul was also darkened by the scale of *unbelief*. Saul had seen Stephen die. If he saw the martyr's heavenly face, he must have noticed the wondrous peace which sat upon his countenance when he fell asleep amid a shower of stones. But Saul did not believe. Though no sermon is like the sight of a martyrdom, yet Saul was not convinced. Perhaps he had heard about the Savior more than he cared to remember, but he did not believe it. He counted the things rumored concerning Him to be idle tales and cast them under his feet. O Brothers and Sisters, what multitudes are being ruined by this cruel unbelief towards Christ! Some of you, too, whom I have been addressing for years, are Believers in the head, but unbelievers in the heart, not really putting your trust in Jesus! Who can see if he refuses the Light of God? Who shall find salvation if he will not trust the Savior for it? Unbelief is as sure to destroy those who are guilty of it as faith is sure to save Believers!

Then the scale of *habit*, too, had formed over Saul's inner eyes, for he had been for a long time what he then was. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" If so, then he that is accustomed to do evil may learn to do well. They say that use is second nature and when the first nature is bad, the second nature is like the first, only it goes further in wrong. Ah, dear Friends, some of you have been so accustomed to refuse the Gospel, so accustomed to follow after the pleasures and the vices of the world, that it does not seem possible that you should follow after Christ! Habits of secret sin are peculiarly blinding to the soul. May this scale be speedily made to fall!

Another scale is *worldliness*, and Saul had that upon his inner eyes, for he loved the praise of men. He had his reputation to maintain, for he had profited beyond most of his brothers and was reckoned to be a most hopeful and rising teacher of Israel. It was not likely that Saul would believe in Jesus Christ, for then he would have to lose the esteem of his countrymen. The fear of man and the love of man's applause—how they prevent men from seeing the Truth about Jesus and recognizing Him as the Son of God! "How can you believe, which receive honor, one of another?" How can men bow themselves before Jesus Christ when, all the while, they are bidding high for the homage of their fellow sinners? The love of adulation, which is a form of worldliness, blinds the eyes and so will any other love of things beneath the moon! Let but the heart be set upon this blinding world and there will be little sight for things Divine.

**II.** These scales were upon the inside of Saul's eyes when he was on the way to Damascus, but now we have to notice them BROUGHT TO THE OUTSIDE. Those outside scales revealed in type and figure what had always been the matter with Saul—they were the material index of the spiritual mischief under which he had long labored! Only now they were brought outside so that he knew they were there, and others could perceive that they were there. Now there was hope that they would be removed from the eyes! Now that he was conscious of them, the evil was half cured! What brought those scales to the outside and made Saul know that he was blind?

Well, first, it was *the exceeding Glory of Christ*. He says, "About noon, suddenly there shone from Heaven a great light round about me," and he adds, "I could not see for the Glory of that light." Let my Lord Jesus Christ only manifest Himself to any of you and you will be well enough aware of your blindness and you will say to yourselves, "What a strangely blind being I must have been not to have loved such beauty as this—not to have yielded myself to such Grace as this—not to have trusted myself to so complete a Savior as this!" Oh, the Glory of Christ! It has even laid the saints prostrate when they have seen it! Those who dwell nearest to their Lord are frequently overcome with the exceeding brightness of His Glory and have to confess with those favored three—

***"When in ecstasy sublime,  
Tabor's glorious steep we climb,  
At the too-transporting light,  
Darkness rushes over our sight."***

So it is with the sinner when he gets his first view of a glorious Christ—the inrush of the Glory makes him mourn his native blindness—he perceives that he has had no perception and knows that he has known nothing!

Another thing which made the scales pass to the outside of Saul's eyes was *that unanswerable question*, "Why do you persecute Me?" That brought home to him a sense of his sin. "Why?" That was a "why" for which Saul of Tarsus could not find a, "because." When he discovered that the Man of Nazareth was the glorious Christ of God, then, indeed, he was "confounded." He could make no reply to the demand, "Why do you persecute Me?" Oh, that the Lord would fix such a "why" in some of your hearts! Why should you live in sin? Why are you choosing the wages of unrighteousness? Why are you hardening your hearts against the Gospel? Why are you ridiculing it? Why do you sneer at the servants of God? If the Holy Spirit drives that "why" home to your heart, you will begin to say, "What a blind fool I am to have acted as I have done, to go kicking against the pricks, fighting against my best Friend and pouring scorn on those whom I ought most of all to admire!" The *why* from the lips of Christ will show you your blindness!

The scales were on the outside of Saul's eyes, now, because *his soul had been cast into a terrible bewilderment*. We read of him that when his eyes were opened, he saw no man, but trembling and astonished, he asked the Lord what he must do. Some of us know what that experience means. We have been brought under the hand of God till we have been

utterly astonished—astonished at our Savior, astonished at our sin, astonished that there should be a hope remaining for us, astonished that we should have rejected that hope so long! With this amazement, there was mixed trembling lest, after all, the mercy should be too great for us and the next word from the Lord would be, “You have kicked against the pricks so long that, henceforth, the gates of mercy are shut against you.” May the Lord fill some of you with trembling and astonishment! And if He does, then you will perceive the blindness of your soul—and cry for light!

I have no doubt the scales became all the more perceptible to poor Saul when he came to those *three days and nights of prayer*, for when you get a man on his knees and he begins crying for mercy, he is in the way of being more fully taught his need of it! If relief does not come at once, then the penitent cries more and more intensely—his heart all the while is aching more and more and he perceives how blind he must have been to bring himself into such a condition. It is a good thing, sometimes, when the Lord keeps a man in prayer, pleading for the mercy and pleading, and pleading, and pleading on and on, until he perceives how great his need of that mercy is! When he has bitterly felt the darkness of his soul, he will be exceedingly bold in bearing light to his fellow men. May God bring many of you to agonizing prayer! And if that prayer should last days and nights and you should neither eat nor drink for anguish of spirit, I guarantee you that you will thoroughly learn your blindness and the scales upon your eyes will be painfully evident to you!

**III.** Now thirdly, and here I should like to stir up the people of God to a little practical business—we have seen Saul with the scales outside his eyes. He now knows that he is blind, though he did not know it before when he was a proud Pharisee. He can see a great deal better, now, than he could when he thought he could see. But still, there he is, in darkness—and we long for the scales to be removed! **WHAT INSTRUMENTALITY DID THE LORD USE TO TAKE THE SCALES AWAY?**

It was not an angel, nor was it an Apostle, but it was a *plain man* named Ananias, who was the means of bringing sight to blind Saul! We do not know much about this useful Brother. We know his name and that is enough. But Ananias was the only person whom the Lord used in taking off the scales from this Apostle’s eyes. Dear Brothers and Sisters, there are some of you, if you are but alive to it, whom God will bless in like work! Perhaps this very night, though you are unknown and obscure Christian people, He may make you to be the means of taking the scales from the eyes of somebody who will be eminently useful in future years. The Holy Spirit blessed the great Apostle to the Gentiles by Ananias and He may lead another of His mighties to Himself by some obscure disciple!

Ananias was a plain man, but he was a *good man*—you can see that Ananias was a thorough man of God. He was one who knew his Lord and recognized His voice when He said to him, in a vision, “Ananias.” And he was a man whom the Lord knew, for He called him by his name. “I have called you by your name: you are Mine.” The Lord will not send you on His errands unless you are sound, sincere and living near to Him. But if

you are that, no matter how feeble you may be, I beseech you to be looking, even tonight, for some blind soul to whom you may be as eyes!

Notice that this Ananias was a *ready man*, for when the Lord spoke to him, he said, "Behold, I am here, Lord." I know many professors who would have to answer, "Behold, I am somewhere else, Lord, but certainly not here." They are not "all there" when they are in Christ's work! The heart is away after something else. But, "Behold, I am here, Lord," is a grand thing for a Believer to say when his Lord bids him seek the wanderer. It is well to say, "Behold, I am here, Lord, ready for the poor awakened one. If he needs a word of comfort, I am ready to say it to him. If he needs a word of direction, here am I, as You shall help me to speak it to him." My Brother, be you like Ananias was, a ready man!

And he was an *understanding man*, for when the Lord said to him concerning Saul, "Behold; he prays," he knew what that meant. He well understood the first indication of Grace in the soul! Beloved, you must have a personal experience of the things of God, or you cannot help newborn souls! If you do not know what it is to pass from death to life, and do not know the marks of regeneration, you are useless.

At the same time, he was a *discerning man*—an enquiring, discriminating man, for he began to say, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man." He wanted to know a little about Saul, so he enquired of the great Master as to his character, and whether it was a genuine work of Grace in his soul. It will not do to pat all people on the back and give them comfort without examining into their state. Some of you must know by this time that indiscriminate consolation does more hurt than good. Certain classes need no consolation, but rather require reproof. They need wounding before they can be healed! And it is a good thing to know your man, and especially to wait upon the Lord and ask Him to tell you about your man, so that you may know how to deal with him when you do come to him. As Ananias did, use all diligence to know the case.

But when once he had made his enquiry, he was an *obedient man*. He was told to go into a house where I do not suppose he had ever left his card in his life, but he did not stop for an introduction—he went off at once to the house of Judas, and enquired for one called Saul, of Tarsus. He had Divine authority—the Lord had given him a search-warrant, and so he entered the house—

***"Thus the eternal mandate ran,  
Almighty Grace, arrest that man!"***

Ananias must be the sheriff's officer to go and arrest Saul in the name of the Lord! And so away he went.

And you will notice what a *personal-dealing man* he was, for he did not stand at a distance, but, putting his hands on him, he said, "Brother Saul." Ah, that is the way to talk to people who are seeking the Lord—not to stand five miles off, and speak distantly, or preach condescendingly, as from the supreme Heaven of a sanctified Believer, down to the poor sinner mourning below! No, go and talk to him! Call him, "Brother." Go and speak to him with a true, loving, brotherly accent, as Ananias did, for he was a *brotherly man*.

Ananias was also *a man whose subject was Christ*. As soon as ever you do speak to the sinner, let the first thing you have to say be, "The Lord, *even Jesus*." Whatever you say next, begin with that, "Brother Saul, the Lord, *even Jesus*." Have something to say about Jesus, but say it personally and pointedly, not as though you were alluding to persons living in Australia seven hundred years ago, but as referring to Brother Saul, and intending the word for him!

Among Christian people there are mighty hunters before the Lord who strive after souls, but I wish that a hundred times as many really cared for the souls of their fellow men. Some church members never speak to anybody about spiritual things. You come into your pews and you like two seats if you can get them—like gentlemen in a first-class carriage, you want a compartment to yourselves! And then, after service, no matter who is impressed, many of you have not a word to say. Should it be so, Brothers and Sisters? We should always be on the lookout to seat strangers comfortably and afterwards to drive home, by personal remark, any Truth of God which may have been advanced. "Ah, says one, but I may speak to the wrong person." Suppose you did? Is it such a mighty misfortune to miss your mark once? Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if you were to address the wrong person 50 times and ultimately meet the right one once in a year, it would well reward you! If you were to receive rebuffs, and rebuffs, and rebuffs, and yet at last you should find out the Brother Saul who is to have the scales removed by you—and by none but you—you would be well rewarded! A plain common-sense word from a common-sense Christian has often been the very thing to set some able critic at liberty! Some man of profound mind—a Thomas of abundant doubts and questions—has only just needed a simple-hearted Christian to say the right words and he has entered into peace and liberty. You must not think that learned persons, when the Lord touches them in the heart, need to be talked to by Doctors of Divinity. Not they! They become as simple-hearted as others and, like dying kings and dying bishops, they ask to hear a shepherd pray because they find more savor, more plainness, more earnestness, more faith and more familiarity with God in the humble expressions of the lowly than in the language of courtly preachers. Do not, therefore, Brother Ananias, say, "I cannot go and talk to anybody. I have never been to college." Do not, Sister in Christ, stay back because you are a woman, for oftentimes the Lord makes the sweet and gentle voice of women to sound out the music of Grace! God grant that many of us may be the instruments of taking the scales from men's eyes!

#### **IV. LASTLY, WHAT DID SAUL SEE WHEN THE SCALES WERE GONE?**

The first person he saw was *Brother Ananias*. It was a fine sight for Saul to see Brother Ananias' Christian countenance beaming with love and joy! I fancy he was like one of our elders, a fine old Christian man with love to souls written on his face. When Saul opened his eyes, it must have done him good to see just such a face as that—a plain, simple

man full of holy zeal and intense anxiety for his good. Dear Friend, if the Lord opens your eyes, you will see the brotherhood of Christians. Perhaps you will enjoy that among the first delights of your Christian experience and, for a little while, your faith, it may be, will hang upon the testimony of an instructed Christian woman and your confidence will need confirmation by the witness of a more advanced Brother in the Lord. But, my fellow worker, the saved one will never see Brother Ananias unless Ananias goes to him and becomes the means of opening his eyes! And if you will go and do that, you will win a friend who will love you as long as life lasts. There are some of you between whom and myself there are ties which death cannot snap. I will find you in Heaven if I can and I know you will desire to meet me. The Lord gave you to me as my spiritual children and if it should come to pass that earthly fathers should not see their children in Heaven, yet the spiritual father will see his children there praising and blessing the Lord! One of the next joys to knowing Christ, yourself, must surely be that of leading others to know Him. Seek after this bliss!

The next thing that Saul would see would be *a Savior in Christ*, for Ananias said to him, "The Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto you in the way as you came, has sent me, that you might receive your sight." Now he would see what an opener of the eyes Jesus is, what a mighty Savior for sinners! And, oh, this is a blessed sight—to see Christ as a Savior, as *my* Savior, opening *my* eyes, so that I can say, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." This is a heavenly sight. May you help many to gaze upon it!

Right speedily he saw *the Spirit of God waiting to fill him*—"that you might receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Ah, dear Soul, when you have come to see Christ, then the blessed Spirit will become dear to you and you will rejoice to think that He will dwell in you to sanctify you, to enlighten you, to strengthen you, and to make you a vessel of mercy unto others!

One more thing that Saul saw, when his eyes were opened, was what some do not see, although their eyes are opened in other aspects. "He received sight forthwith, and *arose, and was baptized.*" He saw the duty of Believers' Baptism and he attended to it directly. You who believe in Jesus should confess Jesus. And you who have confessed Jesus should gently stir the memories of those very retiring young converts who are afraid to put on Christ in Baptism. You know right well that salvation lies in the believing, but still, how amazingly the two things are put together, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." The two things are joined together by *Christ*, so let no man put them asunder! Surely, dear Friends, wherever there is a genuine faith in Christ, there ought to be a speedy obedience to the other matter! I once met a man who had been a Christian 40 years and believed it to be his duty to be baptized. But when I spoke to him about it, he said, "He that believes shall not make haste." After 40 years delay, he talked about not making haste! I quoted to him another passage—"I made haste, and delayed not to keep Your commandment," and showed him what the meaning of his misapplied

passage was. Now, Soul, do not delay! As soon as Saul's eyes were opened, straightway he took upon himself the outward badge of the Christian faith and arose, and was baptized! Now I call upon you who love the Lord Jesus Christ not to play the coward, but come out and acknowledge your Lord and Master! You that are truly His disciples, confess it! I like to see a soldier wearing his red coat—it is the right thing for him to wear his uniform. It is the same with the soldiers of Christ. What are you ashamed of? Be ashamed of being ashamed, if you are ashamed of Christ! “Oh, but, I am afraid I might not hold on my way!” Whose business is it to make you hold on your way? Is it not His business who has bid you to take up your cross and follow Him, and who has said, “Whoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in Heaven; but whoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in Heaven”?

I pray the Lord to bless these feeble words of mine. O Souls, O Souls, it does seem to me so dreadful that so many of you should come here continually and yet be blind! I try to talk plainly about your souls' needs and about Christ Jesus as able to meet those needs—how long must I repeat the old story? Once again I beseech you, think upon my Lord and Master and see what a Savior He is, and how suitable He is for you! I would entreat you to delay no longer, but to close in with the invitations of His mercy. I think, sometimes, that my Master deserves that we should do more than invite you. We *command* you, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, to bow before His scepter, for He is the King! Acknowledge His dominion and let Him be your Savior, for know this—His Gospel comes with Divine Authority as well as with gentle persuasion—and neither can men reject it except at the peril of their souls! He whom I preach to you tonight will shortly come to be your Judge. And if you will not trust Him on His Cross, you must tremble before Him on His Throne! Oh, come to Him! Simple trust is the way to come to Him. Believe in Him and He is yours and His salvation is yours!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
ACTS 9:1-22; 22:1-16.**

**Acts 9:1, 2.** *And Saul, yet breathing out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this Way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. His very breath was hot with malice against the saints! He could not live without venting his spite upon the disciples of Christ. He showed this by the fact that he not only sought to arrest men, but he was equally cruel towards women, who, from their weakness, one would have thought might have been left alone—but he expressly desired it to be written in the letters that, “whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”*

**3.** *And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from Heaven.* When speaking before Agrippa, Paul said that it was “a light from Heaven above the brightness of the sun.” Was it not that very Shekinah which of old had shone forth between the cherubim over the Mercy Seat?

**4, 5.** *And he fell to the earth, and heard a Voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? And he said, Who are You, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you persecute: it is hard for you to kick against the pricks.* There is something very characteristic about Christ’s answer to Saul’s question. He did not say, “It is hard for Me,” although He was, Himself, persecuted in His members and felt intense sympathy with them. He did not dwell upon that, but He said to Saul, “It is hard for you.” There was much pity in the rebuke. Saul was like a bull that has been pricked by the sharp ox-goad and kicks against it—and so is hurt all the more. Our Lord knew what sorrow it would cause Saul in the years to come, for he would never cease to lament that he had persecuted the disciples of Christ.

**6.** *And he, trembling and astonished.* Finding that Jesus, whom he thought to be dead and buried, and those followers he was so violently opposing, was yet alive—

**6-8.** *Said, Lord, what will You have me to do? And the Lord said to him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told you what you must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth and when his eyes were opened, he saw no men: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.* So the proud persecutor, who was going to Damascus as a conqueror to crush the saints of God was, himself, led into the city as a captive, to be forever afterwards the slave of Jesus Christ!

**9.** *And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.* What passed through that mind which was darkened to natural light, but was being filled with spiritual light, we can well guess. I mean, those of us who have experienced true conviction of sin. In those three days, he lived his life of opposition to the Lord Jesus over again—what heart-break he must have felt and what anguish of soul—and what holy resolves he must have made during his three days’ blindness and fasting!

**10, 11.** *And there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here Lord. And the Lord said to him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called, Saul of Tarsus: for, behold, he prays.* [See Sermon #16, Volume —PAUL’S FIRST PRAYER— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He had been a praying man for most of his life, for he was a devout Jew and, according to his light, he had lived up to his knowledge. But now he was praying in the Christian sense of the term, drawing near to God through the very Christ whom he had in his ignorance and unbelief persecuted! How many prayers of unregenerate men, who know not Christ, and are not constrained by His love, go for nothing! When they first from the

heart confess their sin and cry to God for mercy, *then* they begin to really pray!

**12-16.** *And has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem: and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on Your name. But the Lord said unto him, go your way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake.* [See Sermon #944, Volume 16—AN ENCOURAGING LESSON FROM PAUL'S CONVERSION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Ananias said to the Lord, "I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem." And now the Lord says to Ananias, in response to that, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." As he had made others suffer for Christ's name's sake, he must, himself, suffer in the same way. Yet in this he was greatly favored, for it is one of the highest honors that the Lord Jesus Christ can put upon His chosen ones that they should be called to suffer for His name's sake!

**17-21.** *And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto you in the way as you came, has sent me that you might receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And immediately there fell from his eyes, as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed. I should like to have heard one of those first sermons of the Apostle and to have seen the astonishment of the people as they listened to the converted persecutor—"All that heard him were amazed"—*

**21, 22.** *And said; is not this he that destroyed them who called on this name in Jerusalem, and came here for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.*

**Chapter 22:1, 2.** *Men, brethren, and fathers, hear you my defense which I make now unto you. (And when they heard that he spoke in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silent.) And he said—* Men like to be addressed in their own language. They give the more heed to the message if it is spoken to them in words that they can understand.

**3-9.** *I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the Law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as you all are this day. And I persecuted this Way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest does bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren and went to Damascus, to bring*

*them which were there bound unto Jerusalem to be punished. And it came to pass that, as I made my journey, and was come near unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from Heaven a great light round about me. And I fell to the ground and heard a Voice saying to me, Saul, Saul, Why do you persecute Me? And I answered, Who are You, Lord? And He said to me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you persecute. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of Him that spoke to me.* Paul's companions could not help sensing that extraordinary light and though they did not understand what it was, they were alarmed by it. They also heard a supernatural sound, but they could not comprehend what the voice of Jesus said to their leader as he lay prostrate upon the ground.

**10-12.** *And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said to me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told you of all things which are appointed for you to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the Law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there.* These particulars concerning the character of Ananias do not appear in the former part of the narrative. Paul was endeavoring to conciliate his hearers and, therefore, he mentioned that Ananias was a devout Jew, having a good report of all his brethren who dwelt in Damascus.

**13, 14.** *Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive your sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our Fathers has chosen you, that you should know His will, and see that Just One and should hear the voice of His mouth.* If Paul was to be an Apostle, it was necessary that he should see the Lord Christ, for one of the qualifications of an Apostle was that he should be able to bear witness, from his eyesight, and from his hearing, to the existence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore it was that Saul did, at that time, "see that Just One," and did "hear the voice of His mouth."

**15, 16.** *For you shall be His witness unto all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you tarry? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.* These two things were necessary—first, he was to be baptized on profession of his faith in Jesus. And then he was to have in his soul a vivid consciousness that his sins were all washed away. This was not baptismal regeneration, for he was already regenerate! It was, however, the *obedience to the Lord's command*, which brought with it a sweet reassurance of the forgiveness of his sins.

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

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

# REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE

## NO. 44

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 23, 1855,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“Then has God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”  
Acts 11:18.***

ONE of the greatest obstacles which the Christian religion ever overcame was the inveterate prejudice which possessed the minds of its earliest followers. The Jewish Believers, the 12 Apostles and those whom Jesus Christ had called from the dispersed of Israel were totally attached to the idea that salvation was of the Jews. They believed that none but the disciples of Abraham, or, at any rate, the circumcised ones, could be saved. They could not bring themselves to the thought that Jesus had come to be the Savior of all nations and that in Him should all the people of the earth be blessed. It was with difficulty they could allow the supposition. It was so opposite to all their Jewish education that we find them summoning Peter before a council of Christians and saying to him, “you went in to men uncircumcised and did eat with them.” Nor could Peter exonerate himself until he had rehearsed the matter fully and said that God had appeared unto him in a vision, declaring, “What God has cleansed, that call not you common,” and that the Lord had bid him preach the Gospel to Cornelius and his household inasmuch as they were Believers. After this, the power of Grace was so mighty that these Jews could no longer withstand it—and in the teeth of all their previous education, they at once assumed the broad principle of Christianity and glorified God, saying, “Then has God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” Let us bless God that we are now free from the chains of Judaism and that we are not under those of a Gentilism which has, in its turn, excluded the Jew. Let us bless God that we live so near the blessed time that is coming when Jew and Gentile, bond and free, shall feel themselves one in Jesus Christ, our Head! I am not, now, however, about to enlarge upon this—my subject this morning is “Repentance unto life.” May God give me Grace so to speak to you that His Word may be as a sharp sword, “piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow.”

By “Repentance unto life,” I think we are to understand *that repentance* which is accompanied by spiritual life in the soul and ensures

eternal life to everyone who possesses it. “Repentance unto life,” I say, brings with it spiritual life, or rather, is the first consequence thereof. There are repentances which are not signs of spiritual life but of natural life. They are only effected by the power of the conscience and the voice of nature speaking in men. But the repentance, here spoken of, is produced by the Author of life—and when it comes, it begets such life in the soul that he who was “dead in trespasses and sins,” is quickened together with Christ! He who had no spiritual susceptibilities, now “receives with meekness the engrafted Word.” He who slumbered in the very center of corruption, receives power to become one of the sons of God and to be near His Throne! This I think is, “repentance unto life”—that which gives life unto a dead spirit. I have also said this repentance ensures eternal life, for there are repentances of which you hear men speak which do not secure the salvation of the soul. Some preachers will affirm that men may repent and may believe and yet may fall away and perish. We will not consume our time by stopping to expose their error, this morning. We have often considered it before and have refuted all that they could say in defense of their dogma! Let us think of an infinitely better repentance. The repentance of our text is not their repentance but it is a, “repentance unto life.” It is a repentance which is a true sign of eternal salvation in Christ! A repentance which preserves us through this temporary state in Jesus and which, when we are passed into eternity, gives us a bliss which cannot be destroyed. “Repentance unto life” is the act of salvation of the soul—the germ which contains all the essentials of salvation—which secures them to us and prepares us for them!

We are, this morning, to give a very careful and prayerful attention to the “repentance” which is “unto life.” First, I shall devote a few minutes to the consideration of *false repentance*. Secondly, I shall consider *the signs that mark true repentance*. And after that, I shall extol the *Divine Beneficence* of which it is written, “Then has God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”

**I.** First, then, we will consider certain FALSE REPENTANCES. I will begin with this remark—*that trembling beneath the sound of the Gospel is not “repentance.”* There are many men who, when they hear a faithful Gospel sermon, are exceedingly stirred and moved by it. By a certain power which accompanies the Word, God testifies that it is His own Word and He causes those who hear it involuntarily to tremble. I have seen some men, while the Truths of Scripture have been sounded from this pulpit, whose knees have knocked together, whose eyes have flowed with tears as if they had been fountains of water! I have witnessed the deep dejection of their spirit, when—as some of them have told me—they have

been shaken until they knew not how to abide the sound of the voice for it seemed like the terrible trumpet of Sinai thundering out their destruction! Well, my Hearers, you may be very much disturbed under the preaching of the Gospel and yet you shall not have that “repentance unto life”! You may know what it is to be very seriously and very solemnly affected when you go to God’s House, and yet you may be hardened sinners. Let me confirm the remark by an example—Paul stood before Felix with the chains upon his hands—and as he preached of “righteousness, temperance, and of judgment to come,” it is written, “Felix trembled.” And yet procrastinating Felix is in Hell with the rest of those who have said, “Go your way for this time. When I have a more convenient season I will call for you.” There are many of you who cannot attend the House of God without being alarmed. You know what it is to stand aghast at the thought that God will punish you. You may often have been moved to sincere emotion under God’s minister. But let me tell you, you may be, after all, a castaway because you have not repented of your sins and neither have you turned to God!

Further, still, it is quite possible that you may not only tremble before God’s Word, but you may become a sort of amiable Agrippa and *be*, “almost persuaded” to turn to Jesus Christ, and yet have no “repentance.” You may go further and even desire the Gospel! You may say—“Oh, this Gospel is such a good thing I wish I had it! It ensures so much happiness, here, and so much joy, hereafter, I wish I might call it mine.” Oh, it is good, thus, to hear this voice of God! And you may sit and while some powerful text is being well-handled, you may say, “I think it is true!” But it must enter the *heart* before you can repent! You may even go upon your knees in prayer and you may ask with terrified lips that this may be blessed to your soul. And after all that—you may still be no child of God. You may say as Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuaded me to be a Christian.” Yet, like Agrippa, you may never proceed beyond the, “almost.” He was “almost persuaded to be a Christian,” but not, “altogether.” Now, how many of you here have been “almost persuaded” and yet you are not really in the way of eternal life? How often has conviction brought you on your knees and you have “almost” repented—but you have remained there without actually repenting? See that corpse? It is lately dead. It has scarcely acquired the ghastliness of death. The color is still life-like. Its hands are still warm. You may fancy it is alive and it seems almost to breathe. Everything is there—the worm has scarcely touched it—dissolution has scarcely approached. There is no offensive smell—yet life is gone—life is not there! So it is with you—you are *almost* alive. You have *almost* every external organ of religion which the Chris-

tian has. But you have not life! You may have repentance, but not sincere repentance. O hypocrite! I warn you this morning—you may not only tremble but feel a complacency towards the Word of God—and yet after all, not have “repentance unto life.” You may sink down into the pit of Hell that is bottomless and hear it said, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Yet, again, it is possible for men to progress even further than this and positively to *humble themselves under the hand of God, and still be total strangers to repentance!* Their goodness is not like the morning cloud and the early dew that passes away but when the sermon is heard they go home and commence what they conceive to be the work of repentance. They renounce certain vices and follies. They clothe themselves in sackcloth. Their tears flow very freely on account of what they have done. They weep before God! And yet, with all that, their repentance is but a temporary repentance and they go back to their sins again! Do you deny that such a penitence can exist? Let me tell you of a case. A certain man named Ahab coveted the vineyard of his neighbor, Naboth, who would not sell it for a price nor make an exchange. He consulted with his wife, Jezebel, who contrived to put Naboth to death and thus secure the vineyard to the king. After Naboth was put to death and Ahab had taken possession of the vineyard, the servant of the Lord met Ahab, and said to him, “Have you killed, and also taken possession? Thus says the Lord, in the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall the dogs lick your blood, even yours! Behold, I will bring evil upon you, and will take away your prosperity.” We read that Ahab went away and humbled himself. And the Lord said, “Because Ahab humbles himself before Me, I will not bring evil in his days.” He had granted him some kind of mercy. But we read in the very next Chapter that Ahab rebelled and in a battle in Ramoth-Gilead, according to the servant of the Lord, he was slain there so that “the dogs licked his blood” in the very vineyard of Naboth! You, too, I tell you, may humble yourselves before God for a time and yet remain the slaves of your transgressions! You are afraid of damnation, but you are not afraid of sinning—you are afraid of Hell—but you are not afraid of your iniquities! You are afraid of being cast into the pit of Hell, but not afraid to harden your hearts against His commands! Is it not true, O Sinner, that you are trembling at Hell? It is not the soul’s state that troubles you but Hell! If Hell were extinguished, your repentance would be extinguished! If the terrors awaiting you were withdrawn, you would sin with a higher hand than before—and your soul would be hardened and would rebel against its Sovereign. Be not deceived, my Brothers and Sisters. Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith. Ask

yourselves if you have that which is “repentance unto life,” for you may humble yourselves for a time and yet never repent before God!

Beyond this, many advance and yet fall short of Grace. *It is possible that you may confess your sins and yet may not repent.* You may approach God and tell Him you are, indeed, a wretch. You may enumerate a long list of your transgressions and of the sins that you have committed without a sense of the heinousness of your guilt, without a spark of real hatred of your deeds. You may confess and acknowledge your transgressions and yet have no abhorrence of sin. And if you do not, in the strength of God, resist sin—if you do not turn from it—this fancied repentance shall be but the gilding which displays the paint which decorates! You may even, I say, confess your faults and yet have not repentance.

Once more, and then I have gone to the farthest thought I have to give on this point. *You may do some work meet for repentance and yet you may be impenitent!* Let me give you a proof of this in a fact authenticated by Inspiration—

Judas betrayed his Master. And after having done so, an overwhelming sense of the enormous evil he had committed seized upon him. His guilt buried all hope of repentance—and in the misery of desperation, not the grief of true regret—he confessed his sin to the high priests, crying, “I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood.” They said, “What is that to us, see you to that.” Whereupon he cast down the pieces of silver in the Temple to show that he could not bear to carry the price of guilt upon him and left them there. He went out, and was he saved? No. “He went out and hanged himself.” And even then the vengeance of God followed him—for when he had hanged himself, he fell from the height where he was suspended and was dashed to pieces. He was lost, and his soul perished. Yet see what this man did. He had sinned. He confessed his wrong. He returned the silver. Still, after all that, he was a castaway. Does not this make us tremble? You see how possible it is to be the shape of the Christian so nearly that wisdom, itself, if it is only mortal, may be deceived!

**II.** Now, having thus warned you that there are many false kinds of repentance, I propose to occupy a short time by some remarks on TRUE REPENTANCE and the signs whereby we may discern whether we have that “repentance” which is “unto life.”

First of all let me correct one or two mistakes which those who are coming to Jesus Christ very often make. One is they frequently think they must have deep, horrible and awful manifestations of the terrors of Law and of Hell before they can be said to repent. How many have I con-

versed with who have said to me what I can only translate into English to you, this morning, something in this way—"I do not repent enough. I do not feel myself enough of a sinner. I have not been so gross and wicked a transgressor as many—I almost wish I had. Not because I love sin, but because then I think I would have deeper convictions of my guilt and feel more sure that I had truly come to Jesus Christ." Now it is a great mistake to imagine that these terrible and horrible thoughts of a coming Judgment have *anything* to do with the validity of "repentance." They are very often not the gift of God at all but the insinuations of the devil! And even where the Law works and produces these thoughts, you must not regard them as being part and parcel of "repentance." They do not enter into the essence of repentance. "Repentance" is a hatred of sin! It is a turning from sin and a determination, in the strength of God, to forsake it. "Repentance" is a hatred of sin and a forsaking of it. It is possible for a man to repent without any terrific display of the terrors of the Law. He may repent without having heard the trumpet sounds of Sinai—without having heard more than a distant rumble of its thunder! A man may repent entirely through the power of the voice of mercy. God opens some hearts to faith as in the case of Lydia. Others He assaults with the sledge hammer of the wrath to come! Some He opens with the picklock of Grace and some with the crowbar of the Law. There may be different ways of getting there, but the question is, has he got there? Is he there? It often happens that the Lord is not in the tempest or in the earthquake but in the "still small voice."

There is another mistake many poor people make when they are thinking about salvation, and that is that they cannot repent enough. They imagine that were they to repent up to a certain degree, they would be saved. "Oh, Sir," some of you will say, "I have not penitence enough!" Beloved, let me tell you that there is not any eminent degree of "repentance" which is necessary to salvation! You know there are degrees of faith and yet the least faith saves. So there are degrees of repentance and the least repentance will save the soul if it is sincere! The Bible says, "he that believes shall be saved." And when it says that, it includes the very smallest degree of faith. So when it says, "Repent and be saved," it includes the man or woman who has the lowest degree of real repentance. Repentance, moreover, is never perfect in any man in this mortal state. We never get perfect faith so as to be entirely free from doubting. And we never get repentance which is free from some hardness of heart. The most sincere penitent that you know will feel himself to be partially impenitent. Repentance is also a continual lifelong act. It will continually grow. I believe a Christian on his deathbed will more bitterly repent than

he ever did before. It is a thing to be done all your lifelong. Sinning and repenting—sinning and repenting make up a Christian's life! Repenting and believing in Jesus—repenting and believing in Jesus make up the consummation of his happiness! You must not expect that you will be perfect in "repentance" before you are saved. No Christian can be perfect. "Repentance" is a Grace. Some people preach it as a *condition* of salvation. Condition of nonsense! There are no conditions of salvation! God *gives* the salvation, Himself! And He only gives it to those to whom He will. He says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." If, then, God has given you the least repentance—if it is sincere repentance—praise Him for it and expect that repentance will grow deeper and deeper as you go further on! Then this remark, I think, ought to be applied to all Christians—Christian men and women, you feel that you have not deep enough repentance—you feel that you have not large enough faith. What are you to do? Ask for an increase of faith and it will grow! So with repentance! Have you ever tried to get deep repentance? My Friends, if you have failed therein, still trust in Jesus and try every day to get a penitential spirit. Do not expect—I say again—to have perfect repentance at first—*sincere* penitence you must have—and then under Divine Grace you will go on from strength to strength, until at last you shall hate and abhor sin as a serpent or a viper! And then shall you be near, very near, the perfection of repentance! These few thoughts, then, in opening the subject. And now you say, what are the signs of true "repentance" in the sight of God?

First, I tell you, there is always *sorrow* with it. No man ever repents of sin without having some kind of sorrow with it. More or less intense, it may be according to the way in which God calls him and his previous manner of life—but there must be some sorrow. We do not care when it comes, but at some time or other it must come, or it is not the repentance of the Christian! I knew a man once who professed that he had repented and he certainly was a changed character so far as the external was concerned. But I never could see that he had any real sorrow for sin. Neither when he professed to believe in Jesus, did I ever see any marks of penitence in him. I considered in that man it was a kind of ecstatic jump into Grace. And I found out afterwards he had just as ecstatic a jump into guilt, again! He was not a sheep of God, for he had not been washed in penitence—for all God's people have to be washed there when converted from their sins. No man can come to Christ and know His pardon without feeling that sin is a hateful thing—for it put Jesus to death! You who have tearless eyes, unbended knees, unbroken hearts—how can

you think you are saved? The Gospel promised salvation only to those who really repent.

Lest, however, I should hurt some of you and make you feel what I do not intend, let me remark that I do not mean to say that you must shed actual tears. Some men are so hard in constitution that they could not shed a tear. I have known some who have been able to sigh and to groan but tears would not come. Well, I say that though the tear often affords evidence of penitence, you may have “repentance unto life” without it. What I would have you understand is there must be some real *sorrow*. If the prayer may not be vocal, it must be secret. There must be a groan if there is no word. There must be a sigh if there is no tear, to show the repentance, even though it is but small.

There must be in this repentance, I think, not only sorrow, but there must be practice—practical repentance—

***“Tis not enough to say we’re sorry, and repent***

***And then go on from day to day just as we always went.”***

Many people are very sorry and very penitent for their past sins. Hear them talk. “Oh,” they say, “I deeply regret that I should ever have been a drunk. And I sincerely bemoan that I should have fallen into that sin. I deeply lament that I should have done so.” Then they go straight home and when one o’clock on Sunday comes, you will find them at it again! And yet such people say they have repented! Do you believe them, when they say they are sinners, but do not love sin? They may not love it for the time. But can they be sincerely penitent and then go and transgress, again, immediately in the same way as they did before? How can we believe you if you transgress again and again and do not forsake your sin? We know a tree by its fruit and you who are penitent will bring forth works of repentance! I have often thought it was a very beautiful instance, showing the power of penitence which a pious minister once related. He had been preaching on penitence and had, in the course of his sermon, spoke of the sin of stealing. On his way home a laborer came alongside of him and the minister observed that he had something under his smock-frock. He told him he need not accompany him farther. But the man persisted. At last he said, “I have a spade under my arm which I stole up at that farm. I heard you preaching about the sin of stealing, and I must go and take it back.” That was sincere penitence which caused him to go back and replace the stolen article. It was like those South Sea Islanders of whom we read who stole the missionaries’ articles of apparel and furniture and everything out of their houses. But when they were savingly converted, they brought them all back! But many of you say you repent, yet nothing comes of it. It is not worth the snap of a

finger! People who have committed a robbery, or have kept a gambling house do not sincerely repent when they are very careful that all the proceeds shall be laid out to their hearts' best comfort! True "repentance" will yield works meet for repentance." It will be practical repentance.

Yet farther. You may know whether your repentance is practical by this test. Does it last or does it not? Many of your repentances are like the hectic flush upon the cheek of the consumptive person which is no sign of health. Many a time have I seen a young man in a flow of newly acquired but unsound godliness and he has thought he was about to repent of his sins. For some hours such an one was deeply penitent before God—and for weeks he relinquishes his follies. He attends the House of Prayer and converses as a child of God. But back he goes to his sins as the dog returns to his vomit! The evil spirit has gone "back to his house and has taken with him seven others more wicked than himself. And the last state of that man is worse than the first." How long has your penitence lasted? Did it continue for months? Or did it come upon you and go away suddenly? You said, "I will join the Church—I will do this, that, and the other, for God's cause." Are your works lasting? Do you believe your repentance will last 6 months? Will it continue for 12 months? Will it last until you are wrapped in your winding-sheet?

Yet again I must ask you one question more. Do you think you'd repent of your sins if no punishment were placed before you? Or do you repent because you know you shall be punished forever if you remain in your sins? Suppose I tell you there is no Hell at all—that, if you choose, you may swear—and if you will, you may live without God? Suppose there were no reward for virtue and no punishment for sin—which would you choose? Can you honestly say this morning, "I think, I know, by the Grace of God, I would choose righteousness if there were no reward for it, if there were nothing to be gained by righteousness, and nothing to be lost by sin"? Every sinner hates his sin when he comes near to the mouth of Hell. Every murderer hates his crime when he comes to the gallows. I never found a child hate its fault so much as when it was going to be punished for it. If you had no cause to dread the pit of Hell—if you knew that you might give up your life to sin and that you might do so with impunity—would you still feel that you hated sin and that you could not, would not, commit sin except through the infirmity of the flesh? Would you still desire holiness? Would you still desire to live like Christ? If so—if you can say this in *sincerity*—if you thus turn to God and hate your sin with an everlasting hatred, you need not fear but that you have a "repentance" which is "unto life."

**III.** Now comes the concluding and third point, and that THE BLESSED BENEFICENCE OF GOD in granting to men “repentance unto life.” “Repentance,” my dear Friends, is the GIFT of God! It is one of those spiritual favors which ensure eternal life. It is the marvel of Divine Mercy that it not only provides the way of salvation, that it not only invites men to receive Grace, but that it *positively makes men willing to be saved*. God punished His Son, Jesus Christ, for our sins and therein He provided salvation for all His lost children! He sends His minister. The minister bids men repent and believe and he labors to bring them to God. They will not listen to the call and they despise the minister. But then another Messenger is sent, a heavenly ambassador who cannot fail. He summons men to repent and turn to God. Their thoughts are a little wayward, but after He, the Divine Spirit, pleads with them, they forget what manner of men they were and they repent and turn! Now, what would we do if we had been treated as God were? If we had made a supper or a feast and sent out messengers to invite the guests to come, what would we do? Do you think we would take the trouble to go round and visit them all and get them to come? And when they sat down and said they could not eat, would we open their mouths? If they still declared they could not eat, would we still make them eat? Ah, Beloved, I am inclined to think you would not do so! If you had signed the letters of invitation and the invited would not come to your feast, would you not say, “You shall not have it”? But what does God do? He says, “Now I will make a feast. I will invite the people and if they do not come in, My ministers shall go out and fetch them in bodily. I will say to My servants, “go you out into the highways and hedges and *compel* them to come in, that they may partake of the feast I have prepared.” Is it not a stupendous act of Divine Mercy that He actually *makes them willing*? He does not do it by force, but uses a sweet spiritual persuasion. They are first as unwilling to be saved as they can be. “But,” says God, “that is nothing, I have power to make you turn to Me, and I will.” The Holy Spirit then brings home the Word of God to the consciences of His children in so blessed a manner that they can no longer refuse to love Jesus! Mark you, not by any force against the will, but by a sweet spiritual influence *changing* the will. O, you lost and ruined Sinners, stand here and admire my Master’s mercy! He sets not only a feast of good things before men, but He induces them to come and partake of them! He compels them to continue feasting until He carries them to the everlasting, eternal mansion! And as He bears them up, He says to each one, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore, by My loving kindness I have drawn you. Now, do you love Me?” “Oh, Lord,” they cry, “Your Grace in bringing us here proves that You do love us, for

we were unwilling to go. You said, you shall go—we said we would not go, but You have made us go. And now, Lord, we bless You, and love You for that force. It was sweet constraint.” I was a struggling captive, but I am now made willing—

**“Oh, Sovereign Grace, my heart subdue!  
I would be led in triumph too—  
A willing captive to my Lord  
To sing the honors of His Word.”**

Well now, what do you say? Some of you will say, “Sir, I have been trying to repent for a long time. In pains and afflictions I have been praying and trying to believe, and doing all I can.” I will tell you another thing—you will try a long time before you will be able to do it. That is not the way to get it. I heard of two gentlemen traveling. One of them said to the other, “I do not know how it is, but you always seem to remember your wife and family and all that is doing at home. And you seem as if you connected all things around you with them. But I try to bring mine to my recollection constantly, and yet I never can.” “No,” said the other, “that is the very reason—because you *try*. If you could connect them with every little circumstance you meet, you would easily remember them. “I think at such-and-such a time—now they are rising. At another time—now they are at prayers. At such-and-such a time—now they are having their breakfast. In this way I have them still before me.” I think the same thing happens with regard to “repentance.” If a man says, “I want to believe,” and tries by some mechanical means to work himself into repentance, it is an absurdity and he will never accomplish it! The way for him to repent is by God’s Grace to believe—to believe and think on Jesus. If he pictures to himself the wounded bleeding side, the crown of thorns, the tears of anguish—if he takes a vision of all that Christ suffered, I will be bound for it—he will turn to Him in repentance! I would stake what reputation I may have in spiritual things upon this—that a man cannot, under God’s Holy Spirit, contemplate the Cross of Christ without a broken heart! If it is not so, my heart is different from anyone’s else. I have never known a man who has thought upon and taken a view of the Cross who has not found that it begat “repentance” and begat faith! We look at Jesus Christ if we would be saved, and we then say, “Amazing Sacrifice! That Jesus thus died to save sinners.” If you want faith, remember HE gives it. If you want repentance, HE gives it! If you want everlasting life, HE gives it liberally. He can force you to feel your great sin and cause you to repent by the sight of Calvary’s Cross—and the sound of the greatest, deepest death shriek, “Eloi! Eloi! Lama Sabachthani?” “My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?”

That will beget “repentance.” It will make you weep and say, “Alas, and did my Savior bleed? And did my Sovereign die for *me*?” Then Beloved, if you would have “repentance,” this is my best advice to you—look to Jesus. And may the blessed Giver of all “repentance unto salvation” guard you from the false repentances which I have described and give you that “repentance” which exists unto life—

***“Repent! The voice celestial cries.  
Nor longer dare delay.  
The wretch that scorns the mandate, dies,  
And meets a fiery day!  
No more the Sovereign eye of GOD  
Overlooks the crimes of men—  
His heralds are dispatched abroad  
To warn the world of sin!  
The summons reach thro’ all the earth  
Let earth attend and fear!  
Listen, you men of royal birth,  
And let your vassals hear!  
Together in His Presence bow,  
And all your guilt confess—  
Embrace the blessed Savior now,  
Nor trifle with His Grace.  
Bow, before the awful trumpet sound,  
And call you to His bar—  
For mercy knows the appointed bound  
And turns to vengeance there.”***

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

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

# CONVERSIONS DESIRED

## NO. 1282

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 5, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number  
believed, and turned unto the Lord.”  
Acts 11:21.***

THE Brethren who had dwelt together in Church fellowship at Jerusalem were scattered abroad by persecution which arose about Stephen. Their Master had told them that when they were persecuted in one city they were to flee to another. They obeyed His command and in the course of escape from persecution they took very long journeys—very long journeys, indeed, for that age of the world, when travel was exceedingly difficult. But wherever they found themselves, they began, at once, to preach Jesus Christ, so that the scattering of the disciples was also a scattering of good Seed in broader fields. The malice of Satan was made the instrument of the mercy of God.

Learn from this, dear Brothers and Sisters, every one of you, that wherever you are called to go, you should persevere in making known the name and Gospel of Jesus. Look upon this as your calling and occupation. You will not be scattered, now, by persecution, but should the demands of business carry you into different countries, employ your distant travel for missionary purposes. Providence, every now and then, bids you remove your tent—take care that wherever it is pitched you carry with you a testimony for Jesus. At times the necessities of health require relaxation and change of air and this may take you to different places of public resort—seize the opportunity to encourage the Churches in such localities, by your presence and countenance, and also endeavor to spread the knowledge of Jesus among those to whom you may be directed.

The position which you occupy in society is not an accidental one—it has not been decreed to you by a blind, purposeless fate—there is *predestination* in it and that predestination is wise—and looks towards a merciful end. You are placed where you are that you may be a preserving salt to those around, a sweet savor of Christ to all who know you. The methods of Divine Grace have ordained a happy connection between you and the people with whom you associate. You are a messenger of mercy to them, a herald of good tidings, an Epistle of Christ. The surrounding darkness needs you and, therefore, it is written, “Among whom you shine as lights in the world.”

You are intended to warn and rebuke some, to entreat and encourage others. To you the mourner looks for comfort and the ignorant for instruction. Let them never look in vain. Be the true friend of men, observe their condition before God and endeavor to reclaim them from their wanderings. If Joseph was sent to Egypt that he might save his father's house, you, also, are sent where you are for the sake of some hidden ones of the

Lord's chosen family. If Esther was placed in the court of a heathen king for the deliverance of her nation, so are you, my Sister, called to occupy your present position for the good of the Church of Christ. Look to it, Brothers and Sisters, lest you miss your life's calling and live in vain. It would be a sad thing, indeed, if you who profess to belong to Christ should be "creation's blot, creation's blank," by having failed to work while it is called today.

These good people of the early Church, however, with all their zeal, were somewhat narrow-minded and hampered by their national prejudices, for they preached at first to only Jews and it was very hard to make them see that the Gospel was meant for the whole race of man, Gentiles as well as Jews. Their Master had said, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," and yet they began with preaching only to Jews. Words could not have been plainer and yet they missed their meaning. It is not to be wondered at, that some in our day are still unable to preach to men as men, when we see how slow the early saints were to learn the lesson.

Brethren, if there is any narrowness about our spirit, let us pray the Lord to take it away. We shall not, of course, be shackled as these Jews were by boasting of our nationality, but perhaps there may be classes of society of whom we despair and, therefore, for whom we make no effort. We say, "It would be useless to attempt the conversion of such characters. I feel myself quite able to talk to other persons and although I am placed in the midst of these people I cannot bring my mind to speak with them about spiritual things, for I feel hopeless of success." Beloved, may you be delivered from this snare and learn to sow beside all waters.

The Gentiles, though they were, for awhile, passed over by the Brethren, turned out to be the most hopeful of all classes. From the Gentile fields they reaped harvests such as were never gathered in Judea. Antioch, with its Grecians, became famous among Christian Churches—there the Church of Christ first took its name amid a revival of religion when great multitudes believed and turned unto the Lord! God had, from of old, intended that the great majority of the election of Grace should be gathered out of those very Gentiles whom even the Apostles, themselves, scarcely ventured to address!

Now then, my Brother, in the light of this incident, begin to work where as yet you have done nothing—begin to hope where up to now you have despaired. Throw out your best energies in that very direction in which you have felt most hampered, for there awaits you, to your own intense surprise, a success which will amply reward you. You need not restrict yourselves to lands familiar with the plow—invade the primeval forest, fell the ancient trees and clear the broad acres—that virgin soil will yield you harvests a hundredfold such as you will never find in fields where others have labored before you. If your spiritual mining has become a failure, open fresh lodes of the precious metal, for veins of treasure lie concealed in the unbroken ground.

Launch out into the deep! Let down your nets for a catch and multitudes of fish shall crowd the net. It seems to me to be the obvious teaching of the text that wherever we are cast, we should try to do good, and

that we may hope for the largest success among the most neglected portions of society. Coming closely to the text, I desire to press upon you, this morning, with great earnestness, the need of the conversion of men and the desirableness that we should have many converted *here*. And I shall suggest what we can do to produce that result. In all these I beg to be assisted by the Holy Spirit, without whose aid I shall only exhibit my own weakness and deaden those energies which I long to awake.

These will be our heads—first, the end we aim at—that many may believe and turn unto the Lord. Secondly, the power by which this can be attained—“The hand of the Lord was with them.” Thirdly, the desirableness of our objective and, fourthly, how we may promote its attainment.

**I.** Let us speak upon THE END WHICH WE DESIRE. It may seem very commonplace, but it is, in fact, one of the grandest designs under Heaven. He who contemplates it has a higher aim than philosopher, Reformer, or patriot. He aims at that for which the Son of God both lived and died! We desire that men may believe, that is to say, first, that they may believe the testimony of Jesus Christ to be true, for there are some who have not attained as far as that. They reject altogether the Inspired Word and to them the Incarnation, the Redemption, the Resurrection, the Glory, the Second Advent, are so many old wives' fables.

You to whom these Truths are the light of your lives can scarcely realize the power of unbelief of this kind and yet some men live and die in its gloom. We pray that they may be taught better and that the evidence of these great facts may be forced home upon them. Alas, there are many who profess to believe these things, but their only reason for doing so is that they have been taught so from their childhood and it is the current religion of the nation. They regard the Inspiration of Scripture, and so on, as matters about which it is not expedient to trouble themselves—they do not care one way or the other. They find it the easier and more respectable plan to admit the Truth of the Gospel and think no more about it. Such a vain complimentary belief is rather an insult to our holy faith than a thing to be rejoiced in.

But, dear Friends, we need more than this faith of indifference which is little more than dishonest unbelief! We want men to believe for themselves because they are *personally* convinced and have felt in themselves the saving power of Christ Jesus. We pray that nominal Believers may treat the doctrines of Revelation, not as dogmas, but as *facts*—not as opinions, but as Truths of God—as surely facts as the events of history, as much truths as the actual incidents of everyday life. For, alas, the grand doctrines of the eternal Truths are frequently treated as venerable nonentities and have no effect whatever upon the conduct of those who profess to receive them because they do not realize them as matters of fact, or see their solemn bearings.

It is shocking to reflect that a change in the weather has more effect on some men's lives than the dread alternative of Heaven or Hell! A woman's glance affects them more than the eye of God. We, therefore, desire to see men really and truly believing the facts of the Gospel in an honest, practical manner. We cannot, however, be content with this. We labor *that those around us may savingly believe by putting their trust in the Lord Jesus*

*Christ.* This is the grand saving act—the man brings his soul and commits it to Christ for safe keeping—and that entrusting of the soul to Jesus saves him. He makes the Savior, Trustee of his spiritual estates and leaves himself and all his eternal interests in those dear hands which once were nailed to the Cross. Oh, how we long to see the Holy Spirit bringing men to this, that they may believe in Jesus Christ by resting in Him and trusting upon Him!

For this we live, for this we would be content to die that many might believe! The end we aim at is that men may so believe in Jesus that they may be altogether changed in their relation towards God, for “many believed *and turned unto the Lord.*” What does that mean? It means that these heathen gave up their idols and began to worship the only living and true God! We desire, dear Hearers, that faith in the Lord Jesus may lead you to give up the objects of your idolatrous love—yourselves, your money, your pleasures, the world, the flesh, the devil—and there are some whose God is their belly and who glory in their shame. When a man believes in Jesus Christ he puts away his false gods and worships the great Father of Spirits—he makes no inferior objective the aim of his being—but from then on lives for the glory of God!

This is a glorious turning, a complete conversion of the man’s heart and soul. To turn to God means not merely to forsake the false god for the true, but to turn from the love of sin. Sin lies that way, but God’s Glory lies in the opposite quarter. He who looks sin-ward has his back to God—he who looks God-ward has his back to sin. It is blessed conversion when men turn from the folly of sin to the Glory of God. With weeping and supplication do men so turn, confessing their wrongdoing, lamenting their transgressions, abhorring their evil lusts, desiring pardon and hoping for renewal of their nature.

Precious in the sight of the Lord are the tears of penitence and the sighs of contrite hearts! We can never be satisfied with the results of our ministry unless faith leads man to hearty repentance towards God, an intense loathing of their sins and an actual forsaking of them. To turn to God means that from now on God shall be sought in prayer. “Behold he prays” is one of the indications of a true convert. The man who lives without prayer lives without God, but the man who has turned to God is familiar with the Mercy Seat. What a turning it is when the eyes are turned upward to seek the Lord—with the solemn glances of the eyes when none but God is near. To turn to God means to yield yourself obediently to His sway, to be willing to do what He bids, to think what He teaches, and to be what He commands.

Faith is nothing unless it brings with it a willing and obedient mind. Willful rebellion is the child of unbelief—sincere obedience is the offspring of humble believing. “They believed, and turned unto the Lord.” We want men, indeed, to turn so that their whole life shall be a going towards God, growing more like He, a closer communing with Him, leading on to the soul’s becoming perfectly like He and dwelling forever where He is. Now, dear Friends, when I speak thus of believing and turning unto God, some will say, “Well, but that must be a very easy matter, only to believe and turn.” Yes, my Brothers and Sisters, it appears simple, but it is, none the

less, vitally essential. “He that believes on the Lord Jesus has everlasting life; but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed.”

You say, “Why make all this stir about it?” Because upon this apparently little matter depends the present and eternal condition of the sinner! To believe and to turn to God is to be delivered from the present dominion of sin and from the future punishment of it. To be without faith and without God is to be without joy here and without hope hereafter. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this is what you and I must aim at in all our attempts to influence our fellow men. It may be useful to reform them, but it is far better that Grace should regenerate them! God speed every effort to promote sobriety, chastity, thrift, honesty and morality—but you and I are sent for something *more* than this—our work goes deeper and is more difficult.

It is not ours to wash the African, but to seek to change his skin. We do not so much pray that the lion may be tamed as that he may be turned into a lamb. It may be well to lop the branches of the tree of sin, but our business is to lay the axe at the root of the trees by leading men to turn to God. This is a change, not merely of the outward conduct, but of the *heart!* And if we do not see this result—if men do not believe and turn to God—we have labored in vain and spent our strength for nothing and in vain. If there are no believing and turning to the Lord, we may go to our secret chambers and bewail ourselves before God because none have believed our report and the arm of the Lord has not been revealed. There is the objective—aim at it, saying, “This one thing I do.”

Praying in the Holy Spirit and depending upon His power, push on with this one sole objective. Drive at it, you teachers in the Sunday school—do not be satisfied with *instructing* the children—labor to have them converted! Drive at it, you preachers—do not believe that you have done your work when you have taught the people—you must never rest till they believe in Jesus Christ! Pursue this end in every sermon or Sunday school address—throw your whole soul into this one objective. Yours must not be a cold inculcation of an external morality, but a warm enthusiasm for an inward *regeneration*. You are not to bring men to believe in themselves and so become self-made men, but to lead them to believe in Jesus and to become new creatures in Him. There is our end and aim—are we all alive to it?

**II.** Secondly, let us consider THE POWER BY WHICH THIS CAN BE ATTAINED—“The hand of the Lord was with them.” None ever believe in Jesus except those in whom God’s arm has been revealed, for Jesus says, “No man can come to Me except the Father, which has sent Me, draws him.” But, Brother ministers, in answer to prayer, that power *has been revealed* among His people and is with them still! His arm is not shortened that He cannot save, neither has He withdrawn it from His Church.

Be encouraged while I suggest to you a few thoughts. The hand of God is upon many of our friends before we speak to them. It is most pleasant to me, when I am seeing inquirers, to observe how God makes ready the hearts of my hearers. I am studying a certain subject and praying to God for a blessing on it—and upstairs in a chamber, which I have never seen,

one of my hearers is being made ready for my message. He is struck with a sense of sin, or troubled with uneasy thoughts, or rendered hopeful of better things—and thus he is being made ready to accept the Christ whom I shall preach to him! Yes, and ready to accept that particular form of the Gospel message which the Spirit of God gave me when I preached!

There on a sick bed will lie a woman painfully exercised with the sad memory of her sinful life, in order that when she comes up to the House of God, every word may have power over her. Sickness and pain, shame and poverty, often produce a condition of mind most hopeful for the reception of the Gospel. A man well-to-do in circumstances has been ruined in business, he despairs of happiness below and, therefore, comes to hear the Gospel, made willing to seek his happiness above. Another has lately felt failures of bodily strength and so has been warned that life is frail—and thus he is prepared to listen to the admonitions which speak of eternity. Courage, minister of God! You are nothing, but the Almighty God is with you! When you lift your hand to build the House of the Lord, Omnipotence works with you and names your labor a success.

Every revolution of those awful wheels, so ponderous that even the Prophet said, “O wheel!” is working to accomplish the objective which is near your heart. The stars in their courses fight for you! The stones of the field are in league with you! Eternal wisdom plans for you, infinite power works with you, boundless patience perseveres with you and almighty love will conquer by you! “The hand of the Lord was with them.” What more do we need? Sow, Brother, for God has plowed! Go up and build, for God has prepared the stones and made ready the foundation!

Moreover, the hand of the Lord is with His people in helping the teachers and preachers, themselves. There are strange impulses which come over us at times, which make us think and say what otherwise had never crossed our minds—and these work with power upon men’s minds. If you will live to win souls it shall be given you in the same hour what you shall speak. You will often say to an inquirer what you would not have beforehand arranged to say, but God, who knows that inquirers heart better than you do, has prevented your saying what you would have liked to have said and has led you to say what you afterwards judged to be a mistake.

My experience teaches me that we are often wise in our ignorance and as often foolish in our wisdom. We have frequently done best when we felt that we did but badly. If we will but trust God and be whole-hearted in the winning of souls we shall have a power assisting us in our speech of which the greatest orator in the world is not aware. Speak in the House of Commons for a party and you will have to look within for aid, but speak in the House of the Lord and you may look upward for spiritual aid. The poet invokes the fabled muses, but for you, O servant of the Lord, there is real help from a higher source! Think of this, you workers, and be encouraged!

Besides Providence and the gracious help by which good men speak, there is a distinct work of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of men where the Gospel is preached. Not only is the Spirit in the Word, but over and above that, in His own elect, God works most effectually so His Truth is rendered Irresistible. Let us never forget where our great strength lies, for

in this matter we must rely alone upon the Spirit of God. How often has God worked in the power of His Grace by making men feel the majesty of the Word? They come, perhaps, to hear the preacher out of the most idle curiosity. They look for something which shall amuse them—but the Truth of God comes home to them and searches their heart. Simple as the language is, “as if an angel spoke they hear the solemn sound,” it goes through them like a dart and they cannot help feeling, “Surely God was there, and He spoke with me.”

The Spirit of God makes men remember their sins. They try to forget them, but sometimes they cannot. Sad memories steal over them and wholesome regrets fatigue their very souls. Men who have been giddy, careless and forgetful, have all of a sudden found themselves turning over the pages of their old diaries and with thoughtfulness reviewing the past. All this leads to repentance and faith! That same Spirit makes men see the beauty of holiness. They cannot help admiring it, though they are far from it. They are charmed with the loveliness of the Character of Jesus and begin to feel that there is something about it which they would wish to imitate. When the preacher proclaims the way of salvation the same Spirit leads men to admire it and to say within themselves, “There is something here which human wisdom could never have devised”—and they begin to long for a share in it! A wish takes possession of their heart, as though some strange bird from an unknown land had flown into their souls and had amazed them with a new song. They do not know where the desire came from, but they feel strangely bound to entertain the stranger.

Sometimes the Spirit blows like a hurricane through men’s hearts and they have been borne along by its power without the will to resist. As when a tempest rushes across the sea and drives the frail boat before it helplessly, so have I known the Divine Spirit sweep away the peace and quiet of the soul’s self-righteousness, stir up the deeps of inward trouble, make the soul reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man—and impel the heart forward to the iron-bound coast of self-despair where every false hope and vain-glorious trust has been wrecked forever. Glory be to God when this is the case, for then the soul is driven to cling to Jesus!

Yes, Brothers, it is not the preacher and it is not altogether what the preacher says, but there is a power abroad, as potent as that by which the worlds were made. Unbelievers sometimes ask, “Where is your God?” O Sirs, if you once felt the power of the great Spirit, you would never ask that question! “Since the fathers fell asleep,” they say, “all things continue as they were.” But this they willingly are ignorant of, that new creations are being worked every day. That there are men and women alive in this world who are neither liars nor enthusiasts who can declare that upon their spirit the eternal power and Godhead has operated and changed them. It has conquered them and holds them as willing captives to its supreme majesty.

Yes, Brothers, there is a hand of the Lord and that hand of the Lord is still with His people. If it is not, then we shall see no believing and no turning to God. But since it is still at work among us, let us work on, for as surely as we live we shall see great numbers converted to God and God will be glorified.

**III.** Let us now dwell upon THE DESIRABLENESS OF CONVERSIONS. It is no new thing to you and to me to see many believing and turning to God. These 22 years God's hand has been stretched out—we have had no spasm of revival, we have not alternated between furious spurts and sudden lulls. But month by month, I think I might say Sunday by Sunday, souls have been saved and the Church has grown exceedingly and God has been glorified. What we have enjoyed we desire to retain—yes, we would have more! The Lord says to us what he said to the Church at Philadelphia, “Hold fast what you have, that no man take your crown,” and our crown is the crown of soul-winning, which we must hold fast, for we cannot endure to lose it.

This must be our crown, that we have preached the Gospel, both minister and church members, and have been all of us soul-winners. We desire this because, first of all, we desire to see the Truth of God, godliness, virtue and holiness extended. Who among you does not? Does not every good man wish others to be good, every honest man wish others to be honest? Does not every man who loves his family desire that other families should be well-ordered? Oh, then, if there were no nobler reason, you may desire that men may be converted, since conversion is the root of everything that is pure and lovely and of good report!

You desire, too, that your fellow creatures should be happy, but there is no such happiness as that which springs out of reconciliation to God. The peace which you, yourselves, enjoy through pardoned sin must surely make you desire that others may possess the same. If religion is, indeed, a source of perennial joy to yourself, you are inhuman if you do not wish others to drink of it. Brothers and Sisters, as you would make eyes sparkle, as you would make countenances radiant with delight, as I know you would spread gladness on all sides—desire above all things that your children, your relations, your neighbors, your friends, should be converted to God! Thus shall thorns and briars give place to myrtles and roses and deserts shall be turned into gardens of the Lord.

You also desire conversion, I am sure, because you feel the dreadful hazard of unconverted men. You have not yet subscribed to the modern doctrine that these men and women around you are only two-legged cats and dogs and horses and will ultimately die out and cease to be. You believe in the God-given *immortality* of human souls—a heritage from which no man can escape, the noblest of all man's endowments—in itself the highest of all gifts, though sin may pervert it into the direst of all evils. You would have scant motives for desiring men's conversion if you did not believe that there is another and everlasting state.

But, believing that men live hereafter and exist forever, you must, I am sure, be eager that men may escape from the wrath to come. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, you would persuade men. Judging that there is one of two things for them all, either, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment,” or else, “The righteous into life eternal,” you can never rest until you feel convinced that those about you are partakers of life eternal. Look at any unconverted person and your sympathies should be awakened. If I saw tokens of fever, or marks of consumption in the face of anyone I

loved, I should be struck with alarm. What, then, must I feel when I see damnation—as I do see it—in the face of every unbeliever?

How is it that we are not more distressed than we are when men are perishing in their sins? Why, my Brethren, are we not more intent upon the conversion of men? Let these questions humble us and cause great searching of heart. It is a shame to us that we have so little of the mind of Christ, so little compassion for men's souls. Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, self-preservation is a law of Nature and the Church can never preserve herself except by increasing from the world by *conversion*. Where are the preachers for the next generation? Today they are among the ungodly and we must labor to bring them to God. Where are the stones that are to make the next course in the walls of our Zion? They are not quarried yet and we must, by God's Grace, excavate them.

We who now labor for the Lord will soon go our ways. Our thrones and crowns are waiting for us and the angels are beckoning us away. Who will fill our places? Who will bear the banner? Who will blow the trumpet? Who will wield the sword? We must find new champions in the ranks of the foe—they must be born unto God—and we must pray that this may be accomplished by our instrumentality. Seek conversions *for Christ's sake*. You know the agony and bloody sweat—shall these be spent in vain? You know the nailing to the Cross and the shriek of, "Why have You forsaken Me?" Shall these be unrewarded? You have thought over and trusted in the bitter pangs of your Redeemer's death—shall He not see of the travail of His soul?

Shall He not be satisfied? These lost sheep are His sheep, for whom He shed His precious blood! These lost pieces of money are His money and they bear His image and superscription—shall they not be found? These lost sons spending their living in riotousness are His brothers, children of His Father—do you not desire, for Jesus' sake, that they should be brought home? Dear Friends, what joy it will be to yourselves if men believe and turn to the Lord by your means! I put that motive last and hope it will not be the strongest, but it may yet be one of the liveliest. What joy it will be to yourselves if you see many converted!

Somebody has asked, "If the heathen are not evangelized, what will become of them?" I will put another question of a far more practical character. If *you* do not *try* to evangelize the heathen, *what will become of you?* Do not so much inquire about *their* destiny as your own if you have no care for their salvation! He who never seeks the conversion of another is in imminent danger of being damned, himself. I do not believe in any man's salvation who is wrapped up in self! Assuredly he is not saved from *selfishness*. I cannot believe in any man's possessing the Spirit of God who is indifferent to the condition of others—one of the *first* fruits of the Spirit is love. Even as flowers, at their very first blooming, shed their perfume, so do the saved ones, in their earliest days of Grace, desire the good of their fellows.

I know that one of my earliest impulses, when I first looked to Christ and lost the burden of my sin, was to tell everybody around me of the blessings I had received, for I longed to make others as happy as I was. I

fear that you who never try to win souls lack an essential part of the Christian character. I leave the question with your own consciences.

IV. Fourthly, let us enquire, WHAT WE CAN DO TO PROMOTE CONVERSIONS. Conversion is God's work. It cannot be worked without His hand. Without Him we can do nothing. Our hands are far too puny for such a work. The power of the first disciples and our own lies in the fact mentioned in the text—"The hand of the Lord was with them." Still, there are certain circumstances under which that hand will work and there are hindrances which will restrain it.

Let us think awhile. First, then, if sinners are to be converted *we must distinctly aim at it*. As a rule, a man does what he tries to do and not that which is mere by-play. The conversion of sinners is not one of those things which a man is likely to accomplish without intending it. Sometimes, in the Sovereignty of God, a preacher who does not aim at conversion may, nevertheless, be made useful, for God works as He wills. But as a rule, men do not win souls if they do not eagerly desire to do so. Fishing for men cannot be carried out by throwing in the net without caring whether fish are caught or not.

Few traders become rich by accident—they generally have to plod and work hard for money—and to be rich in treasures of saved souls you must aim at it and labor for it. I am struck with astonishment as I think how many sermons are preached, how many Sunday school addresses are given, how many religious books are written of which you are quite sure that the intention was *not* immediate conversion. It is thought that in some unknown way these good things may accidentally contribute to men's salvation, but they are not aimed at as their present objective. Ah, Brother, if you want men to come to Christ you must preach Christ to them with all your heart—with this design—that they may *immediately* close in with Christ and at once give their hearts to Jesus!

Yes, and you are to pray that they may do so through the present effort which you are making for their good. There is the target and if you continue to shoot into the air long enough an arrow may strike it. But, man alive, if you want to win the prize of archery you had better fix your eye upon the white and take your aim distinctly and with skill! If an individual would win souls, he must bend his whole soul to it and make it the objective of his whole energy. Next to that we must take care, if we would have souls won, that we press upon them the Truths which God usually blesses. Shall I read to you the verse before my text? Here it is—"They spoke unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus, and the hand of the Lord was with them."

Now, if we do not preach Jesus Christ we shall not see souls saved. There are certain forms of doctrines which condemn themselves by working out their own extinction. Did you ever hear of a minister whose preaching leaned towards Unitarianism but what the congregation, sooner or later, began to diminish? Though many such preachers have been men of great ability, they have not, as a rule, been able to keep the dead thing on its feet! You shall go into our small towns and you may find an ancient chapel which was once an Independent, or a Presbyterian, or it may be a Baptist chapel. But if you see over the door, "Unitarians," you have, as a

rule, seen all that there is. There is neither church nor congregation worthy of the name—frequently the place is never opened at all and the grass grows knee deep on the path to the door.

Even when these little places are used, you will generally find that they contain half a dozen nobodies who think themselves everybody as to intellect and culture. It is a religion of the utmost value to spiders, for those insects are able to spin their webs in the meeting houses without fear. Who ever heard, who will ever hear of a Unitarian Whitfield, or a Socinian Moody gathering 20,000 people to listen to a Christless Gospel? It is a phenomenon which never has been seen and never will be! Men's instincts lead them to turn away from a creed which contains so little which can solace the troubled soul.

If we want souls saved, we must equally avoid the modern intellectual system in all its classes. "Oh," cries somebody, "you should hear the great Mr. Bombast. It is—Oh, I cannot tell you what it is, but something very wonderful! It is an intellectual treat." Just so. But how many conversions are worked by this wonderful display of genius? How many hearts are broken by fine rhetoric? How many broken hearts are healed by philosophy? So far as I have observed, I find that God does not save souls by intellectual treats. Certain views as to man's future are equally to be kept clear of, if you would be the means of conversion. Diminish your ideas of the wrath of God and the terrors of Hell—and in that proportion you will diminish the results of your work!

I could not conceive a Bunyan or a Baxter, or any other great soul-winner, falling into these new notions. Or if he did, that would be an end to his success. Other crotchets and novelties of doctrine are also to be left alone, for they are not likely to promote your objective, but will most probably divert men's attention from the vital point. Dear Brothers, if you want a harvest, look well to your seed. Time was when gardeners threw all the little potatoes on one side for seed and then they had bad crops. Now I have seen them pick out the very best and put them by. "We must have good seed," they say. If I had to sow my fields with wheat I would not take the tail corn. I should grudge no expense about seed, for it would be false economy to buy any but the very best. Go preach, teach and instruct with the best doctrine, even that of God's Word, for, depend upon it, though the result is not in *your* hands, yet it very much depends upon what you teach! O, eternal and ever blessed Spirit, guide Your servants into all Truth!

Next to this, if you want to win souls for Christ, feel a solemn alarm about them. You cannot make them feel if you do not feel yourself. Believe their danger, believe their helplessness, believe that only Christ can save them and talk to them as if you meant it. The Holy Spirit will move them by first moving you. If you can rest without their being saved they will rest, too. But if you are filled with an agony for them, if you cannot bear that they should be lost, you will soon find that they are uneasy, too. I hope you will get into such a state that you will dream about your child, or about your hearer perishing for lack of Christ—and start up at once and begin to cry, "O God, give me converts or I die!" Then you will have converts—there is no fear about that—God does not send travail pangs to

His servants without causing them to abound in spiritual children. There will be new births to God when you are agonizing for them!

But, let me add, *there must be much prayer*. Delight to be at Prayer Meetings where the Brethren will not let the Lord go except He bless them, when a Brother prays, choking as he speaks, tears rolling down his cheeks as he pleads with God to have mercy on the sons of men. I am always certain that sinners are ordained to be blessed when I see saints thus compelled to plead with God for them. In your closets, alone, at your family altars and in your gatherings for prayer, be importunate and the hand of the Lord must and will be with you. Cry aloud and spare not, plead as for your lives and bring forth your strong arguments, for only by prevailing with God will you be enabled to prevail with men.

Then there must be added to prayer *direct personal effort on the part of all of you*. Great numbers may be saved by my preaching if the Holy Spirit blesses it, but I shall expect larger numbers if you *all* turn preachers, if every Brother and Sister here becomes a witness for Christ. Are you lazy? Are any of you beginning to sleep? I charge you, wake up! By the love you bear to Jesus and by the love you bear to your fellow men, begin at once to seek the conversion of those who dwell around you. O my Beloved, do not become lukewarm! My heart fails me at the very thought! If you are earnest, I live—if you grow slothful, my spirit dies within me!

Last of all, if you want to see many converts, *expect them*. “According to your faith so be it unto you.” Look out for them. Believe that God will bless every sermon and go hunting, after the sermon, to see where the converts are. As a company of butlers and camp-followers generally follow every army—and after a battle go up to strip the slain—so if you cannot preach I would have you follow after the warriors to gather in the spoil. No one needed to urge the voracious spoilers to prowl over the field of Sedan or Gravelotte, but now it even seems necessary to persuade you to collect a far nobler prey.

Come up! Come up, you servants of the Lord and divide the spoil with the strong! Christ has fought your battle. His arrows have been sharp in the hearts of the King’s enemies—the two-edged sword has struck right and left—come up, you sons of Jacob, to the prey and gather in the converts as your spoil! Speak with the young converts, cheer the broken hearts, comfort the seekers and bring into His palace trophies for your Lord! Verily, I say unto you, if you look not for conversions, neither shall you obtain them! And you cannot blame the Lord—you are not straitened in Him—but in your own hearts!

God bless you, Beloved, and may we have a larger increase to this Church during the next month than we have had for years past, that our God may have greater praise.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 11.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—887, 450, 881.**

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

# NO ILLUSION

## NO. 526

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

***“And did not know that what was done by the angel was real,  
but thought he was seeing a vision.”  
Acts 12:9.***

FANCY, not fact! A dream! A delusion! That would be the world’s estimate of the most blessed Christian experience. “Fanaticism” is the name by which they call it. But call it by whatever name you please, the Divine Grace that interposes and rescues a sinner from the Law’s threats, from Satan’s tyranny, from the malice of men, and the fears of one’s own heart is matter of abundant joy. Then let it be witnessed by a life of undeviating principle and devoted service of God—sneer who may—suspect it who will—it is a noble triumph.

Such triumphs of Grace we have among us, and there are many who can witness to the fact. Still, dear Friends, not infrequently does it happen that you, whose salvation is our joy, of whom we speak with the utmost assurance, are *yourselves* in straits, exercised with fights without and fears within. And you are unable to satisfy your own consciences that the work *is* Divine. Observe now that Peter was brought out of prison by a great miracle, and yet it seemed to him as a vision or a dream. I need not recapitulate the circumstances. I have just read them in your hearing. This much I propose.

First, let me endeavor to *draw out some reflections from the narrative*. And then, secondly, I shall *take up the text itself and try to show you that there is no illusion, whatever you may think, in the mighty operations of the Lord*.

To begin—the first remark we think we are justified in making is this, that if ever our enemies can get hold of us, they will be quite sure to hold us as fast as they can. When Herod had been able to apprehend Peter, he was not content with ordinary means of keeping him in custody. He has Peter put into the strongest prison in Jerusalem. To make assurance doubly sure, he is chained not to one soldier, but to two. He was too great a prize to be readily lost. He anticipated as much satisfaction for himself from the applause of the people, for putting so eminent a servant of Christ as James to death, that he could not afford to lose an opportunity of getting further prey.

So he seizes upon him who was accounted a pillar in the Church with singular avidity. Mark you, Brothers and Sisters, if by any fault of our own we ever fall into the hands of our enemies, we need expect no mercy from them. And if without fault we are delivered for a little season into their hands, we have good reason to cry aloud to God, for whoever may be spared, the Christian never is. Men will forgive a thousand faults in others, but they will magnify the most trivial offense in the true follower of Jesus. Nor do I very much regret this. Let it be so and let it be a caution to us to walk very carefully before God in the land of the living.

You young members of the Church, who are often engaged in your worldly calling, where a great number of persons are watching for your falling, let this be a special reason to walk very humbly before God. If you walk carelessly, remember the lynx-eyed world will soon see it and then, with its hundred tongues, it will soon spread the story. You may say—“Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of Philistia rejoice.” But they *will* tell it. With many an addition of their own they will repeat the story. You shall hear them say—“Aha! Aha! So would we have it! All these Christians are inconsistent, they are all mere professors, they are hypocrites to a man, every one of them.”

Thus will much damage be done to our good cause and much insult offered to the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Cross of Christ is in itself an offense to the world. Let us take heed that we do not add any offense of our own. It is “to the Jew a stumbling block.” Let us mind that we put no stumbling blocks where there are enough already. “To the Greek it is foolishness.” Let us not add our folly to give point to the scorn with which the worldly deride the Gospel. Oh, how jealous should we be of ourselves, for we serve a jealous God! How rigid should we be with our consciences, for we serve One whose name is “Holy, Holy, Holy!”

Yes, in the presence of adversaries who will misrepresent our best deeds and twist our best endeavors into something selfish—impugning our motives where they cannot censure our actions—how circumspect should we be! We pilgrims travel as suspected persons through the world. Not only are we under surveillance, but there are more spies than we reckon. The espionage is everywhere—at home and abroad. If we fall into their hands we may sooner expect generosity from a wolf, or mercy from a fiend, than to find anything like patience with our infirmities from the men of the world, or anything like the hiding of our iniquities from the men who spice their infidelity towards God with scandals against His people.

The world is too much like the accursed Canaan who pointed to his father’s nakedness. We can only expect of our own Brothers and Sisters, the conduct of Shem and Japheth, who shall go backward to cast the mantle over us. Better far that we should so act and so live as to not ever *need*

this mantle of charity, but be able to say, with all humility, yet with holy courage—“Lord, You know that in this thing I have not sinned, but have walked uprightly in Your ways.” That is the first lesson which I feel bound to inculcate. “For what glory is it, if when you are buffeted for your *faults*, you shall take it patiently?”

The second lesson is this. When a case is put into God’s hands, He will certainly manage it well and He will interfere in sufficient time to bring His servants out of their distress. Peter’s case was put into God’s hands. The company that met at the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, were appealing to the great Advocate. If any man is in prison, “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” With their humble prayers and tears they were pleading for their Brother, whose valuable life they could ill afford to spare, for the infant Church needed the Apostles, at least for a season.

I think I hear them pleading one after the other—“Lord, remember Peter! You know how we love him. Our desires go up for him. James is dead. Alas, we took up his body and mourned him! Let not Peter be slain! Oh, take not You the prop from under us! Remove not the pillar from the wall, nor the stone from its place.” The Lord has heard their cries. Peter’s cause is in His hands. He will interfere in due time. The assurance that prayer is heard is the earnest that prayer will be answered. The petition is accepted, though no answer has yet been received. Well, we can leave it there.

But look, Brothers and Sisters, Peter has been lying in prison the whole week. The feast of unleavened bread is over, it is the last night, *the last night!* The evening has crept on. No, the dark hours have set in. It is midnight. The sun will soon be rising—in a few more hours—and then where is Peter? Lord, if You do not interfere, where is Peter? If You come not now to help him, his blood shall make the populace of Jerusalem glad while they gloat and delight in his slaughter! But just at that last and dark hour of the night, God’s opportunity overtook man’s extremity.

A light shone in the dungeon. Peter was awakened. God never is before His time. Nor is He ever too late. He comes just when He is needed. But look, there is Peter asleep! Peter is asleep, doing nothing, *doing nothing!* Well, and the best thing for him, too, for the case was put into *God’s* hands. I ask you, dear Friends, suppose Peter had been awake, what could he do? Had he been fretting and troubling himself, what good could he have done? Finding, therefore, that nothing remained for him, he just throws himself upon the mercy of God, shuts his eyes as peaceably as though he were to wake tomorrow to a wedding feast and not to his own execution.

Sleep on, blessed Peter! Well might Herod envy you that peace which his kingly robe could never give him. You sleep, though your hands are

chained, for your spirit is free. And it may be that in your dreams you are rejoicing “with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.” When the case is taken into God’s hands and you and I feel that we can do nothing for ourselves, we may take sleep in perfect quietude, for so He gives His Beloved sleep. While we sleep, His watchful eyes do keep their ceaseless guard. Jesus might seem on one occasion to be asleep, but you know where He slept—it was in the back part of the ship. Why there? Methinks He slept with His hand on the tiller, so that the moment He awoke, He might steer the vessel—

***“Though winds and waves assault your keel,  
He does preserve it, He does steer—  
Even when the boat seems most to reel.  
Storms are the triumphs of His art,  
Sure He may close His eyes, but not His heart.”***

God never sleeps. He is ever on the watch for His people. “Well, but,” says one, “surely the Lord should have interfered before this time, for Peter is not only asleep, but he is bound—bound to two soldiers! How can he escape?” Ah, that word “How?”—*that word “How?”* What a deal of mischief it has done to faith! Don’t you know that true faith has no such word in all her vocabulary? Faith never says “How?” God has said “It shall be,” faith believes it *will* be. As to *how* it shall be, that is God’s business, not mine. It is Unbelief that says “How? I do not see it. How? How? How can it be?” Hush, Unbelief! The fetters shall drop off, gates shall open of their own accord. The case is in God’s hands, Man! If it were in man’s hands it would fail, for cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.

The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh must crack. There must be impossibilities to humanity, but to Deity impossibilities are nothing. Be quiet, for the case is with Him. It may be the last moment. The Apostle may be asleep and he may be bound, but Peter must come out. For God has heard the prayer and Peter shall be free. Yet a third remark, we think, lies like a precious stone upon the very surface of this narrative. It is this—that when God shall come to deliver His people, all the circumstances which seem to go against their deliverance shall only tend to set forth the more His glory. What contempt *He* puts upon chains, prisons, cords, iron gates, wards—inner and outer wards—look how He breaks their bonds asunder and casts their cords from Peter!

I know of nothing that seems to illustrate more God’s splendid triumph over man’s cunning than the resurrection of Christ. “His disciples will steal Him away while men sleep.” “Well,” says Pilate, “you have a watch, go and make it as sure as you can.” He trusted to men, who were sure to do the thing well—the men that hated Him. They keep the watch, they roll the great stone, they seal it, they go home to their beds. Ah, men of the Sanhedrim, proud priests! You have done the work, go to your rest and say “This deceiver shall never shake the earth again, nor call us dumb

dogs that cannot bark, nor tell us that we are blind leaders of the blind. He is buried and the seal is on Him.”—

**“Vain the watch, the stone, the seal,  
Christ has broke the gates of Hell.”**

Look! He rises! And as the angel sits down upon the stone, he seems, in quiet sarcasm, to say to the priests, to earth, to Hell, “Roll it back again if you can, and seal it once more, for He is risen and has overcome the wiles of men.” So, Christian, rest assured that everything that looks black to your gaze now, shall only make it the brighter when God delivers you. Every dark and bending line shall surely meet in the center of His love, and but express more to your mind His power, His wisdom, His faithfulness, His Truth.

Furthermore, the whole story seems to teach us that no difficulty can ever occur which God cannot meet when He makes bare His arm. The chains are gone, the warders are passed, but there is that iron gate. Oh, that iron gate! I think there are some of you tonight that are troubled about it. God has been helping you. You have had faith up till now, but you have got to the iron gate. Oh, if you could but pass that—it leads into the city—all would be well. But that iron gate! Some of you get dreading the iron gate a month before you get to it. You get to fretting and troubling yourself for three months, perhaps, about the iron gate. You do for months as those holy women did for hours, who went out at break of day to the sepulcher, and as they went along they said, “Who shall roll away the stone?”

There was no stone to roll away! And when *you* go to this place, you will find that there is no iron gate there, or if there should be, it will open of its own accord. Oh, how often have we had to wonder at our own folly and we have said, “Well, I will never do that again. I will never more borrow misery. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. I will never go out to get a loan of sorrow for tomorrow.” But alas, we have done it the very next day.

Wait, wait, O Christian, on the Lord! Leave all anxiety about the iron Gates to Him! Since the day when you did believe in Him and put your soul into His hands by prayer, it has been God’s cause, not your cause. It has been God’s work to deliver you and not your work—

**“The gates of brass before Him burst,  
The iron fetters yield.”**

There is yet this one further remark. See, Beloved, see clearly, see indisputably—the omnipotence of *prayer*. If all those disciples had sworn an oath that they would get Peter free, they could not have accomplished it. What could they do? Herod has an army. The prison is strong. The guards are not to be bribed. The last night is come. What can they do? There was only one weapon they could use and that was hanging at their girdles—the weapon of *all-prayer*.

They told *Jesus* about it. When every other gate was shut, there was the gate to Heaven open—so they sent messages up to Him who is able to loose the prisoners, and to their own surprise Peter is loosed. Have not we, in this Church, often felt the power of prayer? I sometimes fear, Beloved, we are lagging here now—lagging in prayer. I may be permitted to say there are some of you I do not see so often at Prayer Meetings as I would wish. It is a busy time of the year, I know, and therefore I make plenty of excuses for you. But when it was not so busy I did not see you!

And then there are some who grow dull in their recollections of fact. At Park Street have not we had seasons when our hearts were hot within us, when we could not speak because we thought, “Surely God is in this place”? It seemed an awful place to us. We were prevailing with God, we were drawing down the blessings and those blessings continued up till now as the result of earnest supplication. What simple prayers they were! Strangers that came in found much fault, but the Lord did not. There were often things said that were not very grammatical. But what mattered it if the *heart* was in the thing?

We stormed Heaven’s gates and down came legions of mercies to us. We want more prayer, more prayer! I am always glad to hear that your special Prayer Meetings and your social assemblies for supplication are well attended and that there is a desire among the members to have such Prayer Meetings often. I am sure the elders of the Church will join with me in advocating and encouraging them. We will lend the rooms connected with this Tabernacle, convicted that more we meet together and more we supplicate the Throne of Grace, the blessings will come down.

There are a few Brothers and Sisters who have met every morning for these last four years, or five years it may be. They meet now every morning, wet or dry, winter or summer, every morning in the Chapel at Park Street, always praying for our prosperity. Their numbers are few to what they used to be. We have not got the fire now that we once had, I fear. May the Lord put the embers together and fan them with His breath and make them blaze again! And then our ministry shall be sent down from Heaven with the Holy Spirit and the multitudes shall hear the voice of God speaking in their hearts.

Brethren, pray for us, pray for your children, your households—take everything to God in prayer, no matter how hard, how intricate, how difficult. If there is a knot you cannot untie, cut it with prayer. God knows how to deliver you when you cannot deliver yourself. Be much in supplication, for this will make you mighty, make you prevalent with men when you have prevailed with the Maker of men. Such are the reflections that occur to us from the narrative.

**II.** But now I turn more closely to my text itself. When Peter came out of prison, his deliverance was so marvelous that *he* did not know whether

it was true or whether it was a vision. Like the Psalm which says, "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream." Thus when a sinner is saved, pardoned, justified, he is utterly astonished and thinks it cannot be true, because it is so good. The astonishment lies in this—"It cannot be true," says he, "that I am saved. I! I! I! If it had been all the people in the world, I could have believed it, but can it be that *I* am delivered? How is it that He should have mercy upon *me*? I, that was so lately in fetters? That a week ago could blaspheme? That a day or two ago could have talked all the idlest jests and could have lived upon the foulest of earth's pleasures? That I, *I* should be saved—delivered from sin, though so filthy—set free, though so fast bound?"

I must try to interpret this peculiar reflection—this dream-like feeling. The reality of God's mercy is only apprehended by *faith*. And because faith has to do with things not seen, you are apt to throw suspicions on its evidence. You see no tangible instrumentality equal to the mighty task. Our ruin was, in some sense, effected by degrees. We can trace the course of evil. The soul of man is like a temple in ruins. The temple built for God has become an abode for unclean spirits. God *suddenly* deserted it, but it *gradually* fell into its present dilapidation and uncleanness.

The *eyes* that were once as lamps which flashed with light and love, have become contracted and their habit now is to love darkness rather than light. The *tongue* that was once a fountain that did send forth sweet water, pure and refreshing, has become as a noxious spring whose bitter streams savor of enmity to God and envy of the Brothers and Sisters. The *heart* that was once as the holy place of all our frame, where the beauty of holiness reposed in heavenly calm, has now become the place of idols and the abode of secret abominations. The very *breath* that sent up its sacred incense in rich perfume, acceptable to God, has grown corrupt and breathes out its baneful poison and its foul impurities.

Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth? Will He take up His abode with us? Shall the change be worked in the twinkling of an eye? Does it suffice that the Word sown in weakness, springs up with power of the Holy Spirit? Man fallen may baffle us, but man redeemed is a mystery we cannot fathom. It seems ever to mere mortal sense as a vision, the dream of poets, or the work of imagination. But, Beloved, why marvel? The angel of the Covenant has descended from Heaven to earth and you knew not it was he till he loosed your bonds, broke up your path, or rather opened every door with the keys that hang at his girdle and gave you knowledge of salvation by the remission of your sins.

Then you thought it was a vision, because you had not known redemption except that your own soul was redeemed. You had not understood salvation except that you were yourself redeemed. And that matchless secret of the new birth penetrated your understanding in the same hour

that it was worked upon your own heart. Thus it is commonly with us, Brothers and Sisters. We see, as a main fact, the downward course by which we corrupted our ways when we were dead in sin. But the hour we first believed, that blessed season when we were translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son seems like a vision to us.

Another reason why it appears so visionary to us is because no forethought or intention of our own helped and availed. How this is true with some of you in one way. Never were your purposes less inclined to seek the Lord than they were when He found you. Your plans were broken off before you were aware of it. You were asleep when the angel entered your cell. And you were dreaming of other things than those that were in store for you. Perhaps you dreamed that the bolts were not heavy, the bars were not thick, the locks were not fast, and you might get up and let yourself out whenever you liked.

It was only when you were delivered that you saw how fast you had been held. The rescued soul, alone, can know how "Satan binds our captive minds fast in his slavish chains." And in yet another way some of us have proved the same. We had our schemes to get loose and many a bitter day we had tried and toiled in vain, till at length we had fallen asleep in blank despair, dreaming of nothing but our fearful doom. When the deliverance came in such an unheard of manner, we could scarcely persuade ourselves it could be true. And so it is, Brothers and Sisters, we never believe anything to be so real as what we see with our own eyes, and work with our own hands.

And I suppose it is just the natural idea which flesh and blood is prone to take of the things of God. They seem more like a vision than the work of a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. And still, I scarcely think I have probed the matter to the bottom yet. The simplicity of God's method of Divine Grace has not ceased to be a marvel. The Jews seek after a sign. And there is something of the Jewish nature about us all. At least I find a host of exercised souls who are asking for signs. Well, and the Greeks, who are rather a refined class of unbelievers—they seek after wisdom. They want some extraordinary endowment. And this craving has not died out among us.

For the first, I hear one say, "I am afraid, Sir, that my experience is only a dream. I want a sign to give me assurance." Let me tell you that simple faith gives clearer evidence than any fancy that could possess your mind. Are you still bound with the chains of your sins? Are you still shut up in the stronghold of unbelief? Have you never seen the key in the Savior's hand that opened the door to set you free? "Oh, yes," you say, "but I am afraid it was only a vision, for I am but a poor, helpless creature after all." And what else could you be? You are never so safe as when you are emp-

tied of all confidence in self. Paul could boast of extraordinary revelations, but the Lord sent him a thorn in the flesh, lest he should be puffed up by them.

Then, again, there are those who show more anxiety after gifts than after graces. And to them all the mercy they have received seems but a vision because they are not raised up above common mortals. After this extraordinary release of Peter, you do not find any display. The Apostle was but a poor, trembling Believer. He would not have Mary or the damsel Rhoda talk too loudly, or express their gladness too cheerfully—he beckoned them with his hand to hold their peace. He just declared how the Lord had brought him out, and then he departed and went into another place.

Brethren, I would have you make your boast in the Lord and speak of what He has done for your souls. But I would warn you not to vaunt your experience, or attempt to magnify yourselves as if we, any of us, had herein matter for glory. The very manner of God's delivering Grace is to hide pride from our eyes. And the reality is none the less palpable, because the angel did all for us to show his strength and then withdrew from us that we should feel our own weakness.

Once again—the suddenness of this deliverance will surprise you. “So Suddenly, too!” It seems like a vision. We have often known persons suddenly renewed in heart that would not believe it. They knew it was so, but still, in thinking it over, it did seem as though it could not possibly be true that they were saved. They had to rub their eyes again to see whether they were not asleep and dreaming. It was much too good to be true and happened all so quickly. The greatness of the mercy has made them stagger. That God should just forgive them and let them into Heaven would have been marvelous, but that He should make them His children, His sons, heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ—this surpassed all belief!

Their fears had got such hold of them that they were ready to die. But little prepared to be saved. Their convictions had been terrible, but now the joy is so excessive they cannot think but that it must be all presumption, all a dream. Many and many have there been who have come to the pastor and said, “Oh I had such joys! I did believe in Christ, I know I did. I cast myself wholly on Him and I felt such a change. I became so different a person from what I had ever been before, but now I come to look back upon it, I cannot think it was true, it must have been a vision, it cannot possibly be a matter of fact.”

Now, dear Friends, lest you should give way to this apprehension too much, let me remind you that inasmuch as this is a great thing, it is all the better evidence that it comes from God. So great a river may well have a rapid tide. So glaring a sun may well shine with uncommon splendor. The great God does not do little acts of Divine Grace. His works are all

great, sought out by all them that fear Him. Inasmuch as you confess that you are a great sinner and therefore this is a surprising thing, let me remind you that this is the ordinary way in which God works to give great mercies to great sinners. He does not give His favors to men who think they deserve them.

He searches the heart with a glance and He abhors the proud. But to those who are made to feel that there is no good thing in them and rest on His Grace because they have nothing else on which to depend, the mercy comes and the prisoners are loosed. Dear Friends, do you not remember that the Gospel that we preach is a very great Gospel? Is it not called in Scripture, "The great salvation"? Now when you find your salvation to be great, do not shrink back and say, "Oh, it cannot be genuine because it is great." It would not be the genuine Gospel if it were little. If it were not a surprising wonderful thing, if it were not superlatively astonishing, it would not be the Gospel.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are My ways your ways, says the Lord. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are My thoughts above your thoughts and My ways above your ways." Besides, remember, my Brothers and Sisters, that Jesus died in pangs unutterable on the Cross. Did He die there to buy farthing mercies, to purchase little favors for little sinners? The blood of bulls and goats might achieve some little, but the blood of Him who was the only begotten of the Father cannot have been shed for trifles. Therefore consider that this must have been true, because it is so great, so strange, so surpassing all your thoughts. God help you to say with the Apostle Peter, "Now I know that God has sent His angel."

Thus shall you know for sure that the Lord has sent His angel and has delivered you out of the hands of your enemies and from all the expectation of your doubts and fears. I will tell you how to prove the reality of it. If you should fear that your feelings have been all a dream, come with me, hand in hand, and let us go and prove the authenticity of our faith *at the Cross*. You and I, a pair of sinners, full of sin, covered with the leprosy of it from head to foot—let us go and stand at Calvary's Cross. There He hangs! His hands and feet are pierced. The blood distils.

Jesus! O my Lord! For whom do You die? "For sinners," He says. Here are two, most gracious Master! Remember us when You come into Your kingdom! I think I hear Him say, "You shall be with Me in Paradise," for never souls breathed that prayer in humble faith and were unheard. Jesus, we look to Your wounds and they are clefts in the rock into which we fly like doves, or if we may not compare ourselves thereunto, we will fly as ravens and we will hide till the tempest is over. Your blood we trust to redeem us, Your merit to clothe us from head to foot, Your plea to preserve

us, Your strong arm to keep us, Your love to give us life now, and in eternity!

And now, before I close, let me tell you that the picture may be inverted. If there are those to whom reality seems to be a dream, what multitudes there are, on the other hand, to whom mere dreams appear to be real and true. Ah, such dreaming is the saddest thing I know. And about the hardest task it is that I ever tried—to awake such slumberers from their delusions. Hear me, you that seek out your own inventions, yet submit not yourselves to the righteousness of God! Do you believe in God? Yes? Then the god you believe in is not the God who created Heaven and earth, but the god of your own imagination.

Do you profess Christ? The Christ you profess is not the Son of the Father, but the child of your own fancy. And do I hear you talk of your experience? Alas, then, it is not the witness of the Holy Spirit, but the incoherent ramblings of a delirious brain. O you poor deluded souls. Who put your thoughts for God's counsels, your devices for His decrees, and your efforts for His interposition. You "shall be as a dream of a night vision. It shall even be as when a hungry man dreams and, behold, he eats. But he awakes and his soul is empty. Or as when a thirsty man dreams and, behold, he drinks. But he awakes and, behold, he is faint and his soul has appetite."

Christians you call yourselves today, but Christ shall say to you another day, "I never knew you." Ah and it is true, for you never knew Him. Do you dream of peace? Without pardon it is a dream. Do you dream of Heaven? Without holiness it is a dream. Do you dream of joy at God's right hand? But you are not His people. You have never renounced the world, overcome the Wicked One, confessed the faith, or followed the Master in the regeneration, which is the earnest of a blessed resurrection. Oh, my Hearers, consider the words, I beseech you—"As a dream when one awakes, so, O Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image."

Here are many, I dare say, who do not understand what I have been talking about. God give them understanding. Sinner, you must either be in Christ, or perish. Remember, Sinners, tonight there is one of two things for you—either to be *shut up* in the prison of Hell, or else to be *delivered* from the prison of sin. Your destiny hangs here—salvation or damnation—life or death. Dare you die, Sinner, dare you die? Dare you die with your sins about you, like millstones strapped about your neck—dare you die? No! But when the time comes for you to die, you will say, "Now I cannot live, I must not live and I dare not die."

Would you like to be able to die peacefully, Sinner, and to rise joyfully and to reign forever hereafter? Trust Christ with your soul and He will save you. He, the Son of God, begotten of the Father. The man of Nazareth, conceived of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary. He, God

over all, blessed forever, and yet your Brother, born to bear your sins! He says, "Trust Me and I will save you." O may His electing love move the hand of His effectual Grace to incline you now to trust in Him! And that done, you are saved and out of this House you may go a lawfully delivered captive, though perhaps you will scarcely know what it is and know not whether it is true that is done unto you.

But it *is* true for all that. He that believes on Him is not condemned and he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God. O that I might speak in God's name to some of you who perhaps may never hear my voice again! I will meet you, as the spirit said to Brutus, on the plains I will meet you another day, each one of you. And if you live and die without trusting in that Lord whose open wounds I have tried to set before your eyes, whose bleeding heart, streaming with His life blood, I have tried to set all warm before you—if you die without Him, on your own heads be your destruction!

You have heard the Gospel—O that you would turn at its rebuke! Trust Christ! The feeblest touch of the hem of His garment—a *look* to Him—and you are made whole! As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so may he lift up the Cross on high. O lift it up, my Brothers and Sisters, you that know Christ! Christian men and women, lift up that Cross in your families. It is mine to lift up here and to cry with the Hebrew Prophet, "Look, look and live!" Sin-bitten, covered with the wounds of sin—LOOK!—It is all He asks.

"Look and live," is written on the clouds of Heaven, legible only by the light they give. And there, too, stand the soul-quickening words—"Believe and live." Leave your doings for Christ's doings—not your tears but Christ's tears, not your blood but His blood, not your groans but His groans, not your penance but His agonies. Come and rest in Him! Join with me in saying, from your heart—

***"My faith does lay her hand  
On that dear head of Yours,  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And here confess my sin.  
My soul looks back to see  
The burden You did bear  
When hanging on the accursed Tree,  
And hopes her guilt was there.  
Believing, we rejoice  
To see the curse removed,  
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,  
And sing His bleeding love."***

The Lord bless you, the God of Heaven and earth bless you, from this time forth and forever. Amen.

# THE SPECIAL PRAYER MEETING

## NO. 1247

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 20, 1875,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“When he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary  
the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where  
many were gathered together praying.”***

***Acts 12:12.***

IT was a great wonder that the infant Church of Christ was not destroyed. Truly, she was like a lone lamb in the midst of furious wolves, without either earthly power, prestige or patronage to protect her, yet, as though she wore a charmed life, she escaped from the hosts of her cruel foes. Had not this child been something more than others it had been slain like the innocents at Bethlehem—but being Heaven-born it escaped the fury of the destroyer. It is worth while asking, however—with what weapons did this Church protect herself? For *we* may very wisely use the same. She was preserved in her utmost danger from overwhelming destruction—what was her defense? Where did she find shield and buckler?

The answer is—in prayer—“many were gathered together praying.” Whatever may be the danger of the times, and each age has its own peculiar hazard, we may rest in calm assurance that our defense is of God and we may avail ourselves of that defense in the same manner as the early Church did, namely, by abounding in prayer. However poisonous the viper, prayer can extract its sting. However fierce the lion, prayer can break its teeth. However terrible the fire, prayer can quench the violence of the flame. But this is not all—the new-born Church not only escaped, but it multiplied! From being as a grain of mustard seed, when it could all assemble in the upper room, it has now become a great tree! Lo, it covers the nations! The birds of the air, in *flocks*, find shelter in its branches.

Why this wondrous increase? What made it grow? Outward circumstances were unfavorable to its progress—upon what nourishment has it been fed? What means were taken with this tender shoot that has been so speedily developed? Whatever means were used of old, we may wisely use them today, also, to strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die, and to develop that which is hopeful in our midst. The answer is—the fact that on all occasions, “many were gathered together *praying*.”

While praying, the Spirit of God came down upon them. While praying, the Spirit often separated this man and that for special work. While praying their hearts grew warm with inward fire. While praying their tongues were unloosed and they went forth to speak to the people. And while praying the Lord opened to them the treasures of His Grace. By prayer they were protected and by prayer they grew. If our Churches are to live and grow, they must be watered from the same source. “Let us pray,” is one of

the most necessary watchwords which I can suggest to Christian men and women, for if we will but pray, prayer will fill up the pools in the valley of Baca, yes, and open to us all the channels of that river of God which is full of water, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God.

We have heard a great deal of talk in certain sections of the Church about going back to primitive times. They are introducing to us all sorts of superstitious inventions, under cover of the customs of the early Church. The plea is cunningly chosen, for primitive practices have great weight with true Christians. But the weak point of the argument is that, unfortunately, what they call the *early* Church is not early enough! If we must have the early Church held up as a model, let us have the earliest Church of all! If we are to have fathers, let us go back to Apostolic fathers! And if we are to have ritual, rule and ceremonies modeled on strict precedent, let us go back to the original precedent recorded in the Holy Scriptures.

We, who are called Baptists, have not the slightest objection to go back in everything to the Apostolic habit and practice—we reverence the real primitive method and desire to follow the customs of the true early Church. And if we could see every ordinance restored to the exact mode in which it was practiced by the saints immediately after the Ascension of our Lord, and during Apostolic times, we would clap our hands with delight! 'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished. To see the early Church alive, again, would cause us unfeigned satisfaction. Especially upon this point would we imitate the early Church—we would have it said of us—“Many were gathered together praying.”

May we have much prayer, much household prayer, much believing prayer, much prevalent prayer—and then we shall obtain great blessings from the Lord!

**I.** This morning my earnest desire is to stir up the Church of Jesus Christ to increased prayerfulness. I have taken this text, as it furnishes me with one or two points of great interest and is full of practical suggestions. The first is this, LET US NOTICE THE IMPORTANCE WHICH THE EARLY CHURCH ATTRIBUTED TO PRAYER and to Prayer Meetings. Let this be a *lesson* to us. As soon as we begin to read in Acts and continually as we read on in that record, we note that meetings for prayer had become *a standing institution in the Church*. We read nothing of “masses,” but we read much of Prayer Meetings. We hear nothing of Church festivals, but we read often of meeting together for prayer.

It is said that Peter considered the thing—I fancy that he considered it all round, and thought, “Where shall I go?” And he remembered that it was Prayer Meeting night down at John Mark’s mother’s house—and there he would go because he felt that there he should meet with true Brethren. In those days they did things by plan and order, according to that text, “Let all things be done decently and in order,” and I have no doubt that it had been duly arranged that the meeting should be held that evening at the house of John Mark’s mother. Therefore Peter went there and found, as he probably expected, that there was a Prayer Meeting going on.

They were not met to hear a sermon. It is most proper that we should very frequently assemble for that purpose, but this was distinctly a meeting where, “many were gathered together praying.” Praying was the business on hand. I do not know that they even had an address, though some will come to the Prayer Meeting if the pastor is present to speak. But you see James, who is generally thought to have been pastor of the Church at Jerusalem, was not there, for Peter said, “Go show these things to James,” and most probably none of the Apostles were there, because Peter added, “and to the Brethren,” and I suppose by that he meant the Brethren of the Apostolic college.

The eminent speaking Brethren seem to have been all away and, perhaps, no one expounded or exhorted that night, nor was there any need, for they were all too much engrossed in common intercession. The meeting was convened for *praying*, and this, I say, was a regular institution of the Christian Church and ought always to be kept up. There should be meetings wholly devoted to prayer! There is a serious flaw in the arrangements of a Church when such gatherings are omitted or placed in a secondary position. These Prayer Meetings should be kept to their objective—and their great attraction should be prayer, itself. An address if you like. A few burning words to stir up prayer if you like. But if you cannot have them, do not look upon speech-making as at all necessary!

Let it be a standing ordinance in the Church that at certain times and occasions many shall meet together to pray, and supplication shall be their only objective! The private Christian will read, hear and meditate, but none of these can be a substitute for *prayer*. The same Truth holds good upon the larger scale—the Church should listen to her teachers and receive edification from Gospel ordinances—but she must also pray. Nothing can compensate for the neglect of devotion.

It appears, however, that while Prayer Meetings were a regular institution, the *prayer was sometimes made special*, for we read that prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God, “for him,” that is, for Peter. It adds greatly to the interest and not a little to the fervency of prayer when there is some great object to pray for. The Brothers and Sisters would have prayed if Peter had been out of prison, but seeing that he was *in* prison, and likely to be put to death, it was announced that the Prayer Meeting would be especially to pray for Peter, that the Lord would deliver His servant, or give him Grace to die triumphantly. And this special subject gave enthusiasm to the assembly.

Yes, they prayed fervently, for I find the margin of the fifth verse runs thus, “Instant and earnest prayer was made of the Church for him.” They prized the man, for they saw what wonders God had worked by his ministry and they could not let him die, if prayer would save him. When they thought of Peter and how his bleeding head might be exhibited to the populace on the morrow, they prayed heart and soul—and each succeeding intercessor threw more and more fervency into his pleading. The united cry went up to Heaven, “Lord, spare Peter!” I think I can hear their sobs and cries even now. God grant that our Churches may often turn

their regular Prayer Meetings into gatherings with a special objective, for then they will become more real.

Why not pray for a certain missionary, or some chosen district, or class of persons, or order of agencies? We should do well to turn the grand artillery of supplication against some special point of the enemy's walls. It is clear that these friends *fully believed that there was power in prayer*, for, Peter being in prison, they did not meet together to arrange a plan for getting him out. Some wise Brother might have suggested the bribing of the guards and another might have suggested something else. But they had done with planning and betook themselves to *praying*. I do not find that they met to petition Herod. It would have been of no use to ask that monster to relent—they might as well request a wolf to release a lamb which he has seized.

No, the petitions were to Herod's Lord and Master, to the great Invisible God. It looked as if they could do nothing, but they felt they could do *everything* by prayer! They thought little of the fact that 16 soldiers had him in charge. What are 16 guards? If there had been 16,000 soldiers, these believing men and women would still have prayed Peter out! They believed in God, that He would do wonders! They believed in prayer, that it had an influence with God and that the Lord listened to the believing petitions of His servants. They met together for prayer in no dubious mood. They knew what they were doing and had no question as to the power which lay in supplication! Oh, let it never be insinuated in the Christian Church that prayer is a good thing and a useful exercise to ourselves, but that it would be superstition to suppose that it affects the mind of God!

Those who say this have foolishly thought to please us by allowing us their scientific toleration to go on with our devotions, but do they think we are idiots, that we would continue asking for what we knew we should not receive? That we would keep on praying if it would be of no more use than whistling to the winds? They must think us devoid of reason if they imagine that we shall be able to keep up prayer as a pious *exercise* if we once concede that it can have no result with God! As surely as any law of Nature can be ascertained and proven, we know both by observation and experiment that God assuredly hears prayer and, instead of its being a doubtful agency, we maintain prayer to be the most potent and unfailing force beneath the skies!

We say in the proverb, "man proposes but God disposes," and *here* is the power of prayer, that it does not dally with the proposer but goes at once to the Disposer and deals with the First Cause! Prayer moves that arm which moves all things. O Brothers and Sisters, may we gather power in prayer by having faith in it! Let us not say, "What can prayer do?" but, "What cannot it do?" for all things are possible to him that believes! No wonder Prayer Meetings flag, if faith in prayer is weak. And no wonder if conversions and revivals are scarce where intercession is neglected.

This prayer in the early Church, we remark, in the next place, was *industriously continued*. As soon as Herod had put Peter into prison the Church began to pray. Herod took care that the guards should be suffi-

cient in number to keep good watch over his victim, but the saints of God set their watches, too. As in times of war, when two armies lie near each other, they both set their sentries, so in this case Herod had his sentries of the night to keep the watch, and the Church had its pickets, too. Prayer was made of the Church without ceasing—as soon as one little company were compelled to separate to go to their daily labor, they were relieved by another company—and when some were forced to take rest in sleep, others were ready to take up the blessed work of supplication.

Thus both sides were on the alert and the guards were changed both by day and by night. It was not hard to foresee which side would win the victory, for truly, except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain! And when, instead of helping to keep the castle, God sends angels to open doors and gates, then we may be sure that the watchmen will wake in vain, or fall into a dead slumber! Continually, therefore, the people of God pleaded at His Mercy Seat. Relays of petitioners appeared before the Throne. Some mercies are not given to us except in answer to importunate prayer. There are blessings which, like ripe fruit, drop into your hands the moment you touch the bough. But there are others which require you to shake the tree again and again, until you make it rock with the vehemence of your exercise, for then, only, will the fruit fall down.

My Brothers and Sisters, we must cultivate importunity in prayer! While the sun is shining and when the sun has gone down, still should prayer be kept up and fed with fresh fuel, so that it burns fiercely and flames on high like a beacon fire blazing towards Heaven! I would pause here a minute and urge my dear Brethren to attach as much importance to prayer as the early Church did. You cannot think too much of it. Believing prayer, dictated of the Spirit and presented through Jesus Christ, is, today, the power of the Church, and we cannot do without it! Some look at her active agencies and prize them, and they suppose that prayer might be dispensed with.

You have seen the threshing machine going along the country road from farm to farm. In front there is a huge, black engine which toils along the road. And then behind you see the machine which actually does the threshing. A novice might say, "I will hire the threshing machine, but I do not want your engine. That is an expensive affair, which consumes coal and makes smoke. I do not require it. I will have the machine which actually does the work, but I do not need the engine." Such a remark would be absurd, for of what use would the machine be to you if the motive power were gone?

Prayer in the Church is the steam engine which makes the wheels revolve and really does the work! Therefore we cannot do without it. Suppose a foreman were employed by some great builder and sent out to manage works at a distance. He has to pay the men their wages weekly and he is very diligent in doing so. He neglects none of his duty towards the men, but he forgets to communicate with headquarters—he neither writes to his employer, nor goes to the bank for cash to go on with. Is this wise? When the next payday comes round, I am afraid he will find that,

however diligent he may have been towards the men, he will be in a dire predicament, for he will have no silver or gold to hand out because he has forgotten to apply to headquarters.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, the minister does, as it were, distribute the portions to the people, but if he does not apply to his Master to get them, he will have nothing to distribute. Never sever the connection between your soul and God! Keep up a constant communication with Heaven or your communications with earth will be of little worth. To cease from prayer is to stop the vital stream upon which all your energy is dependent—you may go on preaching and teaching, and giving away tracts, and whatever you do—but nothing can possibly come of it when the power of Almighty God has ceased to be with you!

Thus much on our first point. May the Holy Spirit use it and awaken the Churches to unanimous, intense, importunate intercession.

**II.** Next we notice THE NUMBER ASSEMBLED which is *a rebuke to some here present*. The text says, “*Many* were gathered together praying.” Somebody said the other day of Prayer Meetings, that two or three thousand people had no more power in prayer than two or three. I think that is a grave mistake in many ways, but clearly so in reference to each other. For have you never noticed that when many meet together praying, warmth of desire and glow of earnestness are greatly increased? Perhaps two or three might have been all dull, but out of a larger number someone, at least, is a warm-hearted Brother, and sets all the rest on a flame.

Have you not observed how the requests of one will lead another on to ask for yet greater things? How one Christian Brother suggests to another to increase his petition and so the petitions grow by the mingling of heart with heart, and the communion of spirit with spirit? Besides, faith is a cumulative force. “According to your faith so is it done unto you,” is true to one, to two, to 20, to twenty thousand! And 20,000 times the force will be the result of 20,000 times the faith! Rest assured that while two or three have power with God in their measure, two or three hundred have still more! If great results are to come, they will be accompanied by the prayers of *many*.

The brightest days of all will never come except by the unanimous prayer of the *entire* Church, for as soon as Zion travails—not one or two in her midst, but the whole Church travails—then shall she bring forth her children. Therefore I do earnestly pray, Brethren, to make the numbers gathered in prayer as great as they can be. Of course, if we come together listlessly—if each heart is cold and dead—there is only so much more coldness and deadness. But taking for granted that each one comes in the spirit of prayer, the gathering of numbers is like adding firebrand to firebrand and piling on the burning coals—and we are likely to have a heat like that of coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame.

Now this is *not a very common occurrence* and why is it that so many Prayer Meetings are so very thin? I know some places in London where they talk about giving up the Prayer Meeting, where instead of two services during the week they have compassion on their poor overworked

minister and only wish him to hold forth for a few minutes at a sort of mongrel service, half Prayer Meeting and half lecture. Poor dear things, they cannot manage to get out to worship more than once in the week, they are so much occupied. This is not in poor Churches, but in respectable Churches.

Gentlemen who do not get home from the City and have their dinner till seven o'clock cannot be expected to go out to a Prayer Meeting—who would have the barbarity to suggest such a thing! They work so extremely hard all the day, so much harder than any of the working men, that they say, "I pray you have me excused." Churches in the suburbs, as a general rule, have miserable Prayer Meetings because of the unfortunate circumstances of the members who happen to be burdened with so much riches that they cannot meet for prayer as poor people do. Some of you who have your delightful villas are very careful of your health and never venture out into the evening air to Prayer Meetings, though I rather suspect that your parties and socials are still kept up.

I say this not with particular reference to anybody, except if it happens to refer to you, and if it does refer to you, the reference is very special. After all, dear Friends, this is a personal matter. It is of no use my standing here or you sitting there and complaining that so few come to the Prayer Meeting—how are we to increase the number? I would suggest to you a way of increasing it, namely, by coming yourself! You may be aware, perhaps, that one and one make two, and that another one will make three, so that by additions of *ones* we shall gradually get up to thousands! The largest numbers are made up of units, so that the practical point of all is, if choice blessings are to be gained by numbers coming together for prayer, the way for me to increase the number is to go there myself. And if I can induce a friend to go, also, so much the better.

I have a very high opinion of the early Church, but I am not sure that quite so many would have been gathered together that night if it had not been that Peter was in prison. They said to one another, "Peter is in prison, and in danger of his life, let us go to the Prayer Meeting and plead for him." Did you ever know a minister who was often laid aside by illness and always found his people pray better when he was ill? Did it ever strike you that one reason for his being afflicted was God's desire to stir the hearts of his people to intercede for him? Their prayers are better than his preaching and so his Lord says to him, "I can do without you. I will put you on the bed of pain and make the people pray."

Now, I have an opinion that the best way for these people to really do good for their pastor is to pray that they always be kept in a right condition and may not need his sickness as a stimulus to prayer! If Churches become slack in prayer, those whom they most value may be laid aside, or even taken away by death—and then they will cry to God in the bitterness of their souls! Could we not do without such flogging? Some horses want to be reminded, now and then, with a little touch of the whip. If they did not need the lash they would not get it. And so it may be with us, that we need Church trials to keep us up to the mark in prayer—and if we need

them we shall have them! But if we are alive and earnest in prayer, it may be that Peter will not get into prison and some other trying things will not happen, either.

**III.** The third thing in our text is THE PLACE OF ASSEMBLY. That we will dwell upon this morning as *a suggestion*. “The house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark.” This was a Prayer Meeting held in a private house and I want to urge all my Brothers and Sisters here to consecrate their houses by frequently using them for Prayer Meetings. This would have an advantage about it—it would avoid all smell of superstition. There still lingers, among people, the notion that *buildings* may be consecrated and rendered *holy*. Well, it is so babyish an idea that I should have hoped the manliness of this generation, let alone anything else, would have given up the notion!

How can it be that inside four brick walls there should be more holiness than outside, or that prayer offered in some particular seat should be more acceptable than prayer offered anywhere else? Behold, this day God hears prayer wherever there is a true heart—

**“Wherever we seek Him, He is found  
And every place is hallowed ground.”**

Meetings for prayer, held at the house of the mother of Mark, at *your* mother’s house, at your brother’s house, at your own house, will do much to be a plain protest against the superstition which reverences holy places. There was a meetness in their meeting in this particular house, the house of Mark’s mother, for that family stood in a very dear relationship to Peter.

Do you know who Mark was, in reference to Peter? If you turn to Peter’s First Epistle, in the fifth chapter, you will read, “Marcus, my son.” Ah, I am sure Mark would pray for Peter, because Peter was his spiritual father! I should not wonder but what Mark and his mother were both converted on the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached that famous sermon. Anyway, Mark was converted under Peter, and so both he and his mother often invited Peter to their house and when he was imprisoned they had the special Prayer Meetings at their house, because they loved him greatly. There is sure to be prayer for the pastor in the house where the pastor has been blessed to the family. He need not be afraid but what his own sons and daughters in the faith will be sure to pray for him!

These meetings had a good effect upon Mrs. Mark’s house. She, herself, no doubt, had a blessing, but her son, Mark, obtained peculiar favor of the Lord. Naturally he was not all we should like him to have been, for though his uncle Barnabas was very fond of him, Paul, who was a very good judge, could not put up with his instability. But he obtained so great a blessing from the Lord that he became, according to the unanimous tradition of the Church, the writer of the Gospel of Mark! He might have been a very weak and useless Christian if it had not been that the Prayer Meetings at his mother’s house warmed his heart. And he might never have used his graphic pen for the Lord had not the conversation of the good

people who came to his house instructed him as to the facts which he afterwards recorded in the precious Gospel which bears his name.

The house received a blessing, and so will you, too, if your house shall be, every now and then, opened for special prayer. I urge upon the followers of Jesus Christ to use their own houses more frequently than they now do for holy purposes. How largely might the Sunday schools in London be extended if all the better-instructed gathered together Bible classes in their own houses and taught them during the Sabbath! And what a multitude of prayers would go up to Heaven if Christians who have suitable rooms would frequently call together their Brothers and Sisters and neighbors to offer prayer! Many an hour is wasted in idle talk. Many an evening frittered away in foolish amusements degrading to Christians, when the time might be occupied in exercises calculated to bring down untold blessings upon the family and upon the Church!

Prayer Meetings at private houses are very useful, because friends who would be afraid to pray before a large assembly and, others, who if they did so, would be very much restricted in language, are able to feel free and easy in a smaller company in a private house. Sometimes, too, the social element is consecrated by God to promote a greater warmth and fervor so that prayer will often burn in the family when, perhaps, it might have declined in the public assembly. I never knew the little Church of which I was pastor before I came here to be in such a happy condition as when the members took it into their heads to hold Prayer Meetings in their own houses! I have sometimes, myself, attended six or seven in an evening, running from one to another just to look in upon them, finding 12 in a kitchen, 10 or a dozen in a parlor, two or three together in a little chamber!

We saw a great work of Grace then! The biggest sinners in the parish felt the power of the Gospel! The old saints warmed up and began to believe in young people being converted and we were all alive by reason of the abundance of prayer! Brethren, we must have the same abundance of prayer—pray that we may have it! We have been distinguished as a Church for prayerfulness and I am jealous with a godly jealousy lest we should go back in any degree. I do affectionately suggest to you with much earnestness of heart that we should try to increase the number of the places where many shall be met together praying. I do not know where the mother of John Mark is, this morning, but I hope she will start a Prayer Meeting in her large room.

She is well-to-do, I believe, because her brother Barnabas had land, and sold it, and I suppose she had property, also. We will use her drawing room. If a poorer friend has a smaller and poorer room, we shall be glad of the loan of it, for it will be more suitable for persons of another class to go to. Perhaps they would not like to go to Mrs. Mark's drawing room, but they will come to your kitchen. All sorts will have an opportunity of praying when all sorts of chambers are dedicated to prayer!

**IV.** I have a little to say about THE TIME OF THIS PRAYER MEETING. It was held at dead of night. I suppose they prayed all through the night.

They could say, "We have been waiting, we have been waiting, all the night long." After *midnight* the angel set Peter free. Peter went to the house and they had not gone to bed, but many were met together praying. Now, as to the time for Prayer Meetings, let me say this. If it happens to be an inconvenient hour, and I should think the dead of night was rather inconvenient, nevertheless go! Better hold Prayer Meetings at midnight than not at all! Better that we should be accused, as the Christians were of old, of holding secret conventicles under the shadow of night, than not meet together for prayer.

But there is another lesson. The dead of the night was chosen because it was the most suitable hour, since they could not safely meet in the day because of the Jews. It becomes those, who appoint the times for Prayer Meetings, to select as good an hour as they can—a quiet hour, a leisure hour, an hour suited to the habits of the people. Still, let us remember that whatever hour is appointed, if we come together with true hearts, it will be an acceptable hour. Better still, it would be well if there could be meetings for prayer at *all* hours. Then every hour would be an acceptable hour and if one happened to be unseasonable, another would be convenient—and all classes of Believers could thus meet together at some time or other to pour out their hearts in prayer to God.

Oh, Brethren, if your business will not let you meet in the middle of the day, meet in the middle of the night! If you cannot come together for prayer at the times that are generally appointed, then have Prayer Meetings at such times as will suit *yourselves*, only let there be a unanimous resolve throughout the whole Church of Christ that much prayer shall be presented to the Most High.

**V.** Notice, in the last place, the SUCCESS OF THE PRAYER MEETINGS AS AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO US. They prayed and they were heard at once. The answer came so speedily that they were, themselves, surprised! It has sometimes been said that they did not really *expect* Peter to be set free. And that their astonishment was the result of unbelief. Perhaps so, but I doubt it, for you must remember that their prayers *did* set Peter free, and therefore it does not look as if it could have been *unbelieving* prayer.

I trace their surprise to another cause. I think they expected that God would somehow or other deliver Peter, but they did not think He would deliver him in the dead of the night. They very likely had appointed in their own minds that something would happen the next day and, so, their surprise arose, not from the fact that Peter was free, so much as from his being out of the dungeon at that particular time, and in that particular manner. I cannot judge that to have been an unbelieving prayer which really did win the day with the God of Heaven.

Dear Friends, the Lord Jesus waits to give us great blessings in answer to prayer. He can send us surprises quite as great as those which astonished the assembly at midnight. We may pray for some sinner and while we are yet praying we may hear him cry, "What must I do to be saved?" We may offer our prayers for the sleeping Church and while we pray, it may be answered. But, the Church still sleeps. She has had a smiting on

the side, of late, but has not yet girded herself and come out of the prison of her coldness and conventionality. But if we continue in prayer we may see, with astonishment, the Church rouse herself from sleep and come forth to liberty. We cannot tell what will happen. Prayer operates in so many ways, but operate it will, and we shall assuredly have our reward!

I selected this topic just now for this reason. The American evangelists who have been so useful in this great city have gone from us and the great assemblies which they gathered are no more. There must have been many converted—I cannot but believe that many thousands have received the Lord Jesus Christ and I have no sympathy, whatever, with the remarks of those who are alarmed that our friends have not touched the lowest class of society. I believe they have touched *every* class of society. At any rate, their business was to preach the Gospel to every creature, and they have done so with great impartiality and earnestness.

If the poorest did not go, it was not because they were not welcome. But they did go! I am an eyewitness to it. I know that many who went nowhere before did attend the Bow and Camberwell Halls, and the fact that the congregation looked respectable by no means proves that they were not of the working classes, for what working man is there among us but tries to dress as neatly as he can when he goes to a place of worship? There are plenty of friends here who work hard for their daily bread, but looking around they all seem, by their dress, to be well-to-do. No one has a right to judge, that because a man does not come to worship in rags, he cannot, therefore, belong to the lower portion of the working class, for it is not the habit of the working men of London to go to places of worship in their everyday clothes or in rags.

I saw with my own eyes that multitudes assembled there were of that class which did not habitually hear the Gospel! I am sure that good was done and I do not care who quibbles. The practical point is—What is to be done *now*? We must keep up this work. And how? Not by those large assemblies, but by all the Churches being revived all round—and the numbers in all the places of worship becoming more numerous—and at the same time becoming more prayerful. Let us pray now. We need prayer to train the converts, to *keep* God's people warm, now they are warm, and to make them yet more so.

What wonders we have obtained in the Tabernacle in answer to prayer! We began this work with a little handful of Christian men I remember the first Monday night, after I came to London—there was a slender audience on the Sabbath, but thank God there was almost as many at the Prayer Meeting as on Sunday! And I thought, "This is all right. These people can pray." They did pray, and as we increased in prayer we increased in numbers. Sometimes, at Prayer Meetings, my heart was almost ready to break for joy because of the mighty supplication that was offered. We wanted to build this great house—we were poor enough, but we prayed for it, and prayer built it! Praying gave us everything we have! Praying brings us all manner of supplies, spiritual and temporal.

Whatever I am in the Church of God this day, I owe, under God's blessing, to your prayers. As long as your prayers sustain me, I shall not flag nor fail. But if your prayers are gone, then my power is gone, for the Spirit of God is gone and what can I do without Him? All through the Church of God the true progress is in proportion to the prayer. I do not care about the talent of the speaker. I am glad if he has talent. I do not care about the wealth of the congregation, though I am glad if they have wealth. But I do care beyond everything for the deep, real, earnest *prayer*—the darting up of the souls of Christians *to* God—and the bringing down of the blessing upon men *from* God!

And if this were the last word I had to address to this congregation, I would say to you, dear Brothers and Sisters, abound in prayer! Multiply the petitions that you put up and increase the fervor with which you present them to God! When my venerable predecessor, Dr. Rippon, was growing old, this was one of the things everybody noticed about him, that he always prayed earnestly for his successors. He did not know who they might be, but his prayer was that God would bless the Church and his successors in years to come. And I have heard old Christians say that our present prosperity might be traced to Dr. Rippon's prayers.

Oh, let us pray! I believe we have had a revival very much in answer to the multitudinous fervent prayers that were put up here and elsewhere. And now that God is beginning to bless the Church in answer to prayer, if she stays her hand she will be like that king of old who had the arrows and the bow put into his hands and shot once or twice, whereas, if he had shot many times, God would have destroyed Syria before him and established his people. Take down your quivers full of desires and grasp the mighty bow of faith! Now shoot again and again the arrow of the Lord's deliverance and God will give us multitudes of converts all over London and throughout the world!

"Prove me now herewith," says the Lord of Hosts, "and see if I do not open the windows of Heaven and pour you out a blessing that you shall not have room enough to receive it." God bless you, for Christ's sake!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 12:1-19.  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—1,009, 978, 1,000.**

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# WHAT HAD BECOME OF PETER? NO. 3118

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1908.

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

*“Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among  
the soldiers about what had become of Peter.”*  
Acts 12:18.

WE can very well understand that there would be great excitement. It was the most improbable thing in the world that Peter should escape from custody. In the innermost dungeon, securely chained, watched by a fourfold guard, with no powerful friends outside to attempt a rescue—it was marvelous that, in the morning, the bird had flown! The prison doors were closed and the guards in their places, but Peter, where was he? We marvel not that “there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter.”

We will use this striking narrative as an illustration—what if we make it an allegory? The sinner fast bound in his sin is, by the mercy of God, set free and brought out from his spiritual prison into the streets of the New Jerusalem. And then there is no small stir among his old companions—what has become of him? Many questions are asked and many strange answers are given. They cannot understand it. The vain world esteems it strange—it admires much—but hates the change. The carnal mind cannot understand conversion. There is “no small stir about what has become of Peter.”

We shall, first of all, dwell a little upon *the escape of Peter as illustrating the salvation of certain sinners*. Then upon *the consequent stir about it*. And then upon *the quiet conduct of the man who is the object of all this stir*—“What had become of Peter?”

## I. First, then, THE IMPROBABLE EVENT.

Peter was *in prison*. It was a most unlikely thing that he should come forth from Herod’s jail, but it is a far more unlikely thing that sinners should be set free from the dungeons of sin! For the iron gate which opened into the city to turn upon its hinges of its own accord was amazing, but for a sinful heart to loathe its sin is stranger by far! Who can escape from the grasp of sin? No person is more terribly shut up than is the sinner in the prison of original depravity! It is not merely *around* us, but *in* us, compassing our path whether we lie down or rise up! Stronger than granite walls and bars of iron are the forces of evil. Evil has penetrated our souls. It has become part of ourselves. Where shall we fly from its presence, or how shall we escape from its power? Vain are

the wings of the morning—they cannot enable us to fly from our own selves.

O marvelous thing, that the Ethiopian should escape from his blackness and the leopard from his spots! There are some men in whom evil is more than ordinarily conspicuous. They have done violence to conscience. They have quenched, as far as possible, the inner Light of God. They have defied the customs of society, they have resolved to sin at random and they do so. What a miracle it is that such as these should be emancipated from the slavery they choose so eagerly—that these whose feet are set fast in the stocks of vice, in the innermost dungeon of transgression, should ever be set at liberty! And yet how often this has happened! The foundations of the prison have been shaken and the prisoner's bands have been loosed. The saints of God can, all of them, bless Him for setting them at liberty from sin. The snare is broken and they have escaped! Yes, and many of them can praise Him for deliverance from very great sins, black sins, iron sins, sins which had entered into their souls and held their spirits captive! No man can set another man free from iniquity, nor can any man burst down his own prison doors. No Samson is strong enough for that—but there is One—"mighty to save," who has come to proclaim liberty to the captives of sin and the opening of the prison to them that are bound by iniquity! And He has so proclaimed it that many of us are now free through His Grace. O that many others, now shut up in the spiritual Bastille, may be set free!

But, besides being in prison, Peter was *in the dark*. All the lamps had been quenched for the night in his miserable place of confinement. Such is the estate, spiritually, of every unconverted sinner—he is in the dark—he does not know Christ, nor apprehend his own condition, nor comprehend eternal realities. What a shade of darkness is he in who has never heard the Gospel! But, alas, there are some who have heard it, *often* heard it, and yet their eyes are held so that they cannot see the light and they are as badly in the dark as those upon whom the lamp has never shone! Does it not seem impossible to convert such darkened ones? You have held up, as it were, the very sun in the heavens before their eyes, while you have preached salvation by Christ, and yet so blind are they that they have seen nothing! Can these blind eyes see? Can these prisoners of midnight escape from the prison through its long corridors and winding passages? The thousands in this city who never attend the House of prayer—is it possible to get at them? Can the Grace of God ever come to them? Yes, we bless God that as the angel came into Peter's prison and brought a light with him, so the Spirit can come into the prison of man's sin and bring heavenly illumination with Him and then he will see, in a moment, the Truth of God as it is in Jesus which he never knew before! Glory be to God, He can lead the blinded mind in today's light and give it eyes to see and a heart to love the Divine Truth! We can testify of this, for so has God worked upon *us*—and why should He not thus work upon others? But it is a great marvel—and when it is performed, there is "no small stir."

Peter's case, in the third place, had another mark of hopelessness about it. He was in prison. He was in the dark and *he was asleep*. How can you lead a man out of prison who is sound asleep? If you cannot enter and awaken him, what can you do for him? Suppose the doors were opened and the chains were snapped, yet if he remained asleep, how could he escape? We find that the angel smote Peter on the side. I daresay it was a hard blow, but it was a kind one. Oh, how I wish the Spirit of God would smite some sleeping sinner on the side at this moment! I would not mind how sharp or cutting the blow might be for the time being if it made him start up and say, "How can I escape from this dreadful cell of sin?" My Brothers and Sisters, how difficult it is to awaken some minds from their indifference! The most indifferent people in this world are those who have prospered in business for a long time without a break—they are accumulating money as fast as they can count it and they have not time to think about eternal things! Another very hardened class consists of those who have enjoyed good health for a long time and have scarcely known an ache or a pain. They do not think about eternity. It is a great blessing to enjoy health, but it is also a great blessing to suffer sickness, for it is often the means of awakening the slumbering heart! Many dream that because things go smoothly with them, they are all right. And yet they are peculiarly in danger. O Spirit of the living God, smite them on the side! I have known this smiting come to some by a sermon, to others by the personal remark of a friend, to others by the death of a companion, or by the loss of a dear child, or by great trouble and need. Well, if your souls are saved, you will not, in later days, be sorry for the awakening trouble which helped to bring you to the Savior! Yes, the most indifferent have been awakened—and why should it not be so again? The Church prayed for Peter and those prayers brought the angel to awaken him—let us pray for indifferent sons and careless daughters! Let us pray for the godless, Christless population around us and God's Spirit will yet awaken them and make them cry with a bitter cry, "Lord, save us, or we perish!"

There was further difficulty about Peter's case. He was in the prison, in the dark, asleep and *he was also chained*. Each hand was fastened to a soldier's hand. How could he possibly escape? And herein is the difficulty with some sinners—they cannot leave their old companions. Suppose the happy young man should propose to think about religion? Why, this very night he would be ridiculed for it! Suppose he endeavored to walk in the ways of holiness—is there not chained to his left hand an unholy companion? It may be some unchaste connection has been made—how shall he break away from it? Let a man be joined to an ungodly woman, or let a woman have once given herself up to an unholy alliance and how hard it is to set them free! Yet Peter did come out of prison though he was chained to his guards—and Christ can save a sinner though he is bound hand and foot by his intimate association with other sinners as bad as himself! It seems impossible that he should be set at liberty, but nothing is impossible with God. There may be some

here who have had to snap many an old connection and get rid of many an evil association, but by Divine Grace it has been done! We give God the Glory of it and do not wonder at the “stir” which it has made!

In addition to all this, Peter was not only chained, but *he was guarded by soldiers placed outside the prison*. And, oh, how some sinners, whom God means to bless, are similarly guarded! The devil seems to have an inkling that God will save them one day and, therefore, he watches them. Fearful lest by any means they should escape out of his hands, he guards them day and night. When men receive a tender conscience, or have their minds a little awakened, Satan will not trust them to enter the House of Prayer, or if they do, he comes with them and distracts their attention by vain thoughts or fierce temptations! Or if they are able to hear the sermon attentively, he will meet them outside and try to steal away the good seed from their hearts. He will assail the man with temptation here and temptation there—he will assault him through some chosen instrument, and then again by another messenger of a like character so that if by any means he may keep him from being saved!

But when the Lord means to save, He makes short work of the guards, the prison, the darkness, the chains, the devil and all his allies! If the Lord means to save you, Man, Woman—whoever you are—He will overcome your old master and his guards. The Lord’s eternal will shall assuredly overcome your will, the will of Satan, the lusts of the flesh and your own resolves! And although you may have made a league with death and a covenant with Hell, yet if the Eternal Jehovah wills it, He can break your covenant, set you free and lead you a captive at the wheels of His chariot of fire—for with God, nothing is impossible!

Once more, Peter was, in addition to all this, *on the eve of death*. It was his last night, the night before his execution. It is a very sweet thing to think of Peter sleeping. It reminds one of the saints whom we read of in Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*. When the jailer’s wife came in the morning to call him, he was so sweetly asleep that she had to shake him to awaken him. It was a strange thing to disturb a man and say, “It is time to get up and be burnt!” But he slept as sweetly as though he would be married that morning instead of meeting a cruel death! God can give His people the greatest peace in the most disturbing times. So Peter slept. But that is not the point I wish to dwell upon. The next morning he was to die, but God would not have him die. Perhaps someone who hears or reads these words is despairing—so despairing that he is ready to lay violent hands upon himself or, perhaps, there is one so sick that if the Lord does not appear to him very soon, it will be too late. Blessed be God, He never leaves His elect to perish in sin! He never is before His time, but He never is behind it. He comes in at the last moment and when it seems as though eternal destruction would swallow up His chosen one, He stretches out His hand and achieves His purpose! May this remark be a message from God to someone! Though you have gone far in sin and are near your end, yet the Lord, who can do anything and everything, may come to you and save you even now, at the eleventh hour—and then there will be a “stir” indeed!

We have thus remarked upon a whole series of improbabilities, but I have noticed that it is often the most unlikely people who are saved. There are many of whom I thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before me," and I have been disappointed in them. And there are many others, who came to hear out of curiosity, and were the least likely to be impressed, who, nevertheless, have been met with by Sovereign Grace. Does not this encourage you to say, "Why should not the Lord meet with me?" Ah, dear Soul, why not? And what is more, He will regard you if you listen to this word of His, "He who believes on the Son has everlasting life." To believe on Jesus Christ is simply to trust Him. Then do you trust Him? For if you do trust your guilty soul entirely on Jesus, He *has* met with you and you *are* saved *now*. Go and sin no more—your sins, which are many, are forgiven you! That is salvation in a nutshell. Whoever reposes his trust in Jesus is saved. God grant such faith to you!

**II.** Secondly, in consequence of this great event, THERE WAS NO SMALL STIR, "what had become of Peter?" When the Lord saves an unlikely individual, there is sure to be a stir about it.

The text says, "There was no small stir *among the soldiers*." So, generally, the stir about a sinner begins among his old companions. "What has become of Peter? I thought he would have met us tonight at our drinking spot. What has become of Peter? We were going to the theater together. What has become of Peter? We intended to have a jolly time of it at the horse races. What has become of Peter? We had agreed to go to the dancing saloon together." Those who were his old companions say, "We did not believe he would ever have been made religious. He'll never make a saint! We'll fetch him back. He has got among those canting Methodists, but we'll make it too hot for him. We will jest at him and jeer at him till he can't stand it—and if that does not do, we will threaten him—cast doubts on his creed and set fresh temptations before him." Ah, but if God has set him free from sin, he is free, indeed, and you will never lead him back to prison again! When you meet him, you will find him a new man—and you will be glad to get away from him, for he will prove too strong for you! Often when a man's conversion is thorough, not only is he rejoiced to get away from his old companions, but his old companions are wonderfully glad to keep clear of him! They do not like his new manner. He is so strange a man to what he was before. They say, "What has become of Peter? His ways are not ours. What has happened to him?" If a dog were suddenly turned into an angel, the other dogs would be puzzled—the whole kennel would take to howling at him!

But after the soldiers came *Herod*. Herod wondered, "What has become of Peter? Did I not put 16 men to guard him? Did I not provide heavy chains for his feet? Did I not chain him wrist to wrist to a soldier? Did I not put him in the innermost ward of the prison? What has become of Peter?" Herod grew very angry. He was delighted to have killed James, and he meant to have killed Peter and, therefore, he cried, in great chagrin, "What has become of Peter?" What a sight it would be to see the

devil when he has lost some chosen sinner, when he hears the man who once could swear, beginning to pray, when he beholds the heart that once was hard as adamant beginning to melt! I think I hear him say to himself, "What has become of Peter? Another of my servants has deserted me! Another of my choice followers has yielded to my foe! What? Has Christ taken another lamb from between the jaws of the lion? Will He leave me none? Shall I have no soldiers? Shall none of my black guard be left to me? Am I to be entirely deserted? What has become of Peter?" Oh, it is a glorious thing to cause a howling through the infernal regions and to set devils biting their tongues because poor sinners have snapped their chains! Pray that as the prayers of the Church then set Peter free, and made Herod angry, so the prayers of the Church now may set sinners free and put the devil to shame!

But we must not forget *the Jews*. They had expected to see Peter die and when they found that they would have to eat the Passover with the bitter herb of Peter's escape from prison, they began to say to one another, "What has become of Peter?" They could not understand his escape. Many in these days are like the Jews. They are outsiders—they do not associate with sinners in their grosser vices, but they look on. Whenever they hear of a man converted, if he is indeed really changed, they say, "What has happened to him? We don't understand him!" They put him down as a fanatical fool. Their maxim is that if you like to go to a place of worship, all well and good. And if you like to have a religion, all well and good. But don't make a fuss about it! Don't get carried off your legs by it—keep it to yourself and be quiet about it. They think that to be lukewarm is the finest condition of mind—whereas the Savior has said, "Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth." When a man becomes genuinely converted, especially if he has been a notorious sinner, these irreligious religious people cry out, "What has become of Peter?" The Lord grant that there may be much of this outcry in these days!

And surely, also, there was no small stir *among God's own people*. There was a great stir in that Prayer Meeting when Rhoda went back and said, "There's Peter at the gate!" "Never, never!" "But I know his voice. He has been here many times. I can't be mistaken!" "Ah," said one, "it may be his ghost—it can't be Peter himself. It is impossible!" So, sometimes, when a sinner who has been very notoriously evil, has been converted, after he had been the subject of many prayers, God's people will say, "What? *That* man converted? It cannot be!" When Paul, who had persecuted the Church, was brought to be a Christian, it was very hard to make the disciples believe it. They had heard by many of this man—how he had put the saints to death—surely he could not have become a disciple of Christ! There was no small stir what had become of Paul in those days! Christians could hardly think that his conversion was genuine. I pray the Lord, in these times, to convert some very terrible opposer of His Gospel, some notorious enemy of the Truth of God. I pray that some of those great philosophers of this learned age who are always startling us with new absurdities, may be made to feel the power of the

Sovereign Grace of God! I do not know why they should not. Let us pray for it, and it will come to pass! Let us ask the Lord to save even those who brandish their silly learning in the face of the Eternal Wisdom, and they may yet be brought down to sit humbly at the Savior's feet, and then there will be no small stir in the Church! "What has become of Professor So-and-So?" O Master, for Your own Glory's sake, grant that it may be done!

**III.** The last point is this—THE QUIET CONDUCT OF THE MAN ABOUT WHOM THERE WAS ALL THIS STIR.

What had become of Peter? He was out of prison. Where was he? I will tell you. In the first place, *he had gone to a Prayer Meeting.* [See Sermon #1247, Volume 21—THE SPECIAL PRAYER MEETING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It is a very good sign that a man has been really awakened when he goes uninvited to a Prayer Meeting. I love to see a stranger come stealing in and sit in a corner where God's people are met for supplication. Any hypocrite may come to worship on a Sunday, but it is not every hypocrite who will come to the meeting for prayer! Anybody will come to listen to a sermon, but it is not everybody who will draw near to God in prayer. Surely, when the Prayer Meeting comes to be loved, it is good and hopeful evidence. What has become of Peter? He is not at the gin-palace. What has become of Peter? He is not at the races. What has become of Peter? He is not with his old associates at the skittle ground. No, but he is drawing near to God where humble Believers are crying to the Most High for a blessing!

The next thing was, *he joined the Christians.* I do not say that Peter had not done so before, but on this occasion, he went to the place where the Christians were and sat down with them. So that sinner whom God sets free from sin straightway flies to his own company. "Birds of a feather flock together," and those who bear the true feather of the white dove and have been washed in Christ's blood, "fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows." You do not love Christ if you do not love His people. If you love the Lord who has saved you, you will love the people whom the Lord has saved and you will, like Peter, find your Brothers and Sisters and join with them. See then, you who have been making a stir about what has become of the new convert, we have told you where he is! He has joined the Church of God. He is going to be baptized and he is following Christ through evil report and good report. What do you say to that?

I will tell you yet further what has become of Peter. *He has began to tell his experience at a Church Meeting.* Peter did that very soon. He beckoned with his hand and told them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. What a delight it is to see a man who was just now black in the mouth with blasphemy, stand up and bless the Lord for what His Grace has done for him! "I would think it strange," says one, "if that ever happened to me." My dear Hearer, I would not think it strange, but would bless God for it! God grant that it may happen and that I may hear of it! No experience in the world is so sweet as that of a sinner who has been in captivity to evil and has been brought out with a high hand

and an outstretched arm. An uncommon sinner who has been remarkably converted tells a more than ordinarily encouraging story in our Church Meetings and we delight in such glad tidings! That is what had become of Peter.

And then, lastly, it was not long before *Peter was preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ*. And oh, you who have been wondering what has become of some ungodly companions of yours, I would not be surprised if you hear them telling others what God has done for their souls! I would like to have heard John Newton's first sermon after he had been a slave trader with his life full of all manner of villainy—and God had met with him in mercy. Oh, it must have been a sweet sermon, wet with tears! I will be bound to say that there were no sleepy hearers. He would talk in a way that would melt others' hearts because his own was melted! I would like to have heard John Bunyan, though under a hedge, preaching the Gospel of Jesus, while he told what God had done for a drunken tinker, and how He had washed him in the precious blood of Jesus and saved him! Those who know what sin is and what the Savior has saved them from, can speak "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Peter could say, "I was in prison, but I gained my liberty and it was the work of God." He could bear good testimony to what God has done for him!

I hold up the blood-red standard at this time. I am a recruiting sergeant and I want, in God's name, to enlist fresh soldiers beneath the standard of the Cross! "Whom will you enlist?" asks one. "What must their characters be?" They must be guilty! I will have nothing to do with the righteous! The Savior did not come to save those who are not sinful—He came to save sinners! I looked out of my window last winter, when it had been raining for several months almost incessantly, and I saw a man with a garden hose watering plants. And I looked at him again and again, and to this moment I cannot understand what he was doing! It did seem to me an extraordinary thing that a man should be watering a garden when the garden had been watered by the rain for a hundred days or so with scarcely a pause! Now, I am not going to water you who are already dripping with your own self-righteousness. No, no, what need have you of Grace? Christ did not come to save you good people! You must get to Heaven how you can, on your own account. He has come to wash the filthy and heal the sick—and oh, you filthy ones, before you I hold up the Gospel banner and say again, "Who will enlist beneath it?" If you will, the great Captain of Salvation will take your guilt away and cast your sins into the depths of the sea—and make you new creatures through the power of His Spirit.

"Well," says one, "If I am enlisted, and become a new creature, what shall I do?" I will not say what you *shall* do, but if the Lord saves you, you will love Him so much that nothing will be too hard, or too heavy, or too difficult for you! You will not need driving, if you once receive His great salvation—you will be for doing more than you can and you will pray for more Grace and strength to attempt yet greater things for His name's sake. A man who has had much forgiven, what will he not

attempt for the service and Glory of Him who has forgiven him? May I be fortunate enough to enlist beneath the Savior's banner some black offender! That is the man for Christ's service! That is the man who will sound out His name more sweetly than anybody else! That is the man who will be afraid of no one! That is the man who will truly know the power of the Gospel of Christ! Oh, that the Lord would bring such men among us, for we need them in these days—men who will come right out, without doubt, fear, or quitting, facing all criticisms, defying all opinions and each one saying, "Sinners, Christ can save you, for He saved me! I was a drunkard and a thief, but God has forgiven and cleansed, and washed me, and I know the power of His salvation!" Pray, members of the Church, that both among men and women there may be many such conversions and that throughout this city of London there may be no small stir, "What has become of Peter," and may that stir be to the praise and Glory of God! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
2 PETER 1.**

**Verse 1.** *Simon Peter, a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.* Peter here uses both his names—Simon or Simeon, which was his first name and signifies, "hearing with acceptance." And happy are they who have the hearing ear and the receptive heart. And then there is what I may call his Christian name, the name which Christ gave him, Petros, or Cephas, a rock or stone. Those who learn to hear well, since faith comes by hearing, may hope to obtain even greater stability of character than Peter had. Observe that Peter calls himself, "a servant of Christ." There is no higher honor than to be a servant of God. "To serve God is to reign." An ancient philosopher was the author of that maxim and Christianity fully endorses it. He is a true king who is a servant of God. In this respect, all Believers are on a level with Peter, but here is his distinguishing title, "an Apostle of Jesus Christ," a sent one, one who had seen the Lord and who could bear personal testimony to the fact of His existence, His death and His Resurrection. Hence the Apostleship has ceased, since there are no longer any who lived in our Lord's days upon the earth. Mark the reason why this Epistle, like the first, is called "the general Epistle of Peter," since it is addressed, not to any one Church, as Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, but to all saints. Not to the Hebrews alone, but to the Gentiles as well. It is a general Epistle, addressed to all those who have "obtained like precious faith." These words were written by the Apostle Peter many centuries ago, yet they come to us as fresh as if he had written them but yesterday! And may God grant us Grace to profit from them as they are read by us today! After the Apostle's titles comes the salutation of his Epistle.

**2-5.** *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as His Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceedingly great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this—*“Since it is God who, by His Divine energy, has made you partakers of the Divine Nature, see that you use your Grace-given energy—rest not idly upon your oars because the tide of Grace carries your ship onward.”

**5.** *Giving all diligence.* It is not man’s effort that saves him, but on the other hand, Grace saves no man to make him like a log of wood or a block of stone. Grace makes man active! God has been diligently at work with you—now you must diligently work together with Him.

**5-7.** *Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.* As you have seen the mason take up first one stone and then another, and then gradually build the house, so are you Christians to take first one virtue and then another, and then another, and to pile up these stones of Grace one upon the other until you have built a palace for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit!

Faith, of course, comes first, because faith is the foundation of all the Graces, and there can be no true Grace where there is no true faith. Then “add to your faith virtue,” which should have been translated, “courage.” True courage is a very great blessing, indeed, to the Christian—without it how will he be able to face his foes? “And to courage knowledge,” for courage without knowledge would be foolish rashness, which would lead you to the cannon’s mouth when there was nothing to be gained by flinging away your life.

“And to knowledge temperance,” for there are some who no sooner get knowledge than they are carried away with the new Doctrine which they have learned and become like intoxicated men, for it is possible to be intoxicated even with the Truth of God! Happy is that Christian who has temperance with his knowledge who, while holding one Doctrine, does not push that to the extreme, but learns to hold other Doctrines in due conformity with it. “And to temperance patience,” or endurance, so that we are able to endure the “trial of cruel mocking” or sharp pains, or fierce persecutions, or the usual afflictions of this life. He is a poor Christian who has no power of endurance. A true Christian must “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

“And to endurance godliness”—having a constant respect to God in all our ways, living to God and living like God as far as the finite can be like the Infinite. “And to godliness brotherly kindness.” O dear Friends, let us be very kind to those who are our Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus! Let the ties of Christian kinship unite us in true brotherhood to each other. “And to brotherly kindness charity.” Let us have love to all men, though especially to the household of faith.

**8.** *For if these things are in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* I am sure you do not wish to be barren. I cannot imagine that any of you will be content to be unfruitful, so seek after all these virtues and may God help you to give diligence to the attainment of them.

**9, 10.** *But he that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Therefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall.* He who is diligent in seeking these Graces is kept from falling. Every Christian is safe from a final fall, but he is not safe from a foul fall unless he is kept by Grace.

**11.** *For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* In this life you shall enjoy all the privileges of the inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. And in the life to come you shall go into the harbor of eternal peace like a ship with all her sails full, speeding before a favorable wind— not as one that struggles into harbor—

**“Tempest-tossed, and half a wreck.”**

**12.** *Therefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth.* We are not merely to preach new Truths of God which people do not know, but we are also to preach the old Truths with which they are familiar. The Doctrines in which they are well established are still to be proclaimed to them. Every wise preacher brings forth from the treasury of Truth things both new and old—new, that the hearers may learn more than they knew before—old, that they may know and practice better that which they do already know in part.

**13, 14.** *Yes, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me.* In the last chapter of the Gospel according to John, it is recorded how Christ prophesied concerning the death of Peter, that when he was old, he would stretch forth his hands and another should gird him, and carry him where he would not. The Evangelist adds, “This spoke He, signifying by what death he [Peter] should glorify God.” The prospect of crucifixion was thus always before Peter’s mind—and knowing what was to happen to him—he was not alarmed, but was rather quickened to greater diligence in stirring up the saints to make their calling and election sure. Hear behind you, O Christian, the chariot wheels of your Lord! Hear behind you the whizzing of the arrow of Death and let this quicken your pace! Work while it is called today, for the sun even now touches the horizon and the night comes when no man can work. If we knew how short a time we have to live, how much more earnest, how much more diligent would we be! Let us be up and doing! “Let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober,” working diligently until the Lord comes, or calls us Home to Himself.

**15-18.** *Moreover I will endeavor that you may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed*

*cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and Glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent Glory, This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from Heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the Holy Mount. Peter and James and John were with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration and Peter here bears his witness that they were not deceived when they bowed down before Christ and worshipped Him as Lord, nor were they deluded in expecting His coming and believing in His power.*

**19, 20.** *We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. Even the Prophets themselves did not always know the full meaning of their own prophecies. Many prophecies have never been completely understood until they have been fulfilled. This passage also appears to me to mean that no prophecy is to be restricted to any one event, so as to say, "This prophecy has been entirely fulfilled."*

**21.** *For the prophecy came not in old times by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. So that they sometimes spoke what they did not themselves understand. The prophecy carried its own key within itself and the key could not be found until the prophecy was fulfilled. I believe that the prophecies in the Revelation and in the books of Daniel and Ezekiel are very much of this character, and that while it is quite right to watch for and expect the coming of the Lord, we shall spend our time more profitably in preaching the Doctrines of the Gospel than in meditating upon the mysterious prophecies of the Word. They will be understood when they are fulfilled, but we do not think they will be fully understood before that time.*

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

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# TWO PAULS AND A BLINDED SORCERER NO. 1781

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 18, 1884,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the Doctrine of the Lord.”  
Acts 13:12.***

CYPRUS was by no means a reputable island—it was devoted to the goddess Venus and you can imagine what her worship was—and what would be the fruitful licentiousness which sprang of it. It was the native country of Barnabas and, as he was, at first, the leader of the missionary party sent out by the Church of Antioch, it was fit that Barnabas and Saul should begin preaching there. Landing at one end of the island, the two Apostolic men traversed it till they came to Paphos, where the Roman governor resided. Now, this Paphos was the central city of the worship of Venus and was the scene of frequent profligate processions and abominable rites. We might call it, “the place where Satan’s seat is.”

Athanasius styled its religion “the deification of lust.” Neither men nor women could resort to the shrine of Venus without being defiled in mind and depraved in character. Yet it was no business of the Apostles to stay away, either from Cyprus or Paphos, because they were the resorts of the gay and vicious. On the contrary, there was a special need for them to go there with the purifying waters of the Gospel. The more wicked the locality, the more need for Christian effort in that very spot.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit had sent the missionaries to Cyprus and, therefore, they might safely enter the caverns of dark obscenity and proclaim the word of salvation among the openly abandoned. Nor need they fear of success, for publicans and harlots have frequently been known to enter the Kingdom of God before self-righteous Pharisees. Even the vilest of open sin is not so hard to deal with as a proud heart which abhors the Doctrine of the Cross because of its humbling character. Let us not refuse to plow up any kind of soil—great harvests come from broken rocks! Happily for the two servants of the Lord, God had prepared their way as He prepares the way of *all* His servants, for whenever He sends a sower forth to sow, albeit that a part of the land which he sows may be rock, or trodden path, yet there is always a portion which is plowed before the sower comes.

God has a prepared people wherever He sends a minister to gather them in. He does not mock us by sending us on fruitless errands. If He

bids Philip go down to the way which leads from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert, Philip does not find it a desert *spiritually*, for there he gathers one of the sweetest flowers that ever bloomed in the garden of the Lord. So now, when Barnabas and Saul come to Paphos, it shall not be to break their hearts over the filthiness and obscenity of its idol worship, but to find for the Lord a jewel amid the mire! The chief magistrate of the island was a candid, studious, prudent man. He possessed an intelligent and inquisitive spirit, and was desirous to know all that could be known. Pliny mentioned him among the authors from whom he quoted. This man was anxious to discover the truth if it could be discovered—he had said with Pilate, but not as Pilate, “What is truth?”

A certain Jew who was expert in the dark learning of the East and practiced sorcery had obtained considerable influence over this ruler, whose name was Sergius Paul. But instead of teaching him the truth, this false-hearted Jew imparted to him the mysteries of the Magi and the superstitions of sorcery. Bar-Jesus was this mountebank’s Jewish name, but he was false to it, for he was no son of Jesus, but one of a generation of vipers! Sergius Paul, hearing that there were other Eastern teachers in the island, and being dissatisfied with the teaching of Elymas, sent for Barnabas and Saul to teach him the Word of God. What a door of hope for this prudent man! What a splendid opening for the two preachers of Christ!

Barnabas and Saul can go to court and hold a meeting in the proconsul’s palace with one of the best of hearers as the center of their congregation—for a really prudent man is one of the most hopeful of listeners to the Gospel if his prudence has not curdled into sophistry—and his knowledge has not fermented into self-conceit. It was a hopeful omen for the rest of the island that its proconsul was so free from prejudice that he called the two missionaries to his hall and desired to hear from them the Word of God. Barnabas and Saul accepted the invitation and I think I see them both opening their commission in the deputy’s presence. Good will surely come of such an opportunity! We are all looking for memorable results, but stop!—we must postpone our hopes, awhile, and look around upon facts.

**I.** Notice first, opposition TO THE FAITH. The missionaries were not to have it all their own way. Bar-Jesus, who was also called Elymas, “withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.” As Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses when he commenced his mission, so this Jew, Bar-Jesus, opposed himself to the ministers of Christ. In some respects, *opposition to the Gospel is to be much deplored*. Under some aspects, the withstanding of the message of mercy is a very grievous thing. Should the glad tidings be denied? Should the Doctrine which God has given by express Revelation be held up to scorn? Woe unto the men who dare thus to provoke their God! Behold, you despisers, and wonder and perish!

No man can set himself against God and against His Christ without frightful peril to his own soul. The greatest of men become base when they

rebel against the Light of God. “Be wise now, therefore, O you kings: be instructed, you judges of the earth. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” Rivers of water should run down our eyes because of the wicked who keep not God’s Law. Our hearts should be filled with horror at the blasphemy and presumption of those who set themselves with deliberate intent to oppose the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—especially when they do it knowing something about it—and being half convinced of its truthfulness. The rejection of known Truth is a crime which goes very near to the sin against the Holy Spirit, if it is not that sin.

To oppose Truth when it is seen to be Truth, and to shut the eyes to the Light of God when it is admitted to be Light, is a heinous offense against the God of Truth and He will certainly avenge it. Let us pity with all our hearts the men who oppose the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ! And the more so because we believe that in some instances they know better and are violating conscience by their opposition. If half the noise that has been made in this country against certain infidels for wishing to exercise the rights of English citizens had been spent in prayer for their conversion, it would have been a more profitable use of zeal and would have been far more likely to bring down a blessing upon the nation.

We are too apt to ban and curse antagonists instead of pitying and praying for them. It is not yours and mine to shut the door in any man’s face, however depraved he may be! We are to stand and entreat him to come to the Savior, regarding, even, if the judgments of God which fall upon him are meant to last only for a season—and intended to lead him to repentance—for this is the usual design of the chastening of this life. Why should not the chief of sinners yet become a Believer? Sometimes those who were the most opposed to Christ have been the first to yield and have become the bravest champions of the faith! Saul of Tarsus, himself, who was opposed by Elymas, had been a furious enemy of that Gospel which now he earnestly proclaimed—and this fact must have sustained his courage under the sorcerer’s attack.

Saul did it ignorantly in unbelief, but there is reason to fear that this Elymas *willfully* perverted the right ways of the Lord and set himself deliberately, with premeditated malice, to keep back an enquiring soul from the true faith. In such a case, opposition to the faith is to be sadly deplored because of our pity for the enemy of the Truth of God, who is, in this thing, an enemy to his own soul. But I further notice that *opposition is eminently overruled for good* and, therefore, it would be unbecoming in us to lament it or dread it. We may not think so much of opposition as to yield to it so far as to cease our testimony, or tone it down, or omit a portion of it!

The Apostle Paul, when speaking of a place where he hoped for great success, said a great and effectual door was opened to him, and *there were many adversaries* (1 Corinthians 16:9). It would seem that the second clause was as good a sign of success as the first! Wherever there is likely to be great success, the open door and the opposing adversaries will

both be found. If there are no adversaries, you may fear that there will be no success. A boy cannot get his kite up without wind, nor without a wind which drives *against* his kite. A contrary wind does much more for us than we suppose. Adversaries advertise the Gospel and so spread it! Opposing work, although in itself, evil, is wondrously overruled by God for the best purposes, since persecution often awakens natural sympathy, and this becomes a ladder by which love climbs up into the heart.

The devil is growing a little wiser than he used to be, but he still remains a fool, for if he looked back over his own history, he would see that he has been the means of spreading the Gospel by the attacks which he has made upon it! A little stream of Living Water flowed through Jerusalem and wherever it went, it fertilized the earth and caused it to bring forth and bud. It flowed on and became wider and Satan said within himself, "If this continues, I cannot tell what will come of it. I will, therefore, stop its flow." He looked around and found a great stone, nearby—I think it bore on it the name of Herod. This stone, the arch-enemy dashed into the bed of the stream, with intent to turn it aside. Great was the fall thereof and, in consequence of its force, the Water of Life splashed right and left, for they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word of God!

Every drop of that little stream became the mother of another fountain where it fell and so other lands were refreshed with the Waters of Life. "Divide and conquer," said Satan—he divided—but he did not conquer! His raging winds carry far afield the precious seed of Divine Truth! Every tempest that he raises, speeds onward the boat of the Church! Now, look! Saul of Tarsus desires to preach and tell Sergius Paul about the eternal Truth of God—and Elymas must interpose. "What good could that be?" cries one! "How can that be overruled?" It *was* overruled—the Lord made the wrath of man to praise Him and brought to nothing the subtlety of Elymas! In all probability, the opposition of Bar-Jesus may have called the attention of Sergius Paul more intently to the Doctrine of the Word of God. When a certain Doctrine is neglected and half forgotten by the Church of God, there rises up a bold heretic who rails at the Truth most bitterly—and then Christian people remember it, defend it, and propagate it!

A Colenso attacks the story of the Exodus—and all eyes are fixed upon Moses and the tribes of Israel. Some critic or other attacks the book of Deuteronomy and straightway we get a host of books about Deuteronomy! All the scholars of the Christian Church begin to study it and, as a part of the Word of God, it is exceedingly valued. This Elymas finds fault with the Gospel—and Saul and Barnabas are thus called upon to clear up the points at issue—and by refuting the magician's malicious errors, they make the Truth of God the more apparent to the mind of the proconsul! So far so good. But this man's opposition was further overruled, for when Saul looked at him and pronounced upon him the solemn judgment of God—namely that he should be blind and should not see the sun for a season—then the proconsul saw what power attended the Word of the Lord and how truly it came forth from the Almighty!

God, by that solemn judgment, set His seal to the Truth and let all men know that it could not be reviled without the most solemn hazard to the opposer. Blinded Elymas, seeking someone to lead him by the hand, was a visible witness for the Truth against which he had fought! His sightless eyes were a just judgment from God. He had shut the eyes of his mind to the Truth of God and the Lord justly closed the eyes of his body. As he groped for the wall, he was, against his will, a most convincing witness to the Truth of the Gospel—and of the Divine commission of Barnabas and Saul!

Depend upon it, the Lord will yet baffle all opposers and He will establish His Truth above all the traditions of men—His adversaries, themselves, being judges. Out of their own mouths will He condemn His enemies. He will so confound and confuse unbelieving philosophers, that their blindness shall bear evidence to the light of His Word, which blinds the proud and self-sufficient. Men will again see how “professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.” Manifestly, even before the eyes of the unlearned, it has happened—and will happen against that learned skeptics will give vent to sheer folly and become the victims of childish credulity till men shake them off and say—“They are not the wise men we thought they were. And the old-fashioned Gospel which they set themselves to overthrow is better than their vaunted discoveries.” So may it be right speedily!

Moreover, this Elymas, by his overthrow, made the victory of Christ to be the more conspicuous. Here are Barnabas and Saul, two poor Jews, and they are met by one of their own countrymen who has obtained the ear of a ruler by acting the part of a courtier and a doctor. He knew how to play his cards with the proconsul. How can these two men hope to destroy his influence and establish the Cross of Christ in its stead? If you had looked at them, you would have said Elymas was master of the situation! He had a fullness of subtlety and no conscience to embarrass his actions—he could use any cunning trick—while the missionaries could only keep to the Truth of God. He seemed sure of defeating the two simple-minded men!

But as soon as Saul drew forth the sword of the Spirit and told him plainly that though he might be called the son of Jesus, he was the son of the devil, the victory was speedy and the vanquished sorcerer begged for help to make a retreat! Sergius Paul was one of the great ones of the earth—in those days comparable to a king—and when he believed, it was a noble gain to the cause! A chamberlain of the queen of Ethiopia had believed before him, but as not many great men, not many mighty are chosen—the conversion of the Proconsul of Cyprus was a great triumph for the Gospel! It is noteworthy that from this point, Saul of Tarsus is called Paul, and we read no more of Barnabas and Saul, but of Paul and Barnabas. If Saul had assumed the name of Paul from this memorable conversion, it would not have been an unworthy act, for his joy at the winning of Sergius Paul might fitly have expressed itself in a fashion suggested by a common custom among Romans.

As Scipeo, after he conquered Africa, was called Scipeo Africanus, so this man, Saul, after such a glorious winning of Sergius Paul for Christ, might himself become Paul. It is very amazing, but from this moment we do not find him called Saul except when he is telling the story of his conversion and uses his old name. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, henceforth calls him Paul, and that name must often have cheered the suffering Apostle. When he was persecuted, he would remember his own namesake, the Roman Proconsul whom he had brought to the feet of Jesus—and Paul would see him standing in the front, as a bright Believer—while Elymas in the background utterly confounded, would serve as a dark figure to bring out the lights of the picture all the more clearly!

Courage then, Brothers and Sisters, whenever you are trying to serve your Lord! If you are assailed, take heart and hope that a great victory is near! Satan would leave you alone if you were doing nothing of any consequence against his kingdom. If he could foresee your defeat, he has plenty to do and, therefore, he would spend his strength elsewhere. But as he fears you, he assails you. If you were a mere official, he would let you go on with your rigmarole, but since he sees you to be a living servant of the Lord, he raises up an Elymas, with smooth and slippery tongue, to speak against you. Be bold, and faint not, for you shall find even the most crafty and cruel enemy to be the unwilling agent of bringing greater glory to God! Be not afraid of a man that shall die, nor of the son of man which shall be made as grass. Go forward resting in the Lord, for greater is He who is for you than all they that are against you! With a brave heart defy all opposers, crying, "I will trust and not be afraid." Never let us be discouraged, for the Lord is on our side. What can man do to us?

*This opposition must have been, to Paul, very instructive, for it was symbolic of the future.* It seemed hard to teach this man, this Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin, as touching the law, a Pharisee, that he was sent to preach to the Gentiles, for even when he went to Cyprus, he and Barnabas kept pretty much to Israel, preaching the Word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. But now he is to have an object lesson which will show him his full career as in a living parable. Jew and Gentile are both before him! The Jew, Elymas, is opposing with the most bitter venom—true picture of his race. Sergius Paulus, the Gentile, listens with most prudent attention, candidly weighing everything and, at last he believes—thus has it been with many of the Gentiles! The chosen of God among the Gentiles accept that which the Jews refuse. When Elymas was struck with blindness, what a sorrowful picture he was of that blindness which has fallen upon Israel!

"Blindness in part," says Paul, "is happened to Israel," and so it happened to Elymas—"You shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a season." That word, "for a season," is a door of hope, for as the day came when Elymas could again behold the sun, so the day comes when the blindness shall be taken from the heart of Israel—and the seed of Jacob shall look on Him whom they have pierced. The scene before us is a vivid description of the whole history of the Christian Church in its relation to Jew and

Gentile. Let us, therefore, look forward with the expectation that wherever the Gospel triumphs, it will meet with opposition—and wherever it is opposed, it will win the victory!

**II.** We have done with the opposition; now let us consider certain AIDS TO FAITH. Sergius Paul, “when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the Doctrine of the Lord.” Kindly notice the words I have selected for a heading to this second part of my discourse—“aids to faith.” I have not called miracles, *causes* of faith, for they do not cause it, although they may lead up to it. What Sergius Paulus saw did not make him believe, but it *helped* him to believe. What did he see? He saw what was done.

First, *He saw the great courage of Paul.* In another case, boldness struck a blow at unbelief, for when the rulers saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled. In this case the effect would be the same. That despised and persecuted Jew, Saul of Tarsus, fixed his eyes on Elymas as though he were perfectly master of the situation—as indeed he was—and without hesitation, or apology, addressed him, “O full of all subtlety and all mischief, you child of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?”

What made Paul bear himself so bravely? What had given courage to this otherwise retiring individual, to come into the front and speak like a hero, as he was? Brothers, I believe the courage of the minister is often made a great blessing to undecided and trembling spirits. Therefore, when you go to teach and preach, never exhibit doubt or fear. The man who himself doubts, may beget doubters, but he cannot be the father of Believers. If you have any question about what you have to say, go home and wait till you have solved the problem. “I believed, therefore have I spoken,” is the Psalmist’s statement, and it is a wise one! Unbelief in a pulpit is like the rebellious angels in Heaven—the sooner it is cast out, the better! Intense conviction on the mind of Paul led him to speak thus plainly, sternly and even indignantly—and we are sure that he did not err in so doing, since his warmth was not the heat of his own spirit, but the fire of the Spirit of God, for we read that he was filled with the Holy Spirit!

Let every teacher of Christ be thus filled and then let him speak boldly as he ought to speak! Come not forward with your “ifs” and “buts” and “perhapses,” to prove that which is its own proof and bears its own evidence upon its brow! Tell the message God has told you, as from Him, and not as your own opinion! Deliver sound Doctrine because you have been delivered into it, yourself, as metal is poured into a mold. Speak because you cannot be silent! Speak because the Holy Spirit has stirred you, in your privacy, to unutterable groans and now moves you to speak out your soul before the sons of men! It must have been an aid to Sergius Paul’s faith to have seen the dauntless outspokenness of the greater Paul. But when he saw Elymas blinded, that gave a further impulse to him.

*When God works in judgments among the sons of men, many are astonished and inclined to hear what this Word may be which bears so solemn a*

*seal from the God of Judgment.* O Sirs, I would to God that some of you who have seen men die in their sins would be warned by what you have seen! To many of us it has happened that we have seen the drunk in his rags, perhaps in his delirium, possibly upon his deathbed. Some of us have seen the unchaste diseased in body and despairing in soul. We have seen the profligate in poverty and dishonor. We have seen the sluggard hungry and homeless. And thus we have learned the result of sin upon other men if we have never felt it upon ourselves. He that will go to the hospital with his eyes open, or, perhaps, even call upon his next door neighbor when his sins have come home to him, may see what sin can do even upon the outward fabric of our manhood!

What it can do upon the soul can be guessed from the ruin which it brings upon the body. The blinded Elymas is not before us, today, but we know that the narrative is true and, therefore, without our actually *seeing* it, the lesson should come home to every thoughtful mind. We have probably seen with our own eyes instances in which other members of the human body have been rendered horrible with disease engendered by sin—and that ought to create in us a horror of all evil and incline us to hear what the remedy of sin may be. He that has once seen the sickness will long to know the antidote. He that has smarted under the curse of sin will be anxious to learn the way by which the plague can be stopped and men can be made anew in the image of God.

But if God's judgments and wonders are aids to faith, *what shall I say of His wonders of mercy?* Blessed be His name, these are much more common and can be much more easily seen! I cannot show you, today, a man blinded because he refused the Gospel. But I can show you a great many whose eyes have been opened by *receiving* the Gospel! They did not believe it, nor wished to know anything about it—but they were persuaded to come and hear the Word of God preached—and while they listened, there fell from the eyes of their understanding, as it had been scales, and they began to see! The glorious Light of God which gleams from Jesus' brow was suddenly visible! The Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ came streaming into their once darkened minds and they saw and believed!

Hundreds of us who are now present were once as blind as bats to the saving Truth of God, but we have been brought out of darkness into marvelous light and we gladly bear our testimony to the power of saving Grace! I, for one, can say, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see!" What I could not understand is now clear to me! What I could not receive has now stamped itself upon my very being, to my heart's intense joy! I know, Brothers and Sisters, that thousands of you would rise if I were to ask you to testify that the Lord has renewed you in the spirit of your minds and has brought you into spiritual life, light, and liberty! Glory be to God for it! It ought to be a great help, to enquiring minds, when they see numerous conversions all around them, for conversions are the standing miracles of the Gospel, and if any man will only look into

them and consider them, awhile, he will perceive that they are the best attesting seals the Truth of God can have!

Evidently there is a singular power in the Gospel which is not to be found anywhere else. What is this power? From where does it come? Could it go with a falsehood? We have seen the Gospel produce an amazing revolution in a man—not merely a reformation, but a far deeper change—a new birth, a complete reconstruction of his nature! How was this done? I knew a man who was of a fierce temper—a troubler to his own household when he happened to fall into his fits. He was so passionate at times that I should not like to tell all the wild things which he would do. I have seen that man, since conversion—and he has had things to test him which might, as we say, have provoked a saint. But he bore them patiently and in a manner which I desire to imitate! The lion has become a lamb! He is gentle and tender—no one could think that he was the same man! Indeed, he is not, for Grace has made him a new man in Christ Jesus!

We have seen persons reveling in licentiousness who sinned greedily, who could not be satisfied with any common sin—they have heard the Gospel and become chaste and even delicate in purity, so that the very mention of their former crimes has shocked them and made them weep! Such persons have manifested a watchful care against the fault in which they once delighted. They have been afraid to go near their old haunts, or to mix with their old companions. What has worked this? What teaching must that be which accomplishes such marvels? These changes have sometimes taken place in a brief space of time. Look at Colonel Gardiner, going to keep an appointment of the worst sort—and as he waited for half-an-hour because he found himself early, he saw, or thought he saw a vision of our Lord upon the Cross. And, being reproved and melted by the sight, he fled from the spot, repented, believed and lived a godly life! Until his death at the battle of Prestonpans, he was one of the leading Christians of his day!

“That is an extraordinary instance,” says one. I tell you I have met with scores equally remarkable! Not a week passes over my head but I hear of conversions which astound even me, as used as I am to these miracles of love! The most unlikely people, those whom their friends never accused of a *touch* of Methodism, who never spoke of religion without a sneer, have heard the doctrine of our Lord Jesus and, before long, they have repented of sin, have believed in the Redeemer and have come to the front among earnest Christians—working for the Lord Jesus Christ with all their might! Thousands of others who have been quietly pursuing the paths of morality and outward religion, have, nevertheless, experienced a spiritual change which, to them, has been quite as memorable as if they had been turned from the grossest immorality to virtue! These Lydias are as truly converted as if they had been Magdalenes—and the change has been as real to themselves as if it had been conspicuous to all beholders.

What is this change? Is it fact or fancy? Do I see the skeptics smiling in a pretended pity for our folly? We are quite able to bear their contempt!

Will they be willing to hear a little reason? Sirs, do you think that we are *all* fools? In what are we inferior to those who thus despise us? Can we not manage our business affairs quite as well as those who think us fanatics? Are we all deceived? It is an odd thing that this deceit should lead hundreds of thousands, in all ages, to seek after virtue and true holiness, to seek peace and live for the good of others! This singular phenomenon of regeneration is not to be denied, for its witnesses are countless! I claim that we have a right to be heard even by those gentlemen who believe only in actual phenomena. This is not to be put aside by a wave of the hand and a sneer—all attempts in that direction are as unphilosophical as they are insulting.

We testify of certain operations which we have seen in others and felt in ourselves, by which the current of our thought is changed, our loves and hates have been made entirely different, and our whole manhood has been made anew! These operations, we believe, to be worked by the finger of God and to be proofs that the Gospel is supernatural and true. I do not say that this witness will lead any man to saving faith by itself, but I do say that were not men's minds depraved, it would do so. I say it ought, at any rate, to lead every man to give attention to that Gospel whose operation is so remarkable.

A skeptical barrister in America took it into his head to attend a Wesleyan meeting and he sat down apart from the rest merely to take notes of what was said, as he might have done in a court of law. He knew the persons who spoke, one after the other, and bore testimony to the effect of the Gospel upon them. They were his neighbors and he thought to himself, "If I were arguing a case and could put these people into the witness box, and they were on my side, I should feel quite sure of carrying my case, for they are well known for honesty and truthfulness." Several persons, without any collusion, rose, one after another, and though their stories greatly varied, yet they all came to one point—that they had believed the Lord Jesus Christ—and by the power of the Holy Spirit had been made totally new.

As the lawyer went out, he said to himself, "Their case is proved. I cannot question the truthfulness of any of these witnesses. There must be much more in religion than I thought." This led him to seek the Savior for himself and he became a Christian. I pray that many here present may feel that these wonders of mercy are a great aid to them! And may the Holy Spirit lead them to attend to the Gospel which has such power in it! Here I wish we could stop and sing that admirable hymn—

***“Questions and doubts be heard no more,  
Let Christ and joy be all our theme!  
His Spirit seals His Gospel sure  
To every soul that trusts in Him.  
'Tis God's inimitable hand  
That molds and forms the heart anew.  
Blasphemers can no more withstand,  
But bow, and own Your Doctrine true.  
The guilty soul that trusts Your blood,***

***Finds peace and pardon at the Cross.  
The sinful soul, averse from God,  
Believes and loves his Maker's laws.  
Learning and wit may cease their strife,  
When miracles with glory shine:  
The voice that calls the dead to life  
Must be almighty and Divine."***

**III.** But I must proceed. Lastly, let us observe THE SOURCE OF FAITH. "Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the Doctrine of the Lord." *It is Doctrine, then, or faithful teaching, which brings men to Christ.* Let those who despise the Doctrine of God mind what they are doing, for the Doctrine of the Cross is only foolishness to them who perish! Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the plain teaching of the Word of the Lord leads men to believe in Jesus! I do not think it is any great good for a preacher to stand up and cry, "Believe, believe, believe," if he never tells you what is to be believed! There is plenty of this kind of preaching around and the result is sadly transient and superficial. Poor souls say, "We are ready to believe, but tell us what to believe! We are ready to trust, but tell us what to trust in!" If we do not preach the great Doctrine of the atoning Sacrifice. If we do not lift up Christ as suffering chastisement in man's place, we have not put before them the basis on which their faith is to be built! Justification by faith and regeneration by the Spirit must be continually taught.

The proconsul was, no doubt, astonished to see Elymas blinded, but he was a great deal more astonished at the Doctrine which Paul preached when he began to tell him that salvation was not by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ—that the way to be accepted of God was not by presenting to the Lord anything performed by us or felt within us—but by laying hold upon the righteousness which Jesus Christ has worked out and brought in! When he heard this good news, he might well be astonished and yield his heart to Jesus! Dear Friends, the most astonishing thing in the world is the Gospel! "We have heard it for a long time," says one. Have you? You may have *listened* to it for years—and all the while it may have gone in and out of your ears—but still you may have never *heard* it. But if you have heard it *inwardly*, and understood it, you will acknowledge that it is the miracle of miracles, the masterpiece of Divine wisdom!

Listen! In the Gospel, God is just and yet merciful! He lays upon His Son the chastisement of our peace and then He forgives us freely for His own name's sake! In the Gospel, everything is of Grace—there is no respect to human merit or human virtue—God gives freely to undeserving sinners! And yet there is nothing like the Gospel for fostering holiness and making men zealous for good works. It will not allow good works to be the *root* of spiritual life, but it promotes, no, *creates* good works as the fruit of that life. All the really good works in the world are fashioned upon the anvil of Free Grace. Nothing ever produces holiness but faith in the Holy Savior. And it is as wonderful as it is true, that while the Gospel bids the sinner come to Jesus as freely as if he were not guilty, yet it declares that

without holiness no man can see the Lord! It does not merely *command* holiness, but it *produces* it!

It is a wonderful system for clearing the guilty and yet for condemning his sin. It is the glory of the Gospel that it can, at one blow, save the sinner and slay his sin, absolve the rebel and end his rebellion. This supernatural effect is not produced for a short time, only, but forever! The Gospel does not renew a sinner for a season and then leave him to relapse—it gives an endless life, implants a deathless principle—and secures ultimate perfection. It is written, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “He that believes in the Son has everlasting life”—not a life that comes and goes, but a life that endures to all eternity! All this can be done in a minute, so that a heavenly life commences in less time than it takes your clock to tick—is not this an astonishing work of the Holy Spirit?

As Sergius Paul heard of this, he was amazed and believed—do you wonder? I say to you who do not understand the Gospel, if you need a refreshing sensation—if you go in for novelty and desire something of the common—begin to study the Word of God and to hear it without prejudice. Here is a Doctrine which is always news, always glad tidings—hear and your soul shall live! Turn from it and you will perish! Angels have not yet grown weary of gazing into the depths of the Gospel. It is written, “which things the angels desire to look into.” Two figures of cherubim were placed over the Mercy Seat of old, standing with outstretched wings and gazing down upon the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, which was called the Mercy Seat. This was meant to set forth the desire of holy angels to comprehend the Gospel of Propitiation. They cannot get a full understanding of all its mysteries till you and I shall join them before the Throne of God and there declare what Grace has done for us, “to the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.”

Come then, my Hearers, come and candidly study what is to be believed! Come and be astonished at the Doctrine of Christ Crucified! Incline your ears, awaken your minds and yield your hearts! Be eager to be instructed of the Holy Spirit who waits to teach you. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land! If you desire to know God, you shall know Him! The great Father is not far from any of you. There is the light! It is not dim, nor far away. The fault is in your eyes if you do not see. Oh, that you would cry out with Bartimaeus, “Son of David, have mercy on me.” Oh, that your prayer would be, “Lord, that I might receive my sight.” Then you would see and believe—and live forever! God grant it this very morning, to the praise of the glory of His Grace. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 13:1-43.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—122, 481, 486.**

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# **“TO YOU”**

## **NO. 2899**

**A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1904.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 9, 1876.**

***“To you is the word of this salvation sent.”***  
**Acts 13:26.**

MY text must be read in the light of the 46<sup>th</sup> verse, or else I may be thought to be guilty of wresting it from its true meaning. Paul originally said to the Jews and proselytes in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, “To *you* is the word of this salvation sent.” But they rejected the message and, therefore, the Apostle said to them, “It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” So, if Paul were now here, he might, in addressing you, use the very same words which he used in addressing Israel of old and say, “To *you* is the word of this salvation sent.”

This fact furnishes us with a warning. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, that the Gospel was first sent to Israel. Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, confined His personal ministry almost entirely within the bounds of Palestine and He bade His disciples begin the preaching of the Gospel at Jerusalem—and such was the narrowness which naturally appertained to their nationality that it took a very long time to bring most of the Apostles to preach to any people beside the Jews. In this way the Jews had a full opportunity of knowing the Truth of God, but, because they were blinded by prejudice and sin, they could not see Christ. They judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, so Paul and the rest of the Apostles turned to the Gentiles. I would solemnly remind you who now have the opportunity of hearing the Gospel that if any nation shall be privileged to have the Gospel sent to it and yet shall continue to reject it, God may turn from that nation as readily as He turned from the Jews—perhaps even more readily than He turned from His ancient and peculiarly favored people, Israel.

If, in this country, men and women continue to go after the idolatrous calves of Ritualism, or turn aside to the modern Sadduceeism of skepticism, it may be that the Lord will remove the candlestick out of its place and that the Word of the Gospel will no longer be sent to us. At present there are many nations to which the Gospel has scarcely been sent by the way of preaching it in their own tongue. They have not yet heard it,

but they must do so, sooner or later. There are other countries that were, at one time, the home of saints to whom Christ's name was known—yet they are now left in the darkness of Popery, or else Mohammedanism has brought the lies of the crescent to take the place of the Truth of the Cross. Go to the ruins of the seven churches of Asia and ask how it is that, as churches, we know nothing of them now—and learn from their doom not to trifle with the Truth of God when it comes to you, nor to judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life lest, perhaps, the messengers of peace should be sent to other lands and the Light of the Gospel should no longer shine upon our highly favored island!

And you, dear Friend—speaking personally to you as an individual rather than to the nation in general—I pray you to take heed that while you are able to hear the Gospel, you also receive it, for it may be that very soon you will be unable to come to the House of Prayer, or your lot may be cast where the Gospel is not faithfully preached and you may have to rue these blessed days in which the Kingdom of God came so near to you, yet you did not enter in! Yes, you may lie a-dying and you may have to lament the Sabbaths that you have wasted and which never will come back to you. And oh, in the next world, with what regret you will have to look back upon the desecrated Sabbaths, the neglected means of Grace and the despised invitations of God's ministers! And you will mourn that you judged yourself unworthy of everlasting life and, therefore, have passed away into that place of woe where Gospel invitations can never reach your ears! I am preaching with the hope that at least some of you may be saved from such a terrible doom as that and that, this very hour, the Gospel which is sent to you may be accepted by you!

There was a little boy whom his mother noticed as always wonderfully attentive to the Word. He would frequently put his hand to his ear so as to catch every word from the preacher. She said to him, "John, why do you do that, my Dear?" He replied, "Did you not hear the minister say, the other Sunday, that if there was any part of the sermon that would be sure to do us good, the devil would try to cause a disturbance just then, so that we might not hear it? So I am determined that if there is anything that is likely to do me good, I will hear it." Any man, or woman, or child who will hear like that, will not hear in vain—that is impossible!

**I.** My talk will be very simple and not very long. And, first of all, I am going to answer the question, **WHAT IS THIS WORD OF SALVATION WHICH IS SENT TO US?**

If you read the passage through, as we did just now, you will see that the word of salvation, which is sent to us, is *the testimony that Jesus Christ is the promised Savior*. Paul showed that He was of the seed of David, the Messiah whom God had promised to His people by the Prophets. Jesus of Nazareth was the Seed of the woman who was to bruise the old serpent's head, the One of whom the ancient seers spoke so sweetly and for whom the 12 tribes, watching night and day, waited so long. This is the Messiah, the world's only Hope, the one Redeemer—rightly called the King of the Jews—yet also the Savior of all who believe in Him!

What has this Truth of God to do with you? Why, it has this to do with you—that *through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sin!* That same Jesus who was the Son of God, took upon Himself our human nature, lived in this world and worked righteousness. And when the due time came, He took upon Himself the sins of all His people. The Lord laid them upon Him and He carried them up to the Cross and there, upon the tree, He bore the full penalty for all the transgressions of His people. The penalty for sin was death, so Jesus died. And Paul writes, by Inspiration, "God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Now, because Christ died in the place of the ungodly, the forgiveness of sins is being preached, at this moment, in tens of thousands of places all over the world! Whoever believes in Jesus Christ—that is, simply trust in Him—shall receive at once the forgiveness of all his sins—a complete and irreversible forgiveness by which the whole of his sin is blotted out as when a man strikes his pen through the record of a debt or writes below it, "Settled." All his sin is removed, as when the North wind drives away the cloud and the sky is bright and clear. All his sin is removed, as when the fuller cleanses the filthy garment and makes it white as snow. All his sin is removed forever, "as far as the East is from the West." So who can lay anything to the charge of the man whose sins Christ has forgiven? This forgiveness is preached unto you through the Man, Christ Jesus, even to you who believe on His name!

The word of this salvation is *the proclamation of perfect salvation through the risen Redeemer*, for the Apostle adds, "by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses." That is to say, there were some sins which the Law given to Moses never thought of forgiving, but there are no sins which Christ is either unable or unwilling to forgive. The Law of Moses could not, in very deed, put away *any* sin, so fresh sacrifices had to be continually offered under the Mosaic dispensation. "But this Man" whom we preach unto you, "after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God," having no need to present any more sacrifices. So that if you believe on Him, your sins shall be not figuratively, but actually put away forever—and there shall remain to you no more consciousness of sin. Washed in the precious blood of Christ, you shall be whiter than snow and shall enter into Heaven, none daring to accuse you, for who shall accuse the man or woman whom Christ has justified? This is the word of salvation, then, that is sent to you, my dear Friends, as much as to those to whom Paul spoke. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." He shall never perish, for he is forgiven by God and is "accepted in the Beloved."

If there are any of you who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it seems to me that you are like a ship that is derelict—left to the mercy of the winds and waves. O Soul, yours is an unhappy condition for anyone to be in! Though as yet you are not destroyed. Though as yet you are not in Hell, it ought to be misery enough for a man to feel, "I am not under

the direction of God. I have not Christ on board to be my Pilot." Stop, young woman! Stop, young man! If that is the case with you, go no further as you are, but ask the Lord to direct you from this time forth and even forever more! I stand here as a living witness to this fact that it is the highest wisdom and happiness to trust in the Lord! I have relied upon Him since I was 15 years of age and my only grief is that I did not trust Him earlier! But since the hour that brought me to His feet and enabled me to rest in Him, He has been a good Helper, a sure Guide and a blessed Friend to me! And speaking from my own experience, I would entreat my Brothers and Sisters who are younger than I am to delay no longer, but to take my Heavenly Father to be their Guide also! May the Lord, the Holy Spirit, lead you to do so this very hour, for Jesus Christ's sake!

**II.** Now let us pass on to a second question which is, IN WHAT MANNER IS THIS GOSPEL SENT TO YOU? Let me have your ears and your heart while I try to answer this important question as the Holy Spirit shall guide me.

Well, first, it was sent to you, dear Friend, whoever you may be, *in Christ's universal commission* which He gave to His disciples, "Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." You are a creature, are you not? Then the Gospel is to be preached to you! Paul wrote to Timothy, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." You are a sinner, are you not? Then, Christ came to save you and this faithful saying is worthy of your acceptation! Our Lord Jesus Christ, in His last invitation in the Book of Revelation, says, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Surely, "*whoever will*" must include you, whoever you may be, for you have a will and you can come to Christ if you will—

***"Let every mortal ear attend,  
And every heart rejoice"—***

for, to everyone of woman born—

***The trumpet of the Gospel sounds  
With an inviting voice."***

Young or old, rich or poor, whomever you may be, "to *you* is the word of this salvation sent" by Him who bade us go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, saying, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned."

But it is also sent to you in another sense, for *the preaching of it has actually come to you*. The word of this salvation is sent to every creature under Heaven, but the great mass of mankind has not yet heard it. "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they are sent?" O Church of the living God, what a sin lies at your door because they are not sent and, therefore, the heathen do not hear and hence they are not saved! But, "to you," the preacher has come! You have heard the Gospel—some of you from your childhood. Can you recollect the time when you did *not* hear it? You say, sometimes, that it has been dinned into your ears until you are almost weary of it. When we come in-

to the pulpit, we cannot tell you anything fresh—it is just the same old story that you have heard so long. "To you" the word of this salvation has been sent and you have heard it and know what it is!

Perhaps some of you may say to me, "Sir, we live in a place where the Gospel is not preached. We have rank Ritualism in the parish church and nothing but vapid intellectualism in all the Dissenting chapels." I am sorry if that is true, but look here, Sirs—you have all got this Bible, or you can all get it and it will be a stern witness against everyone of you, whether you hear the Gospel preached or not! I suppose that a copy of the Bible is in almost every Englishman's house—I wonder whether there is one home in this land without it—there should not be. Well, then, as long as this invaluable preacher is with you—as long as you can read the Word of God in your home, or in the field, or in the barn or the shop—to you, indeed, is the word of this salvation sent!

Further, I believe that, *to some people, the Gospel is sent in a yet more remarkable manner.* Possibly the very fact that you are here, at this service, is one of the many instances in which the Gospel has been sent to you. There was a young man, some years ago, who dishonored his father's name in the village where he lived—a scapegrace, as they called him—and he ran away from home to a distant land. He came to London and went on board a vessel, at the docks, expecting to sail. This was on a Saturday, but an "accident" occurred and the ship was delayed, so he had a Sunday in London. He remembered that his father had often spoken of the Tabernacle, so he enquired the way and came here—an utterly ungodly young man. Some months after, in a letter which he wrote to his home, his father was surprised to find that he was commencing to preach the Gospel. He said that on that Sunday night when he came here, the Lord met with him and saved him. That was a blessed "accident" that kept him from sailing on the Saturday and that brought him here to listen to the Gospel of Jesus!

I never know who may be in my congregation. Ah, Tom, you scapegrace, I should not wonder, as you have come in here, if there was another wonder in store for you! And I trust that the Lord has sent the Gospel to you by that singular Providence which has brought you among us! Out of this crowd there must be some who are here under very peculiar circumstances. Some of you have come up from the country and you have been persuaded by friends to come here. I do not know you, or anything about you, but my Lord does and I trust that to you is the word of this salvation sent by the very Providence which has brought you here! A child takes the seed of a weed, when it is fully ripe, and blows upon it in sheer sport—away go the little parachutes, bearing the seeds through the air—and you may find that weed over hill and dale miles away! We, though not little children, take the Divine Seed of the Truth of God and, with our anxious, but believing breath, we blow it abroad in this congregation. Where that seed may fall, we cannot tell. It may fall upon some stranger from the backwoods of Canada, or some Brother from a great city of America, or some lonely worker who has been toiling far away in

India, or on some at home, unknown to us, who, nevertheless, shall receive into good soil the seed, not of a weed, but of a precious flower of God! And if the world is not sooner brought to its close, even a thousand years hence there may be plants growing that can trace their spiritual parentage to the sowing of tonight! O young man, young woman, worker for Christ—you can never tell the infinite issues of what seemed so small a matter as the sowing of the good Seed of the Kingdom!

Sometimes God sends the Truth very specially home to the heart and conscience of the hearer by the singularity of the preacher's words. He has been guided by the Holy Spirit to paint the man's portrait to the life and the man has been astounded at it. He has imagined that somebody must have informed the preacher about him, yet the speaker was, all the while, quite innocent of the man's affairs. "Why, the very words I have used," says he, "and the inmost thoughts of my heart were laid bare!" Do you not know that this is one of the characteristics of the Word of God? Paul says that it "is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." If anything in the preaching at any time comes right home to you—as though the preacher looked right into you, knew all about you and reckoned you up as a boy does a sum in arithmetic on His slate—do not begin to wonder how it is done, but realize that, in this way, "to you is the word of this salvation sent." Oh, that the blessed Spirit would now arrest some of you—laying His hand of Grace upon your shoulder as the sheriff's officer does when he arrests a man in the name of the law! May the Lord say to you, "You are My prisoner. You shall give your heart to Me. Make haste and come down and receive Me into your heart, for there I must dwell forever"—

***"Thus the eternal counsel ran—  
'Almighty Grace, arrest that man!'"—***

And when the eternal counsel so runs and the Divine decree so determines, so shall it be, for the Lord God is mighty to save and none shall be able to withstand the power of His Omnipotent Grace!

**III.** Now, thirdly, I am going to keep to the same theme, yet to touch another string while I reply to this question—IN WHAT POSITION DOES THE GOSPEL PLACE A MAN WHEN IT COMES TO HIM?

The word of this salvation has been sent to many of you. In what position does it put you? Well, first, *in a position of great indebtedness*, for you owe—I dare not try to calculate how much—God for sending the Gospel to you. That there should be a Gospel to send to you—that Christ should be given for you—that His precious blood should be shed for you—that there should be full and free forgiveness for you, though you feel that you are altogether undeserving of it—all this makes up a stupendous favor from God. May you never dare to thrust it from you!

Then think of what you owe to the Providence that has sent the Gospel to you. For you, dear Friends, Apostles lived, labored, suffered and journeyed so that even to these distant isles of Britain the Gospel of Jesus might be brought. For you Reformers battled, bled and died that they

might dispel the darkness of error and falsehood and bring out the Light of the Truth of God. For you, martyrs suffered by the thousands! Go to Smithfield and recall what your brave sires endured in order that their sons might have the Gospel freely preached to them—that very Gospel which many of them despise! Wonderful have been the arrangements of Divine Providence to keep the Light of Truth burning in these lands!

The fact that at this moment you are hearing the Gospel preached imposes a great obligation upon you. Who built this place, but for the most part generous Christian people—who are even now praying for your conversion—God's servants who love you and desire your eternal welfare? And, though I ask no thanks of you, yet does my soul yearn over you, poor Soul, longing that you may find the Savior as I have found Him and be as happy in Him as I am. Well, you cannot be thought of and loved by others thus, you cannot have the great wheels of Divine Providence continually revolving to bring the Gospel to you and, above all—transcendently above all—you cannot have the Lord Jesus Christ bleeding on Calvary's Cross that there may be a Gospel to preach to you without your being put under very solemn obligations!

Further, the fact that you have the Gospel sent to you *puts you into a very hopeful position*. I like to think about how many people are going to be saved every time the Gospel is faithfully preached. It is not preached in vain—we deliver a message from God that never misses the mark at which He aimed! We are sure that it is so, for we preach it in faith. We always expect to hear of sinners being saved and we are never disappointed, nor shall we ever be while we can preach the Truth of God with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven. It is in His power that we preach, far we have sought the aid of the Holy Spirit! And thousands of you have sought His aid, too, and we have not sought in vain as we look for conversions and we, therefore, feel, dear Friends, that you are in a hopeful condition—and we believe that many of you will be brought to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ!

But remember—and here let me throw the whole emphasis of my soul into my message—you are put into a *very responsible position*, for if the Gospel is thus brought to you and you reject it, it will be a savor of death unto death to you! To every person to whom the word of this salvation comes, I have to say, in my Master's name—If you are not saved by it, you will have the blood of your soul on your own skirts. Woe unto you if you judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life and declare that you will not have Christ to reign over you! Woe unto you if you are disobedient and stumble at this stumbling-stone! Ah, my dear Hearers, it may seem but a trifling thing to you to hear the Gospel, but this makes your position very different from what it would otherwise have been! The Last Great Day will call me to account for every word I utter in delivering my Master's message—and it will also call each one of you to account for the reception or rejection of that message! You young men and young women, and you graybeards will have to answer in that day for the way you deal with tonight's message! You will not be able to excuse yourselves by

saying, "We never heard of pardon through the blood of Jesus." You will not be able to say, "The preacher did not proclaim the Gospel to us. He gave us some fine language and tried to play the orator—and finished off with a grand display of fireworks." You will never be able to truthfully say that! You know that there is nothing that I desire but to set Christ plainly before you and to beseech, entreat and implore you to put your trust in Him, for He is worthy of all the trust of your heart!

So, have done with all other confidences and with the love of sin—and lay hold on eternal life! But, whether you will do so or not, you can be sure of this—to you is the word of this salvation sent and the Kingdom of God has come near to you!

**IV.** My last question is this. HOW ARE YOU GOING TO TREAT THE WORD OF THIS SALVATION, NOW THAT IT IS SENT TO YOU?

First, *are any of you going to contradict it and blaspheme it?* I trust not, although that sin is not an uncommon one nowadays. Yet I most sincerely hope that I am not addressing one who blasphemes the Christ who died for sinners—such love as His ought to be free from blasphemy!

If you do not commit that sin, I fear that you may say, as so many others have said before you, "*I will think of it tomorrow.*" You do not really mean to think of it if you talk like that. When Felix said to Paul, "Go your way for this time: when I have a convenient season, I will call for you," what he meant was, "I do not want to listen to you any longer; you are a nuisance to me." Let me put the matter to you very plainly. You either love Christ or do not love Him—which is it? That "tomorrow" plea is a lie! Satan has invented it in order that he may enable men to reject Christ and yet flatter their souls with the notion that they are not doing so. Come, then, it may be that this is the last time the question will ever be put to you in this fashion. I have you, as it were, by the button-hole now and, as the "Ancient Mariner" detained the wedding guest with his weird story, so would I hold you with this earnest personal pressure upon your heart and conscience! Do you mean to give Christ the go-by, or not? Remember that the bell shall toll before long for you—and six feet of earth shall hold down each one who comes to this Tabernacle and who now sits and listens to the word of this salvation!

Oh, whatever you do, do not procrastinate! Say, "No," if you mean, "No." Say "Yes," if God the Holy Spirit enables you to say it, but do not say it as some have too readily done in certain revival services, without fully considering the matter! They have jumped into religion and jumped out again just as quickly. Like the rocky-ground hearers, the seed quickly sprang up and there was the green blade, but there was no depth of earth, so it soon withered away. Ask the Lord to plow your soul and to break up the soil of your heart that there may be roothold for the good Seed of the Kingdom!

And, in order to attain to this end, look right away from yourself to Jesus—away from your repenting, pleading and chapel attendance and anything else—to Jesus only, with that true faith which has nothing to do with anything but the finished work of the Christ who says, "Look unto

Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Do not trust to going into enquiry-rooms and talking with earnest evangelists and other Christian workers. If you would be saved, your soul must come to grappling terms with Christ—and Christ must come to close terms with you—otherwise you will be none the better for having heard the Gospel! Indeed, the very fact that you have heard it will only increase your condemnation!

I think I hear someone say, "Gladly would I have Him now! I would give my eyes to have Him." Well, you need not give your eyes, or anything else—you may have Him for nothing! I have told you the story of the vessel that was out at sea, as the captain thought, but he was out of his reckoning. They ran short of water, they had not a drop to drink. So at last they hailed a vessel and, speaking through the trumpet the captain cried, "We need water! We are perishing for lack of water." Imagine his surprise when there came across the wave this reply, "Dip it up! You are in the river Amazon! It is fresh water all round you. Dip it up!" You perhaps think that you are out on the salt sea, but you are not—God's mercy is all around you! Throw your bucket overboard; dip it up! Trust in Jesus—

***"Only trust Him! Only trust Him!  
He will save you now!  
Only trust Him, Only trust Him!  
He will save you now!"***

Do you ask, "What shall I do to be saved?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." That was Paul's answer to the question and I cannot give you a better one. Believing does not take a week, or even a minute. Your heart rests and relies on Christ and Christ saves your heart. See me leaning here, with all my weight, upon this platform rail? Lean so upon Christ, with all your weight. Have done with everything but Jesus—and when you have believed on Him, then obey Him by being baptized in His name, for He put belief and Baptism together when He said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved."

So, accept the whole of the Gospel and keep to the command of Christ in every point—and then you may look to the faithful God to fulfill His promise that you shall be saved! The Lord bless you and save every one of you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ACTS 13:13-49.**

**Verse 13.** *Now when Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.* "John"—that is, John Mark, as we see by chapter 15:37.

**14, 15.** *But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue went unto them, saying, You men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say so.* The rulers of the synagogue

had noticed them as strangers coming in and perceived that they were Jews, probably by their wearing the same kind of garments as other Jews did.

**16.** *Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and you that fear God, give audience. Or, rather, "and you Gentile proselytes, give audience."*

**17.** *The God of this people of Israel choose our fathers and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm He brought them out of there.* It is always well to begin with our hearers upon some common ground. So, wishing to persuade these people to receive the Lord Jesus as the promised Messiah, Paul begins with that which was always attractive to their ears—the history of their nation—with a special mention of the peculiar favor which God had shown to His chosen people, Israel, in bringing them up out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage.

**18-21.** *And about the time of forty years He put up with their manners in the wilderness. And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. And after that He gave unto them Judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the Prophet. And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul, the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.* Do you not sometimes hear people speak disparagingly about certain parts of Scripture and say, "Oh, that is the historical part"? Dear Friends, never fall into the error of thinking less of one part of Scripture than of another, but remember that "all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God and is profitable for Doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the men of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." This sermon by Paul is a rehearsal of Old Testament history—and he would not have spoken unprofitably—you may depend upon that! I would urge you to bear a protest *against* the method which seems to be springing up, nowadays, of saying, "That part of the Bible is for the Jews." Or, "That particular Epistle"—for they speak thus even of the New Testament—"is not for us." It is *all* for us and we are to seek to profit by every word of it, praying the Holy Spirit to apply it to our hearts!

**22-25.** *And when He had removed him, He raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also He gave testimony, and said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, which shall fulfill all My will. Of this man's seed has God, according to His promise, raised unto Israel a Savior—Jesus—after John had first preached before His coming, the Baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Who do you think I am? I am not He. But, behold, there comes One after me, whose shoes of His feet I am not worthy to loosen.* Paul went on with his narrative as far as the history of Saul and David—and so he came to great David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He had come by way of Old Testament history to Christ and by way of John the Baptist to Christ—and that is how the preacher of the Gospel should

travel. On whatever road he journeys, his terminus must be Christ. The motto of all true servants of God must be, "WE PREACH CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED." A sermon without Christ in it is like a loaf of bread without flour in it! No Christ in your sermon, Sir? Then go home and never preach again until you have something worth preaching!

**26.** *Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whoever among you fears God. Or, "is a proselyte to God."*

**26, 27.** *To you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the Prophet which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him. See how easy it is for people to hear the Bible read and yet to know very little about what it contains? They may have the lessons read every Sabbath in their hearing and yet they may not understand anything that is in them. They may even become great readers of the Scriptures, yet not come to Christ as it was with those to whom the Lord Jesus said—"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. But you will not come to Me, that you might have life." If you are content with merely reading or hearing the Scriptures and do not come to Christ, Himself, you stop short of salvation! Yes, you stay in a position where you may be capable of the grossest sin—as were these people at Antioch in Pisidia.*

**28-37.** *And though they found no cause of death in Him, yet desired they Pilate that He should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulcher. But God raised Him from the dead: and He was seen many days of them which came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God has fulfilled the same unto us, their children, in that He has raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the Second Psalm, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You. And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give You the sure mercies of David. Why He says also in another Psalm, You shall not allow Your Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but He, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Note how Paul keeps to Scripture! An Inspired Apostle, himself, yet He appealed to the Old Testament to support his case. That was the best argument he could possibly use with Jews—and often it will be the best that we can use with Gentiles.*

**38-42.** *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the proverb; Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you. And when the Jews were gone out of the*

*synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. They did not mind hearing sermons twice in those days! We are not often asked to preach the same sermon over again. But these people wanted to know the Truth of God and, therefore, they asked to have it repeated. If our people will not receive the Gospel the first time we preach it, we must tell it to them over and over again. With the hammer of the Word of God, we must strike the same nail on the head again and again. Even if we do not utter the same words there must always be the same Subject, Sabbath by Sabbath and week by week.*

**43-46.** *Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the Grace of God. And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the Word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spoke against these things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold. Though Jews themselves, they could not bear to see the bigotry of their nation.*

**46.** *And said, It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. And a blessed turning it has been for you, dear Friends, and for me!*

**47-49.** *For so has the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set you to be a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the Word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.*

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—488, 504, 521.  
AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—20.**

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

# **“THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID”**

## **NO. 2366**

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, JUNE 24, 1894.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 6, 1888.**

***“And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now  
no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise,  
I will give you the sure mercies of David.”  
Acts 13:34.***

WE know from this quotation made by the Apostle Paul in his address at Antioch, that he was alluding not only to David, but to the Lord Jesus, also. “For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but He, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.” There was a Covenant made with David which was intended to be typical of another Covenant—and David, himself, is the special type of that great King with whom God has made a Covenant on behalf of His people. We will leave David somewhat in the background in our meditations tonight. We will only use him as the symbol of the great Christ in whom we rejoice, for God gives to us “the sure mercies of David” in Jesus Christ, His well-beloved Son.

The course of our thought upon this passage, if we are helped to follow it, will be this. First, let us consider, *Where our salvation lies*—it lies in this, that the mercies we receive are “the sure mercies of David.” When we have turned that thought over, we will try to answer this question, *What are the sure mercies of David?* Our next enquiry will be, *In what day are they so sure?* And then, lastly, we will enquire, *What is the connection between the sure mercies of David and the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ?* This text is evidently quoted to prove that the Resurrection of Christ was spoken of in the Old Testament—“As concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.”

**I.** First, dear Friends, let us consider, **WHERE OUR SALVATION LIES.**

It does not lie in ourselves. You may sift yourself over and over, as with a sieve, and you will not discover one atom of saving matter in yourself! You may throw on the dunghill all that you find there. There is not a grain of Grace in a hundred tons of human nature. You may go on sifting, sifting, sifting, to all eternity and you shall find only that which is worthy of the damning sentence. Ask any man who is saved and if he speaks intelligently, he will tell you that the Lord Jesus Christ is his salvation. If he begins to explain the grounds, reasons and foundation of his salvation, he will look away from himself and will point to Jesus Christ, alone!

The text speaks about David and David is a good type of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom our salvation lies. Jesus was *One who was despised and rejected*, just as David was in his own family. When Samuel came to anoint as king one of the sons of Jesse, David was away watching the sheep—he was not thought worthy of being called in till Samuel specially sent for him. His brothers evidently despised him and condemned him as being forward when really he was more courageous than they were. So, too, our Lord was despised and rejected of men—they did not think that the Nazarene could be the Messiah. It was enough, merely, to mention His name and to speak of Him as Jesus of Nazareth, for them at once to ridicule His claims. They judged that it was not possible that He, who was so poor, so meek, so lowly—that He who had so little of anything which they looked for in the promised Deliverer, should be the Savior—yet He was and still is the *only* Savior.

You know the story or tradition that when they were building Solomon’s Temple, all the stones were marked to indicate the places where they should go, for no hammer or chisel was to be used upon them in the sacred courts. There was one stone of a very awkward shape and the builders could not find a place for it. They turned it over and tried to fit it in here and there, but it would not go in anywhere, so they threw it aside and the nettles and the thistles grew over it. It became a proverb and a by-word. One would say to another, “Will you not try to build in that stone?” but they all in turn gave it up—it was the stone which the builders refused. At last, the Temple was all but finished—it only lacked one cornerstone and they looked about for it, but they could not find it. Someone at last suggested, “Perhaps that queerly-shaped stone is the very one intended to complete the Temple.” So they brought it out and found that it was even so. Our blessed Lord and Master applied to Himself the words of the Psalmist, “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.” Like David, Jesus was the Rejected One, but He is the Anointed of the Lord, blessed be His holy name!

Our salvation lies in Another, *even in One who has fought our greatest enemy, and overthrown him*. This was the mark of David that, in due time, he came to the front when all Israel fled from the gigantic Philistine. The two champions meet for the deadly duel, the stone flies from the shepherd’s sling, the giant falls! His head is cut off with his own sword and David brings the gory trophy to King Saul. Our salvation lies in One who has destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. I see Him coming back with the tokens of His triumph in His hand! Like David, He has slain His ten thousands in slaying the one great enemy of His people! In this Jesus, who died on Calvary and in dying, destroyed death and burst the bonds of the grave, lies our salvation!

Yet it lies in *One who, despite His glorious triumphs, was sorely persecuted*. David did not go straightway from his victory over the Philistine to sit upon his throne—he was hunted by Saul like a partridge on the mountains and long had to carry his life in his hands. He had to pass through sore persecution before he became king. And, Beloved, in a certain sense, that is the condition of our Lord Jesus Christ even now! He is

still rejected. I know that His name is used and men like to call themselves His followers, but if you set forth a real Christ, crucified among them, and preach His great substitutionary sacrifice, you shall see that He is no more a favorite among men than He used to be! Still will they spit in His face! Still will they scourge Him! Still will they crucify Him. There has been a long, long battle, through these nearly two thousand years, while men have cried, concerning the Lord and His Anointed, “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.”

But the King will yet come to His Throne. God says, concerning Him, “Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion.” “I will set His hand, also, in the sea, and His right hand in the rivers. Also I will make Him My First-Born, higher than the kings of the earth.” But, for a while, the Prince of this world prevails, the Saul, the enemy that walks in darkness, is allowed to “worry whom he can’t devour.” And though it shall not always be so, yet at present it is a time of conflict and trial. Our salvation still rests in a despised Gospel, in a hunted Christ—but as Israel looked to David in Engedi, by the tracks of the wild goats, and not to Saul upon the throne—so we look to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Though He is still cast out and persecuted, He is the one hope of our spirits!

Bear with me while I also say that our salvation lies in *One who was thrice anointed*, even as David was, first, at his father’s house, then at Hebron, where he was anointed king of Judah, and afterwards when he came fully to his throne and was acknowledged as king of all Israel. Our Jesus was trebly anointed as our Prophet, Priest and King. God has anointed Him with the oil of gladness and we, today, rejoice in Him as fully fitted, prepared and equipped for completing the great work of our salvation.

Once more, Beloved, as David ultimately came to his throne and when, on his throne was seen as the king with whom God had entered into a solemn Covenant that the throne should be his forever, even so our salvation lies in *One with whom God has made a Covenant, “ordered in all things and sure,”* a Covenant which shall stand fast when earth’s old pillars bow and when all things that are created shall melt into their natural nothingness! You know that we fell in one federal head, even the first Adam. Behold the glory of the fact that we rise in another Representative, even the Second Adam, the Lord from Heaven! We see our ruin, yonder, in the Garden of Eden. We see our salvation, yonder, in another garden, Gethsemane, and on the Cross of Calvary. Still we look beyond all our willing, doing, praying and everything that comes of ourselves, to the Son of God and Son of Man, given by God to accomplish that redemption by which sinners are saved! The Lord says, concerning Jesus, “I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted One chosen out of the people.” This Almighty Savior is the only hope of guilty men!

May I ask my dear Hearers at once—lest I should suddenly have to stop short in my sermon—do you know and trust this Savior? Have you come to lean on Christ, alone? Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Can you say, “He is all my salvation and all my desire”? Can you take Him up in your arms, as old Simeon did, and bless God that your eyes have seen His salvation? All that can save you lies there, in the Person and work of

this glorious David, of whom I desire to speak to you, tonight. May God the Holy Spirit introduce you to Him if you know Him not, and may you accept Him at once, as God would have you accept Him—as your Savior and your All!

I have thus spoken upon the first point, where our salvation lies.

**II.** Now, secondly, WHAT ARE THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID? What is meant by that expression?

I have already told you, but I may tell you yet again. God dealt with Israel by way of mercy and, to make that mercy sure, He took a man whom He had chosen—a man whom He loved, a man whom He intended to use—and He made with him a Covenant that He would set him upon the throne, that by his personal influence he might bring down blessings upon all the people. These are “the sure mercies of David.”

In the matter of our salvation, “the sure mercies of David” mean that *God has laid hold upon His Son, Jesus Christ*. You cannot help yourself, but Christ can help you. You cannot cleanse yourself, but Christ can cleanse you. You cannot save yourself, but Christ can save you. Dear Heart, whatever it is you lack, there is no lack in Christ! Whatever is your need, Christ has exactly that which can meet your case. Young man, you say, “I have nothing.” And I answer you with this—Christ has everything! You say, old man, “What can I do?” And I answer you with this—What *cannot* Christ do? If you are nothing, Christ is everything! If you are everything that is *evil*, Christ is everything that is *good*. If you have weakness, mourn it, but trust Christ and He shall be your strength! If you have sorrow, you can not shake it off, but go to Jesus and He shall be your song! All that you need is in Christ. This, then, is the first sure mercy of David—that help is laid on Christ.

And, next, as David was anointed to be the Leader and Commander to his people, even so, *Christ is anointed on our behalf*. He comes not to us as a *self-sent* Savior, but as one anointed of God! It was a great comfort to me, when I put myself in Christ’s hands, that I had not to pick out a Savior for myself, but God had appointed Him. I did not put myself into the hands of One who was not authorized to act, for Jesus comes to us fully commissioned by God. A person who has no diploma may very possibly be a wise surgeon, but there are few sufferers who would trust themselves, in difficult operations, with a man who was not properly authorized to act in such a case. My Lord has a full diploma given Him by the infinite wisdom of God! He knows how to save. He has been long in practice and there are multitudes in Heaven whom He has saved. He is the great specialist in soul saving and He can meet your special case! He has dealt with diseases that no one else can understand—if you are an odd man, or the oddest of the odd, yet this Christ, all comprehensive in His wondrous wisdom, knows all about your condition!

This is another of the sure mercies of David. First, help is laid on Christ and, next, He is anointed to act on our behalf.

We are told, in the 89<sup>th</sup> Psalm, that God promised David that He would overthrow all his enemies—“I will beat down his foes before his face.” Here, then, is another sure mercy for us, *Christ will rout all our enemies*. Who are they? How many are there of them? Which way do they come to

assault us? Christ can meet them all! Your sins, your many fierce and cruel sins, are your enemies. But Christ has made full Atonement for them all. Believe, and these Egyptians shall sink like lead in the Red Sea of your Savior’s blood! Your present lusts, your evil passions, the instincts of your nature which you cannot curb are foes too strong for you to overcome, but Christ is able to destroy them and to put all your temptations to the rout! It may be that Satan, himself, assails you and I pity you if that is the case. Any man who has had a real encounter with the devil will never forget it! All the tempters in Hell, together, cannot make up so dreadful an adversary as Apollyon, himself—but even Satan knows who is his Master! Christ can bid him lie down and be still as a man silences a dog! Only look to Christ, for this is part of the Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, that He shall rout your adversaries! Hand your enemies over to Him and He will rid you of them. Cry, “Son of David, have mercy upon me,” and you shall have a gracious answer and quick deliverance!

God also made this to be a part of His Covenant with His servant, David, that he was to be a storehouse of good things to the nation over which he reigned, and *Jesus is the storehouse of mercy to all His people*. I am so glad that I have to speak to those who need large supplies of Grace, for there is, in Christ, all that any sinner can ever need! As truly can it be said, now, as it might have been said nearly nineteen hundred years ago—

***“Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood  
Shall never lose its power,  
Till all the ransomed Church of God  
Is saved to sin no more.”***

He that opened eyes long ago can open your eyes! He that healed lepers in Judea can heal you! He that raised the dead can raise you! He is as much a Savior, now, as He was at the first—if there is any difference, He has an *increase of power*, for now has God committed into the hands of Jesus all power in Heaven and in earth. Only come and trust Him—for all your salvation lies in Him—and in Him will be found for you in abundance all “the sure mercies of David.”

There is this point, also, about the Covenant made with David, that he was always to have a seed—and *Jesus will always have a seed*. I never come to preach at haphazard, saying to myself, “Perhaps my Lord will have some souls bow before Him.” I know that I have a large congregation and I feel sure that, when God’s Truth is proclaimed, some will yield to Christ. When He speaks, some of His sheep will hear His voice and follow Him—and He will give unto them eternal life! When the good Seed of the Kingdom is sown, there are some furrows in which it will surely take root and bring forth a harvest to His praise.

Well, then, since Christ must have a seed, why should not I be among them? Since, as a Savior, He must save some, why should He not save me? If He is a Physician and must heal some, why should He not heal me? If He spreads a banquet of mercy and the wedding must be furnished with guests, why should not I have a seat among them? How I pray that I may be putting a hopeful thought into some troubled heart tonight! I would get alongside some trembler and whisper this into his

ear, “Jesus must save sinners—will you not be one of those whom He must save?” It is written, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” If you trust Him and He does not save you, let us know of it, for we shall have to alter our preaching! Christ will have run back from His Word. He will be another Savior and not the one in whom we trusted. Come, then, and learn what “the sure mercies of David” are. They are the sure mercies of Jesus, that in Him there is salvation! He is anointed on purpose to give salvation! He is able to rout your adversaries—yes—“He is able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.”

**III.** That leads me to say a few words, as best I may, upon the third point—IN WHAT WAY MAY THESE MERCIES BE SAID TO BE SURE?

Well, they may be said to be sure *because they are found in Jesus*. He is the same, yesterday, today and forever. Then, whatever is in Him, is most surely sure! What a storehouse for God to lay up His mercy—the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ! Remember how the Israelites built treasure cities for Pharaoh? Well, Beloved, the Lord God has made His treasure city to be His own dear Son! “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.” “Go unto Joseph,” said Pharaoh. “Go unto Jesus,” says Jehovah, for all the blessings of the Covenant are treasured up in Him and are, therefore, safe and sure! If salvation had been in your own keeping, you would have lost it long ago. If your hope had lain in yourself, it would soon have been withered! But since it lies in Jesus and in Jesus, only, it is always living and blessed! You and I, poor, helpless, hopeless souls, can flee to this City of Refuge whose gates are never closed, and find ourselves secure from the adversary. They are “the sure mercies of David” because the mercies are all in Christ Jesus our Lord!

The expression is also a good one because *the mercies that come to us by Christ are real mercies*. It seems a very commonplace question to ask, but it is necessary to ask it—did you ever feel yourself to be a real sinner? It is wonderfully easy to go on crying, “Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners,” and yet to know nothing at all about genuine conviction of sin. You know that beggars make sham wounds. I do not know the process, but I have been told that they have certain acids which they can put on their flesh to make you believe they have terrible wounds. But real wounds are very different from sham ones—and when a man is a real sinner and knows it, and his sin cuts into his heart—then he needs real pardoning, real cleansing and a real Savior! So I tell you of “the sure mercies of David”—real forgiveness for real guilt, real pardon for real rebellion—nothing sham or superficial. Yes, you truly guilty ones, you who might be ashamed to be sitting in the House of God, tonight, you who might well cover your faces at being found where godly people come together—you are the sort of people for whom Jesus died! You who need to be disinfected and set apart—you are the sort that our great Lord came into the world to seek and to save! Blessed be His name, He brings us “the sure mercies of David!”

I think the expression is used, again, *because the blessings needed are surely provided*. I have said that you need pardon and cleansing—

**“There is a Fountain filled with blood,**

***Drawn from Emmanuel’s veins.  
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains.”***

There is cleansing in that Fountain for you. The blessings which your souls need will not have to be created—they are ready, they are waiting. The medicine for your sickness is already compounded! The clothing for your nakedness is already made! All that you need between here and Heaven is stored up in the provision of God’s mercy that is made in Christ Jesus! You will never surprise the Lord by the greatness of your necessities, nor have to hear Him say, “I cannot meet your special case.” No, there is a sure provision already made for every soul that will come to God by Jesus Christ!

The blessings of the Covenant of Grace are sure mercies *because they are surely bestowed*. You shall not merely hear of them, but you shall receive them. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, your sins, which are many, shall be all forgiven. If you will look only to Christ, you shall be saved with an everlasting salvation! Do you hear this, you despairing one? In the name of God I say it to you, if I never have an opportunity of uttering it in your hearing again! Will you come and cast your soul on the great David, Jesus Christ, the Well-Beloved of the Father? If you do, you shall have power to become a child of God and then all the heritage which belongs to the heirs of Heaven shall fall to your lot! It will surely be so! You *will* have those “sure mercies of David.”

And once you have them, you shall never lose them *because they shall surely be continued*. If God shall bestow on you eternal life, it shall be eternal life! If God shall once forgive you, He will not afterwards condemn you! If the Judge of all shall justify you, who shall lay anything to your charge? If the Good Shepherd shall bring you into His fold, who shall pluck you from His hand? He says of His sheep, “I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” I have not to preach to you a Gospel of, “ifs,” and “buts,” and “perhapses,” but a Gospel of, “shalls” and “wills!” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Jesus said, “He that believes on Me has everlasting life.” God does not speak to sinful men in the way of mere hopefulness, but He speaks with an absolute certainty of Grace! If you believe, you shall be as surely saved as God is God! Though you are the most guilty soul out of Hell, if you will flee to Christ Jesus, you shall as surely be in Heaven as God is in Heaven! Only trust in Jesus. “Trust in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” Riches of mercy, floods of Grace, ceaseless outflowing of love shall be yours if you will but put yourself under Christ’s leadership—if you will take Him as your Leader and Commander and as the one Mediator between God and men!

**IV.** Now, lastly, IN WHAT WAY ARE “THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID” CONNECTED WITH THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST?

God promised to David that his seed should always sit upon his throne, but if Jesus dies, then is that Covenant broken? *That Jesus’ reign may endure forever, He must live*. Though He bows His head in death, yet must He live. He must rise again, otherwise the King is gone, the throne is vacant, the Covenant has failed. Jesus must rise from the

dead, else how can He save His people? Can a dead Christ save us? The Church of Rome continually sets before us Christ either as a Baby in His mother's arms, or else as a Man dead on the Cross. Neither of these is a true portrait of Christ! He is no more a Babe, and He is no more dead! He sits on the Throne of God, reigning and ruling, and He will come, the second time, without sin, unto salvation! The living Christ is our hope! It is witnessed of Him that He lives at the right hand of God and, as I quoted to you just now, it is for this reason that “He is able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.”

Finally, *the resurrection of Christ guarantees to all His people, “the sure mercies of David.”* Our Lord Jesus Christ has passed through great changes, yet He has always remained the same. He was once God in the full Glory of illimitable splendor, then a Baby upon a woman's lap, then a carpenter's Son working and toiling in a quiet village, then a Teacher and Preacher and miracle-worker, then a Sufferer with His visage more marred than any of the sons of men, then bound, accused, scourged, condemned, crucified, dead and buried! A wonderful change this, is it not—from pure Godhead to the grave? Then He rose again and, rising, He revealed Himself in His Glory to His disciples, meeting with them by the sea, and in different places until, at last, He ascended and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And now He sits, in supernal majesty, at the right hand of the Father, waiting till He shall come to judge the earth with righteousness and the people with His Truth.

I do not know how to finish up my sermon better than by telling you the old story of Robbie Flockhart, which I have told in this house, before, but not to this present congregation. The story shows the blessedness of Christ's death and Resurrection. Robbie Flockhart used to, constantly, preach in the streets of Edinburgh, and he told this story. He said, “I had a friend in the army and he committed some offense in war-time for which he was condemned to be shot. So he said, ‘Robbie, I have to die tomorrow, and as I have a little money, I have made my will and left it to you.’ ‘Thank you,’ I said. The next morning, instead of being taken out to be shot, the soldier received a free pardon, so,” said Robbie, “He got his life and I lost my legacy, for a testament is not in force while the testator lives. He must die to give effect to his will. And,” said Robbie, “our great Testator is dead. We know that He died, they nailed Him to the Cross. Therefore His will stands good—let us go and take the legacy He has bequeathed to us. But,” added Robbie, “that story is not enough to set forth Christ's work for us. Some time after, another friend left me a legacy and he *did* die.”

There were some lawyers who got hold of the money and Robbie never received a penny of the legacy. He said, “if my friend had been alive, I would have got it—that is to say, if he would have died and then, *afterwards*, have been alive, again, he would have seen that I received the legacy. So, the first time I lost my legacy because the friend who left it to me *did not* die and, the second time, I lost it because the friend who left it to me *did* die, but did not rise again. But,” he said, “see the glorious safety of the Believer's legacy from His Lord! He who died and so made

the will to be effective, has risen, again, and He will see that no lawyer, honest or dishonest, shall ever interfere with the legacies that He left to His people! Not even the devil, himself, shall prevent the heirs of everlasting life from obtaining the heritage which Christ has left them in the New Covenant which He has sealed with His blood!”

Beloved, the mercies of David are sure because your David lives! He died to purchase these mercies for you—He lives to claim them on your behalf! He died to cleanse you—He lives to apply that cleansing to you and to see that the work is fully done! Come to God in the name of Him that is living and was dead! I entreat you to come to Him! How happy would I be if all in this congregation came to Christ! You who have come and I suppose that is the majority here, tonight, come again, looking unto Jesus! And you who have never come before, oh, that this Thursday night might be made memorable by your coming to Him who always lives to save the sons of men! Dreams of happiness and thoughts of joy hit across my mind as I stand here and think that perhaps—no, great Lord, I drop the, “perhaps,” for it will be so—you will yield yourselves to Jesus, tonight! He will give you “the sure mercies of David,” He will enter into Covenant with you and then each one of you will say—

***“Now will I tell to sinners round,  
What a dear Savior I have found!  
I’ll point to Your redeeming blood  
And say, ‘Behold the way to God.’”***

As I remember the day when I first saw Christ on the Cross and, trusting in Him, soon began to tell the story to others and, by His Grace, many thousands have come to Jesus by the simple telling of the old, old story, so I feel, tonight, as if some young man here will come and trust in Jesus and will go and say to others, “Look and live.” It may be that some mother, here, finding Christ, herself, will be a blessing to her children. And that some father, believing unto life eternal, will bring his sons and daughters to the Savior’s feet. And if so, I will be forever happy and the Lord’s name shall be praised and magnified forever and ever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
*Acts 13:13-49.***

**Verses 13, 14.** *Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath and sat down. They would be noticed as strangers who had come there. The synagogue did not generally contain a very large assembly, and the Jews of the place would be well known to one another, and they would notice that two or three men had come in whom they had not been accustomed to see in their company.*

**15-17.** *And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, You men and brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. Then Paul stood up and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and you that fear God, give audience. The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted*

*the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought He them out of it.* They always liked to hear the story of their race, it was sure to win their attention. Notice how expressly Paul puts it, that though they were a favored people, it was by the election of Divine Grace that they were such—“The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers.” The Lord chooses whom He will and He chose the fathers of the house of Israel—“and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt.” God took care of them when they were aliens and foreigners under a cruel power in the land of Egypt—“and with an high arm brought He them out of it.” This was the glory of Israel! The Jews always delighted to hear of Egypt, of the Exodus and of the great things that God did for them in the day of their redemption when, by the sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb, they were protected from the sword of the destroying angel.

**18.** *And about the time of forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness.* It is a continuous history that Paul gives to these people at Antioch and it brings to their minds the sins of their fathers as well as the Grace of their God. These are two things that you and I always need to keep in mind—God’s Grace and our own sin. Truly, I fear that God has had much provocation from us during our 40 years, even as He had with His ancient people. There is much meaning packed away in that sentence, “Forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness.”

**19.** *And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He divided their land to them by lot.* The Lord did not run back from His Covenant. He promised them a land flowing with milk and honey and He gave it to them, even though seven nations had to be destroyed to make room for them. This verse reminds us of that passage in Isaiah—“since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life.” He gave seven nations of Canaan for this one nation of Israel!

**20, 21.** *And after that He gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the Prophet. And afterward they desired a king.* This was another piece of wantonness on the Israelites’ part. God was their King, yet they must have a *visible* king like the other nations by which they were surrounded. They were faithfully warned by the Prophet Samuel of the evil consequences that would follow their choice, but they would not be content with their God as their only Ruler—“afterward they desired a king.”

**21-23.** *And God gave unto them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. And when He had removed him, He raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also He gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse a man after My own heart, which shall fulfill all My will. Of this man’s seed has God according to His promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus.* No matter where the Apostle begins, he comes to Jesus Christ before long! No matter what the preacher’s text may be, he must never close a sermon without having set forth the claims of Jesus! This should be the invariable rule of our ministry—that Christ is the top and bottom, the sum and substance of all our preaching. Paul could truly say, “We preach Christ crucified.”

**24-26.** *Whom John had first preached before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think you that I am? I am not He. But, behold, there comes One after me, whose shoes of His feet I am not worthy to loose. Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whoever among you fears God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.* This is plain preaching, pointed preaching, bold preaching! Paul did not conceal the Truth of God, though he well knew how objectionable it would be to his hearers, yet he put it before them in the plainest possible terms—“To you is the word of this salvation sent.”

**27.** *For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him.* It was strange that they should fulfill the prophecies which they had often read, no doubt, with fear and trembling! They became the guilty agents by which the prophecies were fulfilled. Paul’s preaching agrees with what Peter said on the Day of Pentecost—“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

**28-30.** *And though they found no cause of death in Him, yet desired they Pilate that He should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulcher. But God raised Him from the dead.* Now the Apostle has reached the very heart of his judgment! Now he has come to the great cornerstone of the Christian faith! Notice that there are no embellishments here—there is not even an anecdote, or a story by which he may illustrate the Truth he sets forth—but just a plain declaration of the great facts of the life and death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. These are the backbone of the Gospel and the more we dwell upon these facts, the better. Let us preach the doctrines that grow out of these facts, for the facts are stubborn things and if they are backed by the Spirit of God, they will carry all before them.

**31-33.** *And He was seen many days of them which came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God has fulfilled the same unto us, their children, in that He has raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You.* Writing to the Hebrews, Paul quotes this passage from the Psalms to prove Christ’s Godhead and everlasting filiation, so that he evidently saw more than one meaning in this portion of Divine teaching, and we do not err when we believe that no Scripture is exhausted by a single explanation. The flowers of God’s garden, bloom not only double, but sevenfold—they are continually pouring forth fresh fragrance.

**34, 35.** *And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give You the sure mercies of David. Therefore He says also in another Psalm, You shall not suffer your Holy One to see corruption.* Christ did die but His precious body was not allowed to see corruption.

**36-41.** *For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but He whom God raised, again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the Prophets, Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your day, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.* This is a noble sermon, but again I remark, how simple it is! Like the sermon of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, it is free from that continual calling out of, “Believe, believe, believe,” which is the habit of some preachers who never tell the people what they have to believe! Exhortation is well enough in its place, but you must not have only powder in your gun—there must be some shot, also. The Apostle has solid facts here which he drives home to the heart and conscience of his hearers. He does not forget that the weight and forge of a sermon must lie in the distinct Truth of God which is taught in it.

**42.** *And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.* They would like to hear the same message, so they said to Paul, “This sermon was to the Jews. Will you not preach to us Gentiles? We have come in here and heard what you have said, but you did not speak specially to us—will you do so next Sabbath?”

**43, 44.** *Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the Grace of God. And the next Sabbath came almost the whole city together to hear the Word of God.* There is something attractive about the Gospel. I do not think they sent out a trumpeter—the preaching of the Gospel is all the trumpet that is needed to gather the people together! If we will but preach it in the power and plenitude of the Spirit of God, it will soon attract a congregation, as it did in this instance.

**45-49.** *But when the Jews saw the multitude, they were filled with envy and spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you, but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so has the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set you to be a light of the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the Word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. God send us days like that, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.*

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—231, 227, 244.**

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

# HIS OWN FUNERAL SERMON\*

## NO. 2243

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1892.  
*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 19, 1890.

**\*This sermon was preached on the Lord's-Day evening after Mr. William Olney "fell on sleep." Long before the beloved preacher was "called Home," it was selected for publication this week. Mrs. Spurgeon feels that her dear husband could not have delivered a more suitable discourse for "his own funeral sermon." She has, therefore, given it that title in the hope that many will be blessed by the message which "he, being dead, yet speaks." Believing that many friends will wish to have this sermon for widespread circulation, the publishers will, at once, issue it, in book form. Price one penny.**

***"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep."  
Acts 13:36.***

IT is remarkable that David should say, in the 16<sup>th</sup> Psalm, "You will not leave My soul in Hell; neither will you suffer Your Holy One to see corruption," and yet that Paul should say concerning him, when preaching at Antioch, that he "saw corruption." The key to this apparent contradiction is the fact that David did not speak of *himself*, but of his Lord. Peter, in his memorable sermon on the day of Pentecost, quotes the words of the Psalmist, applies them to his risen Redeemer and distinctly affirms that, in the Psalm, "David speaks concerning Him."

It is worthy of notice that Peter and Paul both use the same argument about this statement of David. These two Apostles did not always agree, but however much they might differ about other matters, they were of one mind about the Resurrection of Christ! I hope that whatever differences there may be among true preachers of the Gospel, they will always be one in declaring the Resurrection of our Lord. This cornerstone of the Gospel must never be displaced or dishonored. The good news we are commissioned to declare is the same that Paul received and delivered—"that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Chief among the Scriptures fulfilled by the Resurrection of Christ stands this Word of God which David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote so long before the event—"You will not leave My soul in Hell; neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption." The Resurrection of Christ is the top

stone of our faith! Because, “He, whom God raised again, saw no corruption,” Paul was able to say this to his hearers, “Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that before are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses.”

The argument of the Apostle is this—David could not have meant himself when he said, “You will not suffer Your Holy One to see corruption,” because David died and his body was buried—and it *did* see corruption. He must, therefore, have referred to Christ, who is, indeed, God’s “Holy One.” Of Him the prophetic word was true, for God did not suffer Him “to see corruption.” He died and was laid in the grave, but He rose again on the third day. In that climate there was, while Christ lay in the grave, plenty of time for His body to become corrupt. The spices with which they perfumed the precious body would not have sufficed to keep back corruption—they would have helped conceal the unpleasant odor which putrefaction brings, but they would not have stopped the process of decay.

But Christ rose again and no corruption had come to His body, for that body was a holy Thing—it had no defect, nor taint of sin, as our bodies have. Begotten of the Holy Spirit, it was a pure Thing. Though born of the Virgin Mary, it was united to the Godhead and not separated from it even in death—it saw no corruption. There is the Apostle’s argument, then—David speaking not of himself, but of Someone else, says that the Lord will not suffer Him to see corruption—and this he spoke by the Spirit of the very Christ whom we preach to you as the Author and Finisher of salvation. He is living and reigning today, King of Kings and Lord of Lords! He that believes in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and live forever with his risen, reigning Redeemer!

While Paul was speaking in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, he incidentally used the words of our text—“David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep.” That is to be my subject on this occasion. Forgetting, for the present, the main argument, I would only look at this eddy in the current and draw your attention to the expression which dropped from Paul’s lips concerning David. Let us ask, first, *What is it to serve our own generation?* Secondly, *What parts of our generation can we serve?* And lastly, with tender memories of many who have gone from us, let us ask, *What will happen to us when our service is done?* Even that which happened to David—we shall, like he, “fall on sleep.”

**I.** First, then, WHAT IS IT TO SERVE OUR OWN GENERATION? This is a question which ought to interest us all very deeply. We live in the midst of our own generation and, seeing that we are part of it, we should serve it, that the generation in which our children shall live may be better than our own. Though our citizenship is in Heaven, yet as we live on earth, we should seek to serve our generation while we pass as pilgrims to the better country.

What, then, is it for a man to serve his own generation?

I note, first, that *it is not to be a slave to it*. It is not to drop into the habits, customs and ideas of the generation in which we live. People talk, nowadays, about *Zeitgeist*, a German expression which need frighten no-

body—and one of the papers says, “Spurgeon does not know whether there is such a thing.” Well, whether he knows anything about *Zeitgeist* or not, he is not to serve this generation by yielding to any of its notions or ideas which are contrary to the Word of the Lord! The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not only for one generation, it is for *all* generations. It is the faith which needed to be “once for all delivered to the saints.” It was given stereotyped as it always is to be. It cannot change because it has been given of God and is, therefore, perfect—to change it would be to make it imperfect! It cannot change because it has been given to answer, forever, the same purpose, namely, to save sinners from going down to Hell and to fit them for going to Heaven. That man serves his generation best who is not caught by every new current of opinion, but stands firmly by the Truth of God which is a solid, immovable rock!

But to serve our own generation in the sense of being a slave to it—its vassal or its valet—let those who care to do so go into such bondage and slavery if they will! Do you know what such a course involves? If any young man here shall begin to preach the doctrine and the thought of the age, within the next 10 years—perhaps within the next 10 *months*—he will have to eat his own words and begin his work all over again! When he has got into the new style and is beginning to serve the present world, he will, within a short time, have to contradict himself, for this age, like every other, is “always learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” But if you begin with God’s Word and pray God, the Holy Spirit, to reveal it to you till you really know it, then, if you are spared to teach for the next 50 years, your testimony at the close will not contradict your testimony at the beginning! You will ripen in experience! You will expand in your apprehension of the Truth of God! You will become more clear in your utterance—and it will be the same Truth of God all along! Is it not a grand thing to build up, from the beginning of life to the end of it, the same Gospel?

But to set up opinions to knock them down, again, as though they were ninepins, is a poor business for any servant of Christ! David did not, in that way, serve his own generation—he was the *master* of his age—not its slave. I would urge every Christian man to rise to his true dignity and be a blessing to those among whom he lives, as David was! Christ “has made us kings and priests unto God His Father”—it is not meet that we should cringe before the spirit of the age, or lick the dust whereon “advanced thinkers” have chosen to tread. Beloved, see to this and learn the distinction between serving your own generation and being a slave to it!

In the next place, in seeking to answer the question, “What is it to serve our own generation? I would say, *it is not to fly from it*. If any man says, “The world is so bad that I will avoid coming into contact with it altogether. Even the teaching of Christianity has become so diluted and is so thoroughly on the Down-Grade that I will have nothing to do with it,” he is certainly not serving his own generation! If he shall shut himself up, like a hermit, in his cave, and leave the world to go to ruin as it may, he will not be like David, for he *served* his own generation before he fell asleep. She that goes into a nunnery, and he that enters a monastery are like soldiers

who run away and hide among the baggage! You must not do anything of the sort! Come forward and fight evil, and triumph over it, whether it be evil of doctrine, evil of practice, or evil of any other kind! Be bold for Christ—bear your witness and be not ashamed. If you do not take your stand in this way, it can never truly be said of you that you served your generation. Instead of that, the truth will be that you allowed your generation to make a coward of you, or to muzzle you like a dog and to send you out into the streets neither to bark nor to bite, nor to do anything by which you might prove that there is a soul within you!

If we ask, again, What is it to serve our generation? I answer, *it is to perform the common duties of life* as David did. David was the son of a farmer, a sheep-owner, and he took, first of all, to the keeping of the sheep. Many young men do not like to do the common work of their own father's business. You do not want to drudge, you say—you want to be a king! Well, there are not many openings in *that* line of business, and I shall not recommend anyone to be eager to enter them if there were! "Seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not." Before David swayed the scepter, he grasped the shepherd's crook. He that at home cannot or will not undertake ordinary duties, will not be likely to serve his age! The girl who dreams about the foreign missionary field, but cannot darn her brother's stockings, will not be of service either at home or abroad. Do the commonplace things, the ordinary things that come in your way, and you will begin to serve your generation as David served his.

But serving our generation means more than this. *It is to be ready for the occasion when it comes.* In the midst of the routine of daily life, we should, by diligence in duty, prepare for whatever may be our future opportunity, waiting patiently until it comes. Look at David's occasion of becoming famous. He never sought it. He did not go up and down among his sheep, sighing and crying, "Oh, that I could get away from this dull business of looking after these flocks! My brothers have gone to the camp—they will get on as soldiers—but here am I, buried among these rocks, too look after these poor beasts." He was wiser than that! He quietly waited God's time. That is always a wise thing to do. If you are to serve God, wait till He calls you to do His work—He knows where to find you when He wants you—you need not advertise yourself to His Omniscience.

At length the set time came for David. On a certain day, his father bade him go to his brothers and take them some corn and some loaves, with cheeses for their captain. And he reached the camp just at the time when the giant Goliath was stalking forth and defying all the armies of Israel to meet him. Now is David's time and the young man is ready for it! If he had lost the opportunity he might have remained a shepherd all the rest of his days. He tells Saul how he slew both the lion and the bear—and prophecies that the uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he had defied the armies of the living God! Disdaining Saul's armor, he takes his sling and his five smooth stones out of the brook—and soon he comes back with the gory head of the giant in his hand! If you want to serve the Church and serve the age, beloved Friend, be wide awake when the occa-

sion comes! Jump into the saddle when the horse is at your door and God will bless you if you are on the look-out for opportunities of serving Him.

What is it, again, to serve our generation? *It is to maintain true religion.* This David did. He had grave faults in his later life which we will not extenuate, but he never swerved from his allegiance to Jehovah the true God. No word or action of his ever sanctioned anything like idolatry, or turning aside from the worship of Jehovah, the God of Israel. He bore a noble witness to his Lord. He said, "I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed." And we may be sure that he was as good as his word and that when he met with foreign potentates, he vindicated the living God before them. The whole set and current of his life, with the exception of his terrible fall, was to the glory of God in whom he trusted and to the praise of that God who had delivered him.

We, too, shall truly serve those among whom we dwell by maintaining true religion. Had 10 righteous men been found in Sodom, it would have been spared and the world, today, only escapes the righteous judgment of God because of the presence in it of those who fear Him and tremble at His Word. The spread of "pure and undefiled religion" is a certain way to serve those around us. To help true religion, David wrote many Psalms which were sung all over the land of Israel. A wonderful collection of poems they are—there is none like them under Heaven! Not even a Milton, with all his mighty soaring, can equal David in the height of his adoration of God and the depth of his experience! That man does no mean service for his time who gives the people new songs which they can sing unto their God! While none can equal the Inspired Psalms of the Hebrew king, which must always form the choicest praise-book of the Church, other men may, in lesser degree, serve their own generation, by the will of God, in a similar way and be blessed in the deed.

To serve our own generation is not a single action, done at once, and over forever—it is to *continue to serve all our life*. Notice well that David served "his own generation"—not only a part of it—but the whole of it. He began to serve God and he kept on serving God. How many young men have I seen who were going to do wonders! Ah, me! They were as proud of the *intention* as though they had already done the deed! They took a front seat and they seemed to think that everybody ought to admire them because of what they were *going* to do! And they were so pleased with the project that they never carried it out. They thought that they might meet with some mishap if they really attempted to do the thing—and the project was so beautiful that they preserved it under a glass shade—and there it is now! Nothing has been accomplished! Nothing has been done, though much has been thought of. This is folly!

Some, too, begin well, and they serve their God earnestly for a time, but all of a sudden their service stops. One cannot quite tell how it happens, but we never hear of them afterwards. Men, as far as I know them, are wonderfully like horses. You get a horse and you think, "This is a first-rate animal," and so it is. It goes well for a while, but all of a sudden it drops lame and you have to get another one. So it is with Church members. I notice that, every now and then, they get an amazing lameness! To

very many we have to say, even as Paul said to the Galatians, “You did run well; who did hinder you, that you should not obey the truth?” But David continually served God to the end of his life. May we all, by Divine Grace, thus serve our whole generation!

Yet more is included in this faithful serving of our generation. *It is to prepare for those who are to come after us.* David served his generation to the very end by providing for the next generation. He was not permitted to build the Temple, but he stored up a great mass of gold and silver to enable his son, Solomon, to carry out his noble design and build a house for God. This is real service—to begin to serve God in early youth—to keep on till old age shall come and even then, to say, “I cannot expect to serve the Lord much longer, but I will prepare the way, as far as I can, for those who will come after me.”

Many years ago, Dr. Rippon, the minister of this Church, which then worshipped in New Park Street, was known to prophesy about his successor. When he was very old, after having been pastor for more than 60 years, it is in the memory of some still living that he was accustomed to pray for the minister who would come after him. The old man looked forward to one who should come and carry on the work after he was obliged to leave it. So must you and I do! We must be looking ahead as far as we can, not with unbelieving anxiety or unholy curiosity, but after the fashion in which David prepared abundantly before his death. If we cannot find a successor to enter upon our service when we have to leave it, yet let us do all we can to make his work the easier when he comes to it.

**II.** In the second place, let us ask a question even more practical than the first—WHAT PARTS OF OUR GENERATION CAN WE SERVE? It is truly written, “None of us lives to himself,” we either help or hinder those among whom we dwell. Let us see to it that we serve our age and become steppingstones rather than stumbling blocks to those by whom we are surrounded. We shall serve our generation best by being definite in our aim. In trying to reach everybody we may help nobody. The wise man tries to serve somebody in *particular*—where, then, should we make the effort? In answering that question, I divide the generation in which we live into three parts.

First, there is *the part that is setting*. Some are like the sun going down in the west—they will soon be gone. Serve them, dear Brothers and Sisters. You that are in health and vigor, comfort them, strengthen them and help them all you can. Be a joy to that dear old man who has been spared to you even beyond the allotted threescore years and ten, and praise God for the Grace that has upheld him through his long pilgrimage. Look on his gray hairs as a crown of glory—make his descent to the grave as easy as you can. He once was as young as you are. He once had the vigor that you have. Console him, cheer him, give him the respect that is due to his many years. Do not let him feel that you consider him an old fogey who lingers, superfluous, on the stage—but learn from his experience, imitate his perseverance, and ask God to be with you in your old age, as He is with him.

The second portion of our generation which we can serve is *the part that is shining*. I mean those in middle life who are like the sun at its zenith. They are working hard, bearing the burden and heat of the day. As yet their bones are full of marrow and they are strong men ready for service for the Lord. Seek to sustain their hands in every possible way. Help them all you can. As one of those in middle life, I especially ask the help of all my Christian Brothers and Sisters, members of this Church, or of any other Church, who can aid me by their sympathies and their prayers. Get closer to one another and fill up the vacant spaces that death's arrows continue to make in our ranks. Suffer nothing to be left undone which may further the work of Christ, or help the people around you who are so quickly passing away. Many of us have been together for nearly 40 years, and when, one after another, our dear Brothers and Sisters are taken away, let it be everybody's ambition to try to make up what shall be lacking through their departure. This is what is due to those who are like the shining part of our generation.

Especially, however, I want to speak to you about serving your own generation in *the part that is rising*—the young people who are like the sun in the east, as yet scarcely above the horizon. This part of our generation is especially the care of parents and Sunday school teachers, but let us not leave it entirely to them. We can, most of us, do something to serve this portion of our generation before we fall asleep. Beloved, I commend to your care and attention the children and young people who abound in our midst! In them lies our hope for the future of God's cause on earth.

In the first place, they are the most reachable. Happily, we can get at the children. The mass of people in London go to no place of worship—the old habit of attending Church or Chapel seems to have been given up—but the people will still let the children go to Sunday school, even if they do it from no better motive than that of getting them out of the way in the afternoon, or in order that the house may be quiet without them. Anyway, if you open a school anywhere in London, you can quickly get it filled with children. If you cannot do one thing, do another! If you cannot reach the fathers and the mothers, though you should earnestly try to get at them, yet, if you *can* reach the children, take care that you lose no opportunity of teaching them the things of God! This is the work that lies nearest to you—seek to accomplish it and, “whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might.”

Moreover, the children are the most impressible. What can we do with the man who is hardened in sin? The Grace of God can reach him, I know, but the children, as yet, have not known these evil ways. They are horrified when they hear about them. Teach them while yet the clay is soft—mold it for God! May the Lord, Himself, help you, dear Sunday school teachers and others who labor among the children, to do your work right well! Nobly are you serving your own generation and the generation to follow. The salvation of the children ought to be sought with double diligence, for they will last the longest. If a man of 60 or 70 is converted, he will have only a short time for serving God, for he will soon be gone. If a

child is converted, a long life of usefulness may enrich the Church of God. Therefore, look after the children!

If you had a gathering of Christian men and women and were to put the question to them, "How many of you were converted before you were twenty-one?" you would be greatly surprised to find that probably five out of six would answer that, in early years, they were led to know the Grace of God and trust in Christ as their Savior. I tried the experiment one evening with a number of friends who had come together from different places. "How many of you owe your salvation to your father's prayers, your mother's instruction, or your Sunday school teachers' influence in youth?" I asked. And almost everyone out of a company of about 25 said that it was in early youth that God blessed some instrumentality to their conversion.

Remember, too, that those who are converted when children usually make the best saints. These of whom I have just spoken, who gave the answer that they were converted in their youth, were ministers of the Gospel! I do not know whether the same rule is true among ordinary Christians, but among those who have become leaders of men, in nearly every case they yielded to Christ while they were young. Our thoughts at this time cannot but be occupied with our dear friend, William Olney, who has just been taken from us so suddenly, to our unutterable grief. He was as earnest as a youth as he was when he became an old man! Indeed, I never knew a moment when he was not earnest. I never even knew him to be dull or depressed—he seemed to be always joyous and glad. He would almost frighten me, sometimes, with his jubilation under pain—for when he was in agonies of suffering and could only sit on the platform for a short time—there was never anything like depression about him! He was just as glad and happy as if he had been in perfect health. I wish that it were so with all of us. Young Christians do become the best Christians. Early piety is usually eminent piety, so seek to catch the children while they are young and train them for the Lord—then they will be ready to serve their generation in their turn.

We ought to look after the children, again, for they are specially named by Christ. He said, "Feed My sheep," but He also said, "Feed My lambs." I would almost be inclined to say that the Lord made the same division of the generation as I have done. When He said, the first time, "Feed My sheep," He may have meant the old sheep. When He said, the second time, "Feed My sheep," He may have had especially in mind the middle-aged ones. There is no doubt that when He said, "Feed My lambs," He meant the young people. Christ gave the lambs a place all to themselves—"Feed My lambs." I wish Christians would consider more seriously how the children ought to be looked after by the Church.

I read, the other day, of a boy who wished to join in membership with the people of God. His father said that he was too young and kept him back. He was big enough, however, to be sent out to fold the sheep one night. When he came in, his father said, "Jack have you folded the sheep?" "Yes," he said, "I folded all the *sheep*," laying great stress on the last word. "And did you put the lambs in?" asked his father. "No," he re-

plied, "I left the lambs outside—they were too young to go in." "Oh, Jack!" said the father, "you know more than I do, after all—they were the very ones that needed most to be folded. You may go and see the minister about joining the Church as soon as you like!" If any Believers in Christ need especially to be taken into the Church, it is those who have come to Jesus in their youth! I pray you, serve your generation by giving the children and young people your most loving attention and care!

Look after the children of this generation, again, for the dangers around them at the present time are almost innumerable. What a time this is for boys! You cannot read the daily papers without being shocked by the amounts of wrong-doing of mere boys. This is an age which seems to make snares on purpose to entrap them. There are "penny dreadfuls" enough to poison the whole generation! They are full of stories of crime with a false halo about it so that it is made to seem like heroism! These vile stories are everywhere—perhaps your own boy has one, unknown to you—and is reading it while you are sitting here. Traps are laid everywhere for the feet of our boys and girls! Serve your generation by warning them of their danger and trying to keep them free from the evils by which they are surrounded. Satan gets the advantage over many a young life by causing even right things to be put to wrong uses—and in all sorts of ways he lays traps for young people.

Oh, parents and teachers, do try to give your children a backbone of moral honesty! Try to show them that they have not come into this world merely to please themselves, that there is something better to be done than that. Do not rest till you have led them to the Savior, for no boy is safe until he is converted! No girl is safe in the streets of this city till she has a new heart and a right spirit. The times are perilous, yet if we speak a word of warning, we are called sour Puritans! It always makes me laugh when I am called a sour Puritan because you know there is nobody with a quicker eye for fun, or with a deeper vein of mirth than I have! At the same time, I like to have humor and anything of cheerfulness and brightness in life consecrated to God. But when mirth is made a plank on which a man can go into sin and iniquity, then we will saw that plank into pieces! You must be saved from sin, young men! You must be kept from evil, young women, if you are to be truly happy! May God's Grace put in your way wise, godly friends, parents and teachers who shall serve their generation by leading you in the paths of peace!

**III.** Now, I have done when I have tried, for just a minute or two, to answer this question—WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US WHEN OUR SAVIOR IS DONE? "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep." The day's work is done; the worker is weary; he falls on sleep—what can he do better? It was all "by the will of God." To what part of the sentence do you think that clause belongs? Did David serve his generation by the will of God or did he fall asleep by the will of God? Both! Guided by the will of God, he did his work on earth and calmly resigned to the will of God, he prepared to die. Even when passing away, he served his generation by giving Solomon some last charges concerning the kingdom, saying, "I go the way of the earth; be you strong and show yourself a

man.” Over both his life and his death may be written the words, “By the will of God.” Oh, that we may all so live, that even in death we may serve our generation! May it be true of us that “whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s!” Thus, “the will of God” shall be done both in our service and in our sleep.

David is an example of what will befall those who know Christ at the end of their service. *He did not go to sleep till his work was done.* “David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep.” Do not want to die till you have done your work! When Brothers and Sisters say, “Oh, I wish I could go to Heaven! Oh, when shall I get Home?” they remind me of a man who, when he begins work on Monday, says, “I wish it were Saturday night.” We do not need servants like that, nor does God, either! Be willing to live for 250 years, if God wills it. Be willing to live until strength fails you, if God wills it—you can still bear your dying testimony to the Lord’s faithful and unchanging love. Do not be in a hurry to go home to Heaven. Do not want to go to sleep till you also have served your generation well. When David had served his generation, he fell on sleep. We are told that, in the early days of Christianity, when Believers were falling asleep in Jesus, their friends did not bid them “good-bye,” but, “good night.” So we say, in the words of that beautiful hymn—

***“Sleep on, Beloved, sleep, and take your rest,  
Lay down your head upon your Savior’s breast—  
We love you well, but Jesus loves you best.  
Good night! Good night! Good night!  
Only ‘good night,’ Beloved—not ‘farewell !’  
A little while, and all His saints shall dwell  
In hallowed union, indivisible—  
Good night!  
Until we meet again before His Throne,  
Clothed in the spotless robe He gives His own,  
Until we know even as we are known—  
Good night!”***

But next we are told that *when his work was done, he fell on sleep.* Did his soul sleep? By no means! It was not his soul that is spoken of here, for we read that he “saw corruption.” Souls do not see corruption! Paul is speaking of David’s *body*. “He fell on sleep, and was laid with his fathers, and saw corruption.” His body fell into its last, long sleep, and saw corruption. If you like to take the words in the wider sense, he was asleep as far as the *world* is concerned—he had done with it. No sorrow came to him, no earthly joy, no mingling with the strife of tongues, no girding his harness for the war. “He fell on sleep.” He had nothing to do with anything that was under the sun. And that is the case with our dear Friend whom we miss from his place today—and it will soon be the case, also, with you and with me. There is not much here worth stopping for and when our work is finished, like David, we shall fall on sleep. We shall then be asleep to all the declensions of the age, all the strifes of men and all else which gives us sorrow of heart.

Does not this word further mean that *his dying was like going to sleep?* It usually is so with God’s people. Some die with a considerable measure

of pain, but, as a rule, when Believers pass away, they just shut their eyes and open them in Heaven. I have had infinitely more pleasure at deathbeds than I have had at weddings. I have been to many marriage feasts—I have gone there at duty's call—but I can confirm what Solomon said, "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for it is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart." I am not aware that I have gained anything at a wedding, but I have gained much at the dying bed, as I have seen the joy and peace and rapture of girls and youths, and men and women passing away joyfully to be "forever with the Lord."

I have known some of our number here who were too bashful and backward to ever say much for Christ when they were well—but when I was sent to see them die, there was not a bit of bashfulness about them! They spoke out so boldly that I have said to them, "Why, if you get better, you must preach for me one of these Sundays!" And they have smiled and said that they would never get better. They have known this and they have rejoiced to think that they were going where they would not need any preacher, but would see their Lord Jesus face to face! How they have brightened up at the mention of His dear name! Some of them have sung, then, though I never knew them to sing *before*—and some of them have told of things which they seemed to see and hear which eyes have not seen, nor ears heard, till God has revealed them to the departing spirit.

You remember such dying beds, do you not? Was it your mother, or your father who passed away in that glorious style? Perhaps it was a beloved brother, or a sister, or a friend. Well, if we know Christ, it shall be ours, by-and-by, to sleep in Him. You who believe in Christ ought no more to dread death than you dread going to sleep at night! You will, before you sleep, commit yourself to God, and as you put your head on the pillow, the similitude of death will be upon you, even sleep which one has called, "death's cousin." You are not afraid of *that*! Why, then, should any dismay seize you in prospect of that which is but another sleep? Rather sing to yourself—

***"Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing,  
But gladly put off these garments of clay!  
To die in the Lord is a Covenant blessing,  
Since Jesus to Glory through death leads the way."***

Let us follow where He leads! Perchance some of us may tarry until He comes again. There will be no death for such—they will but change the service of their generation for the service of the glorified. "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Then, when the trumpet shall sound, this corruptible shall put on incorruption—those who sleep in Christ shall awake in Resurrection splendor and together we shall serve our Lord day and night in His Temple forever! Meanwhile, serve your own generation by the will of God. And if the Lord should tarry, you will fall on sleep, even as David did. May God bless you, who believe in Jesus, and save the unsaved who are in our midst, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

***Portion of Scripture Read before Sermon—Acts 13:14-43.***

## HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—879, 694, 844.

The note at the end of last week’s sermon informed all readers that the long-dreaded blow had, at last, fallen and that their much-loved preacher had been called to his heavenly Home. His voice shall no more be heard on earth, but he will continue to speak for his Lord through the press—and especially by his sermons.

Attentions has been already directed to the overruling hand of God in the selection of the sermons to be published at this memorable time. The one for next week will be the third in the series preached in connection with the death of the late Mr. William Olney, the text being Ephesians 5:30. And the following week, the address by Mr. Spurgeon at Mr. William Olney’s funeral service in the Tabernacle, will be published. A considerable portion of this address was *revised by Mr. Spurgeon’s own hand*. With it the publishers will give *a portrait of the beloved preacher* and also a portrait of the late Mr. Olney.

The revision of the weekly sermons and the editorship of *The Sword and the Trowel* will remain in the hands of those who have carried on the work during Mr. Spurgeon’s long illness. He was only able, personally, to revise two sermons throughout the many months that he was laid aside. These will now have a special value in the estimation of his many friends. They are the two entitled, **“Gratitude for Deliverance from the Grave” (No. 2237), and, “A Stanza of Deliverance” (No. 2241).**

There is not much that can be recorded here concerning Mr. Spurgeon’s last illness and his falling asleep in Jesus. *The Sword and the Trowel* for March will contain an account of the varying experiences in the sunny land, from the time when he delivered his two New Years addresses until all that remained of him was borne away to the railway station, *en route* for England, amid tokens of widespread sorrow and sympathy. Among other items of interest will be reports of the last two Sabbath evening services conducted by Mr. Spurgeon at the Hotel Beau Rivage. And later numbers of *The Sword and the Trowel* will furnish the readers with descriptions of “Mr. Spurgeon’s last drives at Mentone,” with reproductions of photographs taken under his personal supervision.

[ <http://www.pilgrimpublications.com/swtrowel.htm> for issues of *The Sword and the Trowel*.]

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# THE TRUE AIM OF PREACHING

## NO. 3191

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 1910.

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

*“Be it known unto you, therefore, brethren, that through this Man  
is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.”  
Acts 13:38.*

PAUL’S mode of preaching, as illustrated by this chapter, was first of all to appeal to the understanding with a clear exposition of doctrinal Truths of God and then to impress those Truths upon the emotions of his hearers with earnest and forcible exhortations. This is an excellent model for revivalists. They must not give exhortation without Doctrine, for if so, they will be like men who are content with burning powder in their guns, but have omitted the shot! It is the Doctrine we preach, the Truth we deliver which God will make a power to bless men. However earnest and zealous we may be in speaking, if we have not something weighty and solid to say, we shall appear to be earnest about nothing and shall not be at all likely to create a lasting impression. Paul, if you notice through this chapter, first of all gives the history of Redemption, tells the story of the Cross, insists upon the Resurrection of the Savior and *then* he comes to close and personal dealings with the souls of men and bids them not neglect this great salvation!

At the same time, it was not all Doctrine and no exhortation but, whenever Paul wound up his discourse and left the synagogue, he made a strenuous, pointed, personal appeal to those who had listened to him! Let such of our brethren as are passionately fond of mere Doctrine—but having little of the marrow of Divine Mercy or the milk of human kindness in their souls, do not care to have the Word pressed upon the consciences of men—let them stand rebuked by the example of the Apostle Paul! He knew well that even the Truth of God, itself, would be powerless unless it is applied. Like the wheat in the basket, it can produce no harvest till it is sown broadcast in the furrows. We cannot expect that men will come and make an application of the Truth of God to themselves. We must, having our heart glowing and our souls on fire with love to them, seek to bring the Truth to bear upon them, to impress it upon their hearts and consciences as in the sight of God and in the place of Christ.

The subject to which Paul drew attention—the target at which he was shooting all his arrows—was *forgiveness of sins through the Man, Christ Jesus*. That is my subject tonight. And when I have spoken upon it briefly, I shall then have a few words to say about *his audience and what became of them*.

I. PAUL'S SUBJECT was superlative—the Subject of subjects—the great master Doctrine of the Christian ministry—*“Be it known unto you, therefore, brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.”*

“The forgiveness of sins” is a topic which will be more or less interesting to every hearer here in proportion as he feels that he has committed sins, the guilt of which appalls his conscience. To those good people among you who fold your arms and say, “We have done no wrong either to God or man,” I have nothing to say. You need no physician, for you are not sick. You, evidently, would not be thankful for the heavenly eye-salve, for you are not blind. The wealth that Christ can bring you will not induce you to bow the knee to Him, for already you think yourselves to be rich and increased in goods. But I shall be quite sure of the ears of the man whose sins have been a burden to him. If there is one here who needs to be reconciled to God, who says with the prodigal, “I will arise and go to my Father,” I shall not need to study how to fit my words—let them come out as they may, the theme, itself, will be sure to enlist the attention of such an one who says—

***“How can I get my sins forgiven?  
How can I find my way to Heaven?”***

While we attempt to tell him that, we shall ensure his attention. This is our aim—and this we will do if God permits.

The Christian minister tells men the ground of pardon, the exclusive method, (for there is a monopoly in this matter)—*the exclusive method by which God will pardon sin.* “*Through this Man,*” says the text. That is to say, God will pardon, but He will only pardon in *one way*—through His Son Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus has a monopoly on mercy! If you will depend upon the uncovenanted mercy of God—the mercy of God apart from Christ—you shall find that you have depended upon a reed and built your house upon sand! Into the one silver pipe of the atoning Sacrifice, God has made to flow the full current of pardoning Grace. If you will not go to that—you may be tempted by the mirage, you may think that you can drink there to the fullest, but you shall die disappointed. You must die unless you come for salvation to Christ! What does He say, Himself? “I am the Door: by Me if any man enters in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” He that believes on the Son of God is not condemned! But he that believes not—may he go right, too? No, he is already condemned because he believes not! “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” These are Christ’s own words, not mine! He that believes shall be saved, “but he that believes not shall be”—what? Pardoned for his unbelief? No, he—*“shall be damned!”* There is no other alternative. The expression might seem harsh if I were the inventor of it, but as it came from the lips of Christ who was the gentlest, meekest and most tender of men, God forbid that I should make up a charity of which the Lord, Himself, made no profession! “He that believes not shall be damned.” God presents mercy to the sons of men, but He has chosen to present it in only *one channel*—through that Man who died for sinners, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring them to God!

Why is it that forgiveness comes to us only through Jesus Christ? The whole economy of Redemption supplies us with an answer. The Man Christ Jesus is a Divine Person. He is the Son of God. You will never doubt that reconciliation is an effect of Infinite Wisdom if you once clearly understand the condition that made it requisite. Though His people were objects of God's everlasting love, their sins had kindled His fierce anger as if it were an unquenchable fire. Inasmuch as God is just, He must from the necessity of His Nature, punish sin! Yet He willed to have mercy upon the fallen sons of men. Therefore it was that Christ came into this world. Being God, He was made Man for our sakes. He suffered from the wrath of God that which we, the offending sinners, ought to have suffered. God exacted from the Man, Christ Jesus, that which He would otherwise have exacted from us! Upon Christ's dear devoted head was laid the curse. Upon His bare back fell the scourge that would have tortured our souls throughout eternity! Those hands of His, when nailed to the tree, smarted with our smart. That heart bled with our bleeding. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed; surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Substitution, then, is the cause of it all! God will forgive sin because the sin which He forgives has been already atoned for by the sufferings of His dear Son!

You know, many of you, the story, in old Roman history, of the young man who had violated discipline and was condemned to die. But his elder brother, a grand old soldier who had often been to the front in the battles of his country, came and exposed his chest, showed his many scars and exhibited his body covered with the orders, insignias and honors of his victories. And then he said, "I cannot ask life for my brother on account of anything that he has ever done for his country. He deserves to die, I know, but I set my scars and my wounds before you as the price for his life. And I ask you whether you will not spare him for his brother's sake." And with acclamation, it was carried that for his brother's sake he should live. Sinner, this is what Christ does for you! He points to His scars. He pleads before the Throne of God, "I have suffered the vengeance due to sin. I have honored Your righteous Law—for My sake have mercy upon that unworthy brother of Mine!" In this way, and in no other way, is forgiveness of sins preached to you through this Man, Christ Jesus!

*It is our business to also preach to you the instrument through which you may obtain this pardon.* We read the question in your anxious eyes, "I can understand that Christ, having stood as a Substitute, has received from God power to pardon human souls, but how can I obtain the benefit, how can I draw near to Him?" Did you ever read that Moses described the righteousness of faith—and Paul endorsed his description? "Say not in your heart, who shall ascend into Heaven, or who shall descend into the deep?" You have no reason to climb so high or dive so low. "The Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart; that is, the Word of faith which we preach." You have no need to go home to get at Christ! You have no need to even come here to find Him! He is accessible at all hours

and in all places—the ever-present Son of God.” But how shall I come to Him?” asks one. Oh, you need not torture your body! You need not afflict your soul! You need not bring your gold and silver—you need not even bring your tears! All that you have to do is to come to Him as you are and trust in Him! Oh, if you will believe that He is the Son of God and is able to save to the uttermost—and if you will cast yourself upon Him with your whole weight—falling upon Him, leaning upon Him, resting upon Him with that whole trust which needs and lacks no other support, you shall be saved! Now cling to the Cross, you shipwrecked Sinner, and you shall never go down while clinging to that! If you are enabled by the Holy Spirit to put your sole and simple reliance upon Christ, earth’s pillars may totter and the lamps of Heaven be extinguished, but you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of Christ’s hands! Trust Jesus—that is the way of salvation! “What?” asks one, “If I trust Christ tonight, shall I have my sins forgiven?” Yes, forgiven tonight! “What? If I just rest in Christ and look to Him?” Even so! “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”—

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

You will be saved, not by repenting and tears! Not by wailing and works! Not by doing and praying, but coming, believing, simply depending upon what Jesus Christ has done! When your soul says by faith what Christ said in fact, “It is finished,” you are saved and you may go your way rejoicing!

We have thus preached God’s way of pardon and man’s way of getting at God’s pardon. But we are also enjoined to preach about *the character of this forgiveness of sin*. Never had messengers such happy tidings to deliver! When God pardons a man’s sins, He pardons all of them—He makes a clean sweep of the whole! God never pardons half a man’s sins and leaves the rest in His Book of Remembrance. He has pardon for all sins at once! I believe that, virtually, before God, all the sins of the Believer were so laid to the account of Christ that no sins ever can be laid to the Believer’s door. The Apostle does not say, “Who *does* lay anything to the charge of God’s elects,” but, “Who *shall?*” as though nobody ever could! I am inclined to think that Kent’s words are literally true—

***“Here’s pardon for transgressions past—  
It matters not how black their cast!  
And oh, my Soul, with wonder view,  
For sins to come, here’s pardon too!”***

It is a *full pardon*. God takes His pen and writes a receipt. Though the debt may be a hundred talents, He can write it off! Or be it ten thousand, the same hand can receipt it! Luther tells us of the devil appearing to him in a dream and bringing before him the long rolls of his sins. And when he brought them, Luther said, “Now write at the bottom, ‘the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin!’” Oh, that blessed word, “all”—“from all sin!” Great sins and little sins! Sins of our youth and sins of our gray hairs! Sins by night and sins by day! Sins of action

and sins of thought—they are ALL gone! Blessed Savior! Precious blood! Omnipotent Redeemer! Mighty Red Sea, that thus drowns every Egyptian!

It is a full pardon and it is, likewise, a *free pardon*. God never pardons any sinner from any other motive than His own pure Grace. It is all gratis! It cost the Savior much, but it costs us nothing! It is a pardon freely given by a God of Grace because He delights in mercy.

There is, too, this further blessing about it, that while it is full and free, *it is also irresistible!* Whom God pardons, He never condemns. Let Him once say, "*Absolvo te,*" "I absolve you," and none can lay anything to our charge! We have heard of men who have been pardoned for one offense, but who have committed another—and have, therefore, had to die. But when the Lord pardons us, He prevents our going away to our old corruption. He puts His Spirit in us and makes new men of us so that we find we cannot do what we used to do! That mighty Grace of God is without repentance! God never repents of having bestowed His Grace. Do not believe those who tell you that He loves you, today, and hates you tomorrow! O Beloved—once in Christ the devil cannot get you out of Him! Get into the sacred clefts, Sinner, of that Rock of Ages which was cleft for you, and out of it the fiends of Hell can never drag you! You are safe when once you get into that harbor. Get Christ and you have Heaven!

All things are yours when Christ is yours—full pardon, free pardon and everlasting pardon! And let me also tell you, *present pardon*. It is a notion still current that you cannot know you are forgiven till you come to die. O Beloved, when people talk thus, it shows what they know, or rather, what they do *not* know about it. There are some here who can bear witness—no, there are millions of God's people who, if they could speak from Heaven, would tell you that they knew their pardon long years before they entered into rest.

If you had ever been shut up in prison, as some of us were, and had been set at liberty, you would know what present pardon is. Five long years it was with me a bitter agony of soul when nothing but Hell stared me in the face—when neither night nor day had I peace, and oh, what joy it was when I heard that precious Truth of God, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." I felt the pardon really fall on me! I was as conscious of pardon as this hand is conscious of being clean after I have washed it—and as conscious of being accepted in Christ, at that moment, as I am now sure that I am able to stand here and say as much with my mouth! A man may have this Infallible Witness of the Holy Spirit! I know that to some stubborn minds, it will always seem as fanaticism, but what do I care whether it seems as fanaticism to them or not, as long as it is real to my heart? We count ourselves as honest as others and have as much right to be believed—whether they credit our sanity and our sincerity or not does not affect us a straw, as long as we know that we have received the Grace! If you reckoned a clear profit of ten thousand pounds upon some speculation and somebody said to you, "It is all foolery"—the proof would be unanswerable if you had received the

amount and had the bank notes in your house. Then you would say, "Ah, you may think as you like about it, but I have got the cash." So Christians can say, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God...and not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the Atonement."

When someone tells a Christian that he is not forgiven, he says, "Oh, you may say what you like about it, but I have the witness within that I am born of God. I am not what I used to be—if I were to meet myself in the street, I would hardly know myself, I mean my *spiritual* self—my inner self—for I am so changed, so renewed, so turned upside down that I am not what I was! I am a new man in Christ Jesus." The man who can say this can bear to be laughed at. He knows what he is doing and at the coolest and most sober moment of his life, even when lying on his bed sick and ready to die, he can look right into eternity, soberly judge of Christ, and find Him to be worthy of his confidence and, thinking of the blood-washing, find it to be a real fact! There are a thousand things in this world that look well enough till you come to look upon them in the prospect of the grave—but this is a thing that looks better, the nearer we get to eternity and the more solemnly and deliberately we take our account of it in the sight of God!

Oh, yes, there is a present pardon! But what I want to say most emphatically is that *there is a present pardon for you*. "Who is that?" you ask. Oh, I am not going to pick and choose from the midst of you. Whoever among you will come and trust Christ, there is present pardon for you! What? That gray-headed man there, 70 years old in sin? Yes, blessed be the name of the Lord, if he this night should rest in Christ, there is instantaneous pardon for him! Is there a harlot here? Is there a drunk here? Is there one here who has cursed God? Is there one here who has been dishonest? Is there one here over whom all these sins have rolled? Why, if you believe, your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you! And though there should be brought before us one so guilty that we might well stay away from him, yet if he can but trust Christ, Christ will not stay away from him, but will receive him! Oh, was not that a wonderful moment when the Savior wrote on the ground as the woman taken in adultery stood before Him—when all her accusers, being convicted by their own consciences, went out, leaving the sinner and the Savior alone together—and when Jesus Christ, who hated all kinds of sin, but who loved all kinds of sinners, lifted Himself up and said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more"? Ah, poor Sinner, Jesus Christ does not condemn you! If you condemn yourselves, He will never condemn you. He will only condemn your sin, for that is what He hates, but He does not hate you. If you and your sins part, Christ and you shall never part! If you will but trust Him right now, you shall find Him able to save you even to the very uttermost from all these sins of yours which have become your plague and your burden! God help you, then, to trust Him at once and to find this present pardon—this pardon which will last you forever—and which you may have right now!

Now, as I said before, all this will be good news only to those who want pardon, but not to those who do not require it. I have nothing to say to those who do not want it. Why should I? They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick." God will have something to say to you one of these days. I recollect and I hope you have not forgotten the story of the rich man. It is more than allegory, it is *fact*. You know that while he was in this world, he had fared sumptuously every day. He was clothed in purple and fine linen and as for God's child Lazarus, he thought he was a poor miserable beggar, only fit to be with the dogs—and he despised him. He looked at him and said, "Oh, I am a gentleman. I am dressed in purple and fine linen. I am none of your beggarly saints lying on the dunghill, though they call themselves saints, and all that. I am rich." Now it so happened that he did not see himself—he had scales over his eyes. But he found out the Truth of God one day. You remember Christ's words, "In Hell, he lifted up his eyes!" Ah, and he saw, then, what he had never seen before! All that he had ever seen before had been a glamour over his eyes—he had been dazed and benighted. *He* had been the beggar, all the while, if he had but known it! While Lazarus, who had won the beggars garb, was waited on like a prince and carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. So, the poor beggar, covered with wounds and sores, who thinks he is only fit for the dunghill—he is the man Christ will save! He is the man Christ will take up to Heaven at last! As for your self-righteous men who think themselves so good and excellent, they will be like the tinsel and the gilt—and will all be burned up in the fire—the varnish and paint will all come off! God will knock the masks off their faces and let the leprosy that was on their brow be seen by all men. But, Sinner, you who are such, and who know it—unto you is preached this night forgiveness of sins through the Man, Christ Jesus!

**II.** We shall now proceed to remind you of THE CONGREGATION TO WHICH PAUL ADDRESSED HIMSELF, AND WHAT BECAME OF THEM.

The text says, "Unto *you* is preached forgiveness of sins." Never mind the Jews and Gentiles Paul preached to—the verse is quite as applicable here as it was there. "Unto *you* is preached the forgiveness of sins." My dear Friend, *it is no small privilege to be where the message of the forgiveness of sins can yet be heard.* Unto *you* is preached the forgiveness of sins, but not to the tens of thousands and millions who have gone the way of all flesh, unpardoned and unsaved! How is it that you are spared? Your brother is dead. Your children have, some of them, died—but you are spared. You have been at sea. You have been in peril. You have had the fever. You have been near death and yet here you are, kept alive, with death so near! Is not this a privilege that unto you is preached the forgiveness of sins? What would they give to hear it once more? What would they give to have another opportunity? But it has been said of them—

***"Too late, too late! You cannot enter now."***

"Unto you is preached the forgiveness of sins." I said that this was a privilege, but *it is a privilege which some of you have despised.* Those who heard Paul had never heard the Gospel before—many of you have heard it from your youth up. Alas, I cannot help saying of some of you that I al-

ready to despair of your conversion! You do not improve. All the exhortations in the world are to you as if they were spoken to an iron column or to a brazen wall! Why will you die? What shall be done to you? What shall be said to you? Unto you is preached the forgiveness of sins. When you die, careless, Christless, unsaved—when we throw that handful of dirt upon your coffin, we shall have to think, “Ah, that man is lost, and yet unto him was preached the forgiveness of sins!”

Well, but it is still preached to you! Notwithstanding that you have neglected the privilege, the Gospel is still preached to you! Gladly would I point my finger at some of you and say, “Well, now, I really do mean you, *personally*. You people under the gallery whom I cannot see and you upstairs, here, everyone of you—unto you is preached the forgiveness of sins! God has not sent us, tonight, to preach to your neighbors, but to you—you Mary, Thomas, George, John, Sarah—you, you *personally*—unto you is preached the forgiveness of sins and it is with you, now, tonight, to consider what reception shall be given to the message of mercy! Shall a hard heart be the only answer? Oh, may the Spirit of God come upon you and give instead thereof a quickened conscience and a tender heart that you may be led to say, “God be merciful to me a sinner!”

Do you ask, “*What became of those to whom the Word was preached with such thrilling earnestness?*”

Some of them raved at a very great rate. If you read through the Chapter, you will find that the Jews were filled with envy and they spoke against those things that were declared to them by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming, and so on, until Paul shook the dust off his feet against them and went his way. But there was another class. The 48<sup>th</sup> verse says, “When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the Word of the Lord: *and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*” Ah, that is the comfort! There are some, whenever the Gospel is preached, who do not like it. A person was once very angry with me because in preaching on the natural depravity of man, I had charged man with being depraved and I had said that man was proud. The man would not confess it and there he was—proving the truth of the assertion regarding himself that he was proud, because he could not bear to hear the truth told him about it! If he had said he was proud, I would have thought I had made a mistake, but when he bridled up and got into an angry temper, I knew that God had sent me to tell him His Truth. Outspoken Truths of God makes half the world angry! The Light of God blinds their eyes!

When the Jews kicked against Paul’s preaching, did Paul feel disappointed? Oh no, or if he did feel depressed for a moment, there was a strong cordial at hand—that very cordial by reason of which Jesus rejoiced in spirit as He saw the goodwill of the Father in revealing unto babes those things that are hidden from the wise and prudent! Here was Paul’s comfort—there were some upon whom there had been a blessed work! There were some whose names were written in the Book of Life! Some concerning whom there had been Covenant transactions! Some whom God had chosen from before the foundation of the world! Some

whom Christ had bought with His blood and whom the Spirit, therefore, came to claim as God's own property because Christ had bought them upon the bloody tree—and those “some” believed! Naturally they were like others, but Grace made the distinction and faith was the sign and evidence of that distinction!

Now, you need not ask tonight whether you are God's elect. I ask another question—Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? If you do, you are His elect—if you do not, the question is not to be decided by us yet. If you are God's chosen ones, you will know it by your trusting in Jesus. Simple as that trust is, it is the Infallible proof of Election! God never sets the brand of faith upon a soul whom Christ has not bought with His blood. And if you believe, all eternity is yours! Your name is in God's Book, you are a favored one of Heaven, the Divine decrees all point to you—go your way and rejoice!

But if you believe not, you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. May eternal mercy bring you out of that state, yes, bring you out of it tonight! Oh, that I had the time and power to plead with some here who know that Christ died, who know that He can save, who know the Gospel—but who still do not trust in that Gospel for their salvation! Oh, may you be led to do it and to do it now, before this day is over! We want and pray for the conversion of many more beside you. If we had these souls given to us, what a token for good would it be, and what a comfort! May the Lord bring you in, and bring you in tonight! Oh, trust Him, Soul, trust Him! May God help you to trust Him, and His shall be the praise, world without end!

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: LUKE 24.**

**Verses 1-11.** *Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher. And they entered in and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: and as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said to them, Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen. [See Sermon #1106, Volume 19—“THE LORD IS RISEN, INDEED”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Remember how He spoke to you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again? And they remembered His words, and returned from the sepulcher, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the Apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. What an emptying power unbelief has! No news could ever be more full of solace than the news of a risen Savior! But to the ears of unbelief, this news,*

which made all Heaven glad, seemed to the Apostles but as idle tales! Unbelief tied the hands of Jesus once when he was at Nazareth for, “He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” And unbelief seems often to tie our heartstrings, too, so that they can give forth no sweet music! O Lord, help us to overcome our unbelief and enable us to always confidently believe the Truth that comes to us supported by such testimony as these good women gave to the Apostles!

**12-14.** *Then arose Peter, and ran to the sepulcher; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass. And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about three score furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. As was most proper, they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another. Just as Elijah and Elisha talked with each other as they went towards the Jordan where Elijah was to be translated, so these two disciples were talking together of the great events that had recently happened—and especially talking of the death and the reported Resurrection of Christ. This was most natural, for what is uppermost in the heart will soon be uppermost upon the tongue. They had had their minds greatly exercised concerning the departure of their Lord and it was only natural that they should speak of it. If we never talk of Christ, we have great reason to suspect whether He is really in our hearts at all. Christ’s declaration to His disciples, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them,” was literally fulfilled in the case of these two disciples going to Emmaus!*

**15.** *And it came to pass that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus, Himself drew near and went with them. And, Beloved, if you would have communion with Christ, have communion with one another! If my Lord will not reveal Himself to me, perhaps He will reveal Himself to others—therefore let me get into the company of His chosen and then, surely, when He appears in the midst of their assembly, I shall have a share of the fellowship that they will enjoy!*

**16-19.** *But their eyes were restrained that they should not know Him. [See Sermon #1180, Volume 20—JESUS NEAR BUT UNRECOGNIZED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] And He said to them, What kind of conversation is this that you are having with one another as you walk and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said to Him, Are You a stranger in Jerusalem and have not known the things which are come to pass in these days? And He said to them, What things? And they said to Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. What little advance these disciples had made in the knowledge of Christ! He had been their Teacher. They had seen His miracles and yet, though they had been constantly under His superintendence, they had not learned enough to know that He was Divine! The Holy Spirit had not yet been given and, without the Holy Spirit’s Divine instruction, these disciples could only say that Christ “was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.”*

**20-25.** *And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and besides all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yes, and certain woman of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; and when they found not His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but they did not see Him. Then He said to them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken.* [See Sermon #1980, Volume 33—FOLLY OF UNBELIEF—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Supposing Him to be a stranger in Jerusalem, yet one who was well acquainted with Jewish prophecy, they had told Him exactly what the prophecies had foretold concerning the Messiah! If they had meant to refer to the various prophecies concerning Christ, they could not have detailed facts which would have more accurately fulfilled them and, therefore, Christ said to them “O fools, how slow of heart you are to believe all that the Prophets have spoken!”

**26.** *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things.* “Are not those just the very things which the Prophets said that the Christ, the Anointed, must suffer? ‘Ought not Christ to have suffered these things’—

**26-28.** *And to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the thing concerning Himself. And they drew near unto the village, where they went: and He made as though He would have gone further.* For Christ never forces His company upon anyone. And if we are willing to let Him go, He will go—nor will He return until we are heartily sick of having treated Him coldly. When we can no longer bear the absence of Christ, then He will speedily return to us. There is an instance of this in the life of Christmas Evans which impressed me very much when I read it. Sandemanianism had spread very much through Wales and he had been very busy attacking it. But it seemed as if, in doing so, his sermons had lost all their former power and unction—and his own soul also grew very dry and barren—he had little or no fellowship with Christ. He said that, at last, his soul grew utterly weary of being absent from his Lord and he could not endure it any longer, but felt that he must once again enjoy communion with his Lord and experience the power of the Holy Spirit in his preaching. So he stopped at the foot of Cader Idris and spent some three hours in an intense agony of prayer. And the result was that when he next preached, he did so with all the unction and power which had formerly rested upon him. He had grown weary of the absence of Christ and therefore Christ returned to him! O Brothers and Sisters, if Christ makes as though He would go further, do not let Him go, but hold Him fast!

**29-33.** *But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight.* [See Sermon #681, Vo-

lume 12—EYES OPENED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem.* This shows their zeal and also their courage! This news was too good to be kept to themselves and although it was nearly night, and they had a good distance to go, in a country that was far from safe for travelers, they “returned to Jerusalem”—

**33-36.** *And found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they spoke, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said unto them, Peace be unto you.* [See Sermon #1958, Volume 33—THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE RISEN LORD TO THE ELEVEN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] No more appropriate greeting could have been given to the troubled disciples!

**37-53.** *But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself: handle Me and see: for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have you here any food? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them. And He said to them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures. And He said to them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry you in the city of Jerusalem until you be endued with power from on high. And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.*

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

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# **SIMPLE FACT AND SIMPLE FAITH**

## **NO. 3547**

**A SERMON**  
**PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 18 1917.**

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

***“Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins and by Him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses.”***  
**Acts 13:38, 39.**

APOSTOLIC preaching was widely different from the common sermonizing of this age. Doubtless, when the Apostles addressed assemblies of Believers, they took distinct subjects and kept to them, opening up and expounding the particular Truths of God they had in view. But when speaking to the outside world, and making their appeals to unbelievers, they do not usually appear to have selected any one Doctrine as their topic. The manner in which they preached did not so much consist in inculcating a specific Doctrine and showing the inferences that would naturally arise from it, as it did in declaring certain facts of which they had been actual witnesses, themselves, and had been chosen to bear witness to others. Turn to Peter's sermon at Pentecost, or the same Apostle's sermon to Cornelius, or to the record of Paul's preaching at Perga or at Antioch. You will find these discourses were an argument from the Scriptures that as God had of old promised to send a Savior, so Jesus Christ had come into the world, had lived a holy life, had been put to death, being falsely accused, had been laid in the grave, after three days had risen again and that afterwards He had ascended, according to the testimony of the Prophets. Of Him they spoke, that whoever believed in this Man, who was very God, should certainly be saved by Him. This was the declaration which they made. I do not find them, as a rule, expounding the Doctrine of Election in promiscuous assemblies of unbelievers, or arguing the subtle questions of free agency and Predestination, or striving about words to no profit, to the subverting of the hearers. Their resolute purpose was to declare those things that pertain directly to the salvation of the soul, this being the all-important matter which they would have all men to heed. Thus they charged everyone who heard them, at the peril of his soul, to accept the Revelation and embrace the faith of the Gospel!

Listen to the Apostle Paul in that famous 15<sup>th</sup> Chapter in the First Epistle to the Corinthians which is usually read at funerals. He says there—“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I deli-

vered unto you.” Now you expect him to begin a long list of Doctrines, but instead of that, he says, “How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that on the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures.” This it is that he emphatically describes as the Gospel! To assert these facts, to exhort men to believe them and to put their trust in the Man who thus lived, and died, and rose again, was the preaching of the Gospel which of old shook the hoary systems of superstition, fastened though they seemed to be upon their thrones most securely! This preaching it is which enlightened the darkness of heathendom and made, in those first ages of Christianity, the whole world to be astonished with the light and the Glory of Christ!

Let us, then, strive to imitate the Apostles, and endeavor to preach a simple Gospel sermon, if not with their ability, or with their Inspiration, yet with their earnestness and with the same desire as burned within their bosoms—that men may be saved thereby! We shall accordingly have to deal, first, with *the history of Jesus, whom we hold forth as a Savior*. Secondly, with *the claims of Jesus*. And thirdly, with *the blessings which Jesus brings*. In respect to—

**I. THE HISTORY OF JESUS**, if you will kindly refer to your Bibles, you will find that the Apostle here commenced his sermon by noticing that many Prophets had gone before to speak concerning the coming of Jesus. In the 23<sup>rd</sup> verse he especially mentions the promise made to David, that of his seed God would raise up a Prince and a Savior to the house of Israel. Let me remind you, Brothers and Sisters, that full often in the world’s history, sages have appeared claiming a Divine Inspiration, whose announcements fostered the hope of a coming Man who should redeem the world from thralldom, and become the Savior of our race. All the Seers whose eyes were anointed of God to look into the future, heralded the advent of a Great Prophet, a Prince and a Savior, whose claims to homage it would be alike perilous and preposterous to reject! These Prophets appeared at divers times and various places, and without any collusion they have, one and all, proclaimed the same thing! The most of them sealed their witness with their blood. “Which of the Prophets did not your fathers slay?” Yet in the teeth of extreme suffering, or of violent death, they seem to have been compelled by a Divine *furor* within them to proclaim, even to the last, that One was coming who would overturn the old reign of terror and the old order of outward ceremonies, to introduce a *spiritual* kingdom, and to redeem the world from its sins and sorrows!

In the favored land of Judea, that bright star of hope beamed most brightly through the dark night of long years and dreary watches. At length there appeared a remarkable individual who had been foreshown by some of these Prophets. They had signified that before the promised Man, the Messiah, arrived, there would be a harbinger—one like unto

Elijah. Elijah would come first. Now the Tishbite, whose career had been so memorable in Israel, was a man of much sanctity, but little polish. His raiment was rough, his diet frugal, his bearing austere and his address earnest or even vehement. He seemed to be fire embodied, if such a thing could be—so strong was his passion and so dauntless his courage! He laid the axe at the root of every sin, nor did he quail before any man's face, however high his station or lofty his pretensions. Let him but detect a wrong, he denounced it with all his might! Eighteen centuries have transpired since there appeared in the wilderness, near the river Jordan, a man whose raiment was of camel's hair and whose meat was locusts and wild honey. John the Baptist, a child of the desert, ascetic in his habits, with a ministry all his own, rebuked the vices of the age with a defiant air and summoned men to repentance in trumpet tones till the whole of Judea was startled with the phenomenon—and the multitudes poured forth from town and village to hear his preaching, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The one culminating point of his exhortations was this, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Look for Him, gaze at Him, resort to Him. He takes away the sin of the world. John's mission it was to make straight in the wilderness a highway for the coming of the Lord, whose shoe laces he declared himself not worthy to unloose!

At length the Savior came—the Savior long promised. From the privacy of His home at Nazareth, where He had been brought up, He came to the river of Jordan. Of His miraculous birth and His Infancy I forbear to speak. He appeared in the wilderness where John ministered by the fords of Jordan, and demanded Baptism—and as He came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him like a dove, and a Voice was heard by many witnesses, "This is My beloved Son. Hear you Him." This Man, this wonderful Individual who had now become openly manifest, lived for three years a public life of extraordinary benevolence in which there was a combination of deep humility and Divine Power—the most memorable life on record! Imagination has never dreamed its equal! Those who have thought much on virtue have been utterly unable to construct the story of a life out of their invention that could at all resemble it, or compare with it for purity or symmetry—a life in which there was not so much any one prominent virtue, as all the virtues Divinely blended! As gentle as a lamb, as bold as a lion, stern against hypocrisy, always tender towards the sinner, especially when the teardrop of repentance glistened in the eyes. A Man who tore to pieces all the old formalities, denounced the learning of the Rabbis and came, with nothing but His own force of Character and the Witness of God, to speak Truths of God which, like light, are self-evident Truths which stand the test of time and weather the changes of circumstance—Truths which will endure unimpaired when this old world has passed away—Truths which have set free human minds from the shackles of superstition! Truths which have gladdened

the daughters of despair! Truths which have always been most acceptable to the poor and needy! Truths which have elevated humanity from the very hour in which they were first proclaimed! Truths which have drawn disciples through the ages and have filled Heaven with His admirers who fall down before the glorious Son of God and worship Him! Truths of God, I say, which will yet make this world bright in the light of Heaven!

Now that Man lived a perfectly blameless life—so blameless that when His enemies sought His death, they could not find anything to lay to His charge and, therefore, by false witnesses they accused and condemned Him. The great point in His history to which we always call your most devout attention, and to which the Apostles always bore the most vehement testimony, was this—that He was crucified. It would be policy, some suppose, to conceal this. This great Teacher, this Promised One, this Divine Man—for He was Man, yet God, perfect God and perfect Man—actually died a felon’s death! He was taken by wicked hands, scourged, mocked, made to carry His Cross, and then on Calvary was fastened to the tree and there He died. But we must tell you the interpretation which lends a charm to the information. He died there as a Substitute for man. He had no guilt of His own, but He was appointed by God to bear all the sins of all His people—of all men, in fact, who will believe on Him! He was punished that they might not be punished. He bore the penalty for all Believers, that they might be released from the dread punishment that justice demanded of them. He did, in fact, go up to that tree with the load of all the guilt of all who had believed and all who should believe piled upon His shoulders! And owing to the excellence of His Nature, being God, His sufferings made Atonement for all the guilt of all that vast multitude! It was as much a vindication of God’s Justice as if all those ten thousand times ten thousand had been cast into Hell forever. Here was the fact. The punishment due to all those souls was put into one bitter cup and Jesus, on the Cross, put that cup to His lips and—

***“At one tremendous draught of love  
He drank damnation dry”***

—drank to the very dregs all the wrath which God had towards His offending, sinful, guilty and condemned people! And they were, therefore, clear. This is the great Doctrine of the Cross. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” When taken down from the Cross, He was laid in a tomb. There His sacred body remained for three days but on the morning of the third day, by His own Eternal Power and Godhead, He rose again from the grave, since He could not be held by the bands of death. And now He lives—henceforth He ever lives! At this moment, the Man who was born of the Virgin at Bethlehem, who was put to death in weakness by Pontius Pilate, but was raised in power having ascended on high after His Resurrection, sits at the right hand of the Father, whereas Man, though God,

He incessantly pleads with God for us, and by His eternal merit saves as many as put their trust in Him. These are historical facts which the Gospel holds forth to be surely believed. Some think them old wives' fables. Let them think so—they miss the benefit which simple faith would certainly confer. On their own heads be the blame, for on their own souls will come the smart! Many of us can vouch, with our hands on our breasts, that we have proved the Truth of all that is written in the Book. These precious Truths of God have exerted a potent spell over our own lives. Our believing them has enabled us to overcome our passions and it has been the leverage which has lifted us up out of our depravity. These verities are our unfailing solace while as creatures we are subject to vanity—and in the hour of death they shall be our succor and support as tens of thousands before us have found them to be! With the history of Jesus thus clearly in our view, let us now ask—

## II. WHAT ARE THE CLAIMS OF JESUS?

He claims, as the Ever-Living One, *that we should accept Him as being what He professes to be, if we would derive any benefit from Him.* He professes to be the Messiah, anointed and commissioned of God. Do you believe that? Reading the prophecies concerning Him, can you see how exactly He fits them as the key fits the wards of the lock? If you see that, I am glad. Moreover, He demands that you should receive Him as God. This is His profession, that He is God Over All, blessed forever, God Incarnate. He trod the waves of the Lake of Gennesaret. He raised the dead. He healed the sick. He multiplied the loaves and fishes. He stayed the winds. He lulled the storm. He has done all things that only God can do! He was Almighty, even here below as a Man. Accept Him, then, as very God. If you do so intelligently, sincerely, I am glad. And now will you accept Him as your Priest, and none upon earth beside? To have Him, you must renounce all else, for know of a surety our High Priest will not stand side by side with any other priest! Resort to Him only for Atonement, for intercession, for benediction. He offered Himself as a Sacrifice, gave Himself up for the sins of His people. Believe in Him as your Priest, and in His sufferings and death as your Sacrifice. Away, you priests of Rome! Begone, you priests of every other order! Away with every vain pretender to the priesthood! To Him who has entered into the holy place not made with hands pertains the exclusive privilege of the priesthood! Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only Priest over the house of God. His people become priests through Him—everyone of them. Yes, kings and priests after the Melchisedec type, but we acknowledge no priestcraft now. The religion of Jesus disavows and denounces all prelatic pretences. It proclaims forever the putting down of the hierarchy of men, with all their empty conceits and their inflated arrogance, their frocks and their robes, their lawn sleeves and their fine millinery, their vain boasting and their

sanctimonious finger play—with all the preternatural influence that is supposed to emanate from a bishop's hands! Jesus is the only Priest!

Will you take Him to be such? Then I rejoice that you are thus enlightened! Yet know that He claims to be your King. You must do what He bids you. You must be His subject, observe His statutes and keep His commandments. Are you His subject? He will be your Friend. You shall even be His brother or sister and you shall live near to Him as one dear to Him, in affectionate communion with Him. Though He is in Heaven, yet will He reveal Himself to you on earth. Now, are you willing to accept Him as such—your Prophet, so that you shall believe what He teaches you? Your Priest, so that you shall confide in His mediation. Your King, so that you shall serve Him. And oh, in what accents of tenderness does Jesus *claim that we should trust Him!* This is a blessed message to some of you who may not have heard it before. If you will but trust this glorious Man, this blessed God, you shall this moment be saved! To trust Him is what He demands. He said, “I am God; rely upon Me implicitly. I am perfect Man. I died for My enemies out of love to them. I have all power given to Me in Heaven and in earth, and with My blood sprinkled on My Father's Throne, I reign supreme in the realm of mercy. Only trust Me, and I will save you—save you from the guilt of the past, save you from the power of passion in your soul, save you from the dominion of sin—and in the future I will change you. I will make you a new man. I will give you a new heart and a right spirit. All of My Grace shall be yours, if you will but trust Me.”

Even the power to trust Jesus—He gives—for it is all of His Grace from first to last! But whoever trusts Him shall be saved. My Master has a right to this, and nothing short of this will He take, for these are His own words, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; He that believes not shall be damned.” He does not admit of any medium! You must either believe or not believe—and if you believe not, His wrath falls upon you.” He that believes not has made God a liar because he has not believed on His Son, Jesus Christ.” “He that believes on Him is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already.” “He that believes on Him shall never perish; he shall never come into condemnation, for he has passed from death unto life.” I do hope I am making this plain. It is my fervent desire and my heart's prayer that you may all know the Gospel if you never knew it before. If you have known it before, I would that you might discern it more clearly. Should you reject it, the fault shall not be mine. God is my witness—I have eschewed every idea of trying to be eloquent or oratorical in my preaching! I care nothing whatever about the gaudy show of speechmaking. I only want to tell you these Truths of God in unvarnished speech. It may be that they awaken prejudice and you who listen to them, perhaps, are saying they are dull and trite. Such trite tru-

isms, however, contain the very pith and marrow of the Gospel whereby you can be guided to Heaven! Dull as you may account them, if rejected, dark and dreary, indeed, will be the ruin of your souls. I charge you, therefore, before Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, that you remember these few simple things, seeing they involve your hope or your despair, your salvation or your condemnation for eternity! Door of Heaven, there is none but this! Gate of Paradise, there is none beside it! "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation." He has devised for us a way of redemption. Trusting in Him, we shall be saved! Rejecting Him, we are lost!

Jesus claims of you that you do not trust in yourselves. That you do not think that you are good enough. That you should not imagine that you ever can be good enough of yourselves. That you rely not in any ceremonies. That you will not depend upon any man. That you do not encourage a hope of Heaven by any reasoning or resolution of your own, but that you just put your sole trust in Him! Though it seems too good to be true, yet true it is, that if you are the worst of sinners, defiled with vilest lusts and degraded with heaviest crimes—though your sins are of scarlet dye, and their remembrance haunts you like ghostly specters—yet if you will trust in Jesus, whom God has set forth for a Propitiation, you shall have perfect forgiveness from God, the eternal Father, and power shall be given you to overcome those very trespasses to which you were prone, that you fall not into them again! Oh, glorious Gospel of the ever-blessed God! Would that men had hearts to receive and welcome its gracious provisions!

### III. THE BLESSINGS WHICH JESUS CHRIST BRINGS TO ALL WHO TRUST HIM.

This may well exceed our power to enumerate them. "*By this Man is preached unto you forgiveness of sins.*" Not lenience, but pardon—the forgiveness of all sins! From your childhood to your old age! The sins of fourscore years, if you have lived so long! Your public misdemeanors, your private trespasses, your overt acts, your secret thoughts, your uttered words, your smothered wishes—the whole catalog all unrolled of your transgressions and obliquities shall be at once blotted out from the book of God's remembrance, if you trust in Jesus Christ! They shall not be laid to your charge. However black the list, or long the inventory, do but trust in this Man and they shall be all forgiven you! He that confesses his sin and comes to Jesus shall find mercy, shall find mercy now! Is there one here who feels his guilt? What grateful news this must be to his aching heart! I wish that you all knew how guilty you have been, and how deeply stained you are. A real broken-hearted sinner is a gem wherever you meet with him. There is no music in the world like the notes of pardon to the conscience-stricken self-convicted sinner! Jesus gives par-

don for all sin. To those that believe in Him, He gives immediate pardon—not pardon in prospective, not pardon to be revealed when you come to die, but pardon *now*—pardon reaching sins yet to come, pardon comprehending the whole of your sinful life, given into your hands to be read by the eye of your faith and to be as distinctly known as though it were delivered to you on parchment written by an angel's hand, sealed with the Savior's blood! Christ Jesus will give a pardon which shall never be revoked! A pardon that cannot hereafter be cancelled. God never plays fast and loose with men. Whom He once pardons, He never condemns. If He pronounce a man forgiven, forgiven he is and forgiven he shall be when the world is on a blaze! What unspeakable joy shall fill the soul of him who hails this hallowed hour a pardon from the skies! His burden gone! His manacles struck off! His fetters loosed! The fever cured! His health restored! How he will leap with delight! Dance with pleasure and sing with holy mirth! Believe in the slain but ever-living Son of God, poor Sinner, and this heavenly rapture shall be yours to prove!

This is a pardon of pure good will that retains no dregs of animosity. A man forgives his child and foregoes the rod, but he may say, "I shall not forget your conduct, for in the future I cannot trust you." But when God forgives, He does not reproach. He takes the prodigal to His bosom. He does not seat him at the end of the table to remind him of his waywardness, but He kills the fatted calf for him to convince him of his welcome! In some of us who were the very chief of sinners, He puts such confidence that He gives a commission to preach the Gospel to others by which we are saved ourselves—and sends us about the business which lies nearest to His heart—and most concerns His own Glory. Oh, yes, it is a blessed pardon which sweeps the whole extent of human ruin and redeems us, restores us and recoups us for the losses we sustained by sinning! And not only so, but by Him, by Jesus, all who believe are justified as well as forgiven—justified from all things which we could not be justified by the Law of Moses. Here we have a comparison, or rather a contrast. What does this mean? When men came to the altar, according to the Law of Moses, they brought a bullock which they offered for their sin. This done, with what feelings would they depart from the altar? Conscience of guilt the man came—convinced that he had complied with a statute, he went away. But his conscience was not cleansed! The stain was not removed. Though the blood of the beast quieted some of his scruples and eased some of his terrors, it did not, could not, give him perfect peace! He must have known that the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer could not take away sin, neither could it atone for its guilt or eradicate its venom.

By so much is the Gospel of Christ better than the Law of Moses. If you will come and trust Christ, you shall feel that you are no longer guilty! Up till now you have lived in guilt and sin. Henceforth the whole

force of sin upon the conscience shall be gone! You shall have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord! You shall feel that for the past it is so obliterated that you have it no longer on your conscience. You can sing—

***“Thro’ Jesus’ blood, I’m clean.”***

What a mercy this is—this perfect cleansing of the conscience from guilt! He that come to the altar under Moses’ Law did not always feel that he could come to God. The blood was sprinkled and there was the way of access—but only the High Priest went within the veil once in the year. The Law of Moses could not so justify a man as to let him have access to the Mercy Seat, but Jesus Christ so justifies His people that they come right up to God and speak to Him as a child to a father! They tell Him all their needs and weaknesses, all their gratitude and joy. Into His very ears they pour out their loving hearts. How sweet the access of the creature, man, to his Covenant God, when once he knows Christ! I do avow that some of us have as truly talked with God as ever we spoke to men—and have been as sure that we were in the Presence of our heavenly Father, and as conscious of that wonderful overshadowing as ever we have been conscious that we have been in fellowship with any man or woman born! Oh, if you did but know it, God would not seem far off from you when you once trusted Christ! You would not think of Him as the God of Thunder driving His rattling car over the sky with a flashing spear of lightning, but you would sing of Him—

***“The God that rules on high,  
And thunders when He pleases,  
That rides upon the stormy sky  
And manages the seas.  
This awful God is ours,  
Our Father and our Love—  
He will send down His heavenly powers  
To carry us above.”***

You would see Him everywhere about you with the eyes of your spirit and rejoice in Him!

They who came by the Law of Moses to the altar were not justified from apprehensions of the future—but each worshipper, as he went home after all the killing of lambs, and rams, and bullocks—was afraid to die. But he that trusts in Jesus feels that, as far as the future is concerned, he is perfectly secure. “Now,” he says, “God has promised to save those who trust Christ. I trust Christ—God must save me. He is bound by His Justice to do so.” On the lion of Justice rides the fair maid of Faith, and she has no fear! While God is just, no disciple of Jesus can be destroyed! What if Justice charges me with being a sinner? I reply, “’Tis true I am, and yet I am not amenable to judgment, for all my sins are taken from me. They were laid on my blessed Surety! I have not one left. Christ has been punished for my sins—shall two be punished for one of-

fense? Shall my Substitute die, and I die, too? Shall Christ be condemned and I be condemned, too, for the one and same offense? God is not so unjust as to punish first the Substitute, and then the man for whom the Substitute stood.”

Oh, this is something to roll back on! This is a pillow for an aching head! This is a safe boat to sail in amidst the storms of life and across the seas of death. Jesus Christ in my place, outside the gate of the city, poured out His heart’s blood as God’s great Victim! I trust in Him. Trusting in Him, I cannot perish! He has sworn and will not change His mind! By two Immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie, He has given strong consolation to them who flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel! Oh, Beloved, surely we can live on this promise, and on this promise die!

Would to God that you all trusted Him! May full many of you trust Him now for the first time. The preaching of this Gospel is trustworthy because the promise is trustworthy. I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes. Do you believe? Say, “Yes,” or, “No,” for there are signs following in either case. Say “Yes,” and say it now! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ACTS 13:14-42.**

**Verses 14, 15.** *But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath, and sat down. And after reading of the Law and the Prophets.* From which there were always two appointed lessons, one from the writings of Moses, and another from one of the Prophets. And on this day it was probably the First Chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy, or the First Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah—“the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them.”

**15.** *The rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, You men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.* They were seen to be Jews who were traveling, and they were invited by the minister who conducted the service, to stand up and say anything they had to say. “Then Paul stood up and, beckoning with his hand, said—

**16.** *Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and you that fear God, give audience.* You, who, though Gentiles, have come to worship Jehovah, God of Israel—“men of Israel.”

**17, 18.** *The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought He them out of it. And about the time of forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness.* You that are familiar with your Bibles will be struck with the great likeness of this sermon by Paul to

that of Stephen. It seems to run on the same lines. Stephen gave the history of Israel to the Israelites. Paul does the same. Ah, we can never tell how great was the influence of that dying Stephen upon this living Paul! Paul is the continuation of Stephen. His blood was not lost in that day when they stoned him to death. From his ashes sprang this mighty preacher of the Word of God!

**19-22.** *And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He divided their land to them by lot. And after that He gave unto them judges for about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the Prophet. And afterwards they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul, the Son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. And when He had removed him, He raised up unto them, David, to be their king; to whom also He gave testimony, and said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, which shall fulfill all My will.* All this would be very pleasing to the Jews. They were never weary of hearing the ancient history of themselves as a chosen people. Paul ingratiates himself with them. The Gospel that he had to preach was bitter to them, but he gilds the pill! And we must do what we can lawfully and properly do to win the attention of men and their kindly feeling to us, although we must faithfully preach the Gospel. Now he got as far as David into history. Now we will step to Christ.

**23-25.** *Of this man's seed has God according to His promise raised unto Israel a Savior—Jesus—after John had first preached before His coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think you that I am? I am not He. But, behold, there comes One after me, whose shoes of His feet I am not worthy to loosen.* He brings in the testimony of John, who was universally respected among them. They regarded him as the last of the Prophets, and so Paul still tries to win their kind feelings.

**26, 27.** *Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whoever among you fears God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him.* Not knowing it, they have fulfilled the prophecies of old in condemning Jesus, the Son of David!

**28, 29.** *And though they found no cause of death in Him, yet desired they Pilate that He should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulcher.* You see he has given the story of Christ—His life, His death, His burial, His Resurrection.

**30, 31.** *And He was seen many days of them which came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses unto the people.* He does not expect them to believe without proofs, but he adduces the proof of the Resurrection in the many witnesses who saw Him after He had risen.

**32-37.** *And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God has fulfilled the same unto us, their children, in that He has raised up Jesus again: as it is also written in the Second Psalm, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You. And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give You the sure mercies of David. Therefore He also says in another Psalm, You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption. But He, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. So that David was not speaking of himself, but he was speaking of another and higher David, his greater Son, the Son of God, begotten of the Father!*

**38.** *Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins— Now they have it. Now he brings it out very clearly, indeed! Glad tidings are now ringing in their ears!*

**39.** *And by Him all who believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses. The sins which the Law of Moses did not propose to touch, yes—all sins which the Law of Moses could only typically remove—all these sins are now really taken away by this glorious Son!*

**40, 41.** *Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the Prophets: Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though one were to declare it unto you. You cannot imagine anything more appropriate to the occasion, more properly set forth, more bold, more clear—but these men were not prepared to receive it.*

**42.** *And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. They are earnest hearers who want to hear the same sermon again! But perhaps they did not expect to hear the same words, but to get the same sense and have it explained more fully that they might the better grasp it. Oh, what a mercy it is when the congregation is going away, if there are some that stay behind, anxious to learn more!*

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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

# FURTHER AFIELD

## NO. 2045

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 23, 1888,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you put it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so has the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set you to be a light of the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the Word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”***  
**Acts 13:46-48.**

DEAR friends, last Sabbath morning I tried to stir YOU up to sacred activity. I heard from many that they felt thoroughly motivated and I know of some who at once commenced to speak for Christ. I wish I could hope that our whole company kept step together in this. If what is said on the Sabbath were really carried out, what splendid advances we should make! But if not, it is as though a commanding officer spoke to his troops and the men did not march according to orders. However, I am thankful for what was done and for the many of you who did keep step together in an earnest march to conquer the powers of sin by making known the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

“They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word,” and I hope that you, as you scattered to your various abodes, did go everywhere teaching the Word of God according to your capacity. If so, you have already come far enough to have met with individuals upon whom your warnings and invitations have been spent in vain. I thought it would be well for us this morning to go with Paul to Antioch, in Pisidia, and just see how he was treated there and what he did when he met with an ill reception from the Jews.

By God's Grace may we not be discouraged if our message has been refused, but might we be instructed by the example of Paul and Barnabas as to what we should do. And may we be comforted by the success which their perseverance achieved. The Jews of Antioch, after having heard Paul with considerable attention, made up their minds to refuse Jesus, the Son of David, and not to accept Him as their Messiah and Savior.

**I.** Our first point for consideration will be that **THE REJECTION OF CHRIST IS A VERY SOLEMN BUSINESS.** It has been a very solemn business for the Jewish nation. The history of the Jews since their rejection of our Lord may be written in blood and tears. No Gentile should read it without ten thousand blushes, for they have been evilly treated by all the nations, though through them the greatest blessing that ever came to men has come to us. Never should we forget that our Redeemer is of the seed of Israel. Yet, when the chosen people rejected Jesus deliberately, from that

day a history of woe and sorrow began, which has gone on even to this day.

To the deep disgrace of Christendom, so called, there still remain countries in which they regard a Jew's life as of less value than that of a dog and only force holds them back from massacre. They are still a people scattered and poor in many parts of the earth, although in others they take the lead in wealth. Oh, that they had received the Messiah, I shall not attempt to picture what would have been their history if they had accepted the Son of David as their Lord. It is not so—

***“Oh, would our God to Zion turn!  
God with salvation clad,  
Then Judah's harp should music learn,  
And Israel be glad.”***

I am bound to talk about a people nearer home, about some here present, who have refused the Savior. Perhaps they will say, at the very outset, “We have not done so, we will receive Him one day.” Yes, but you refuse Him now. If you do not now believe in Him, you have up till now rejected Him. This you have done as they did at Antioch, against the evidence of honest men. They doubted whether Christ had really risen from the dead, although His resurrection was attested by hundreds of true witnesses. His rising from the dead was a great miracle. But if He did not rise from the dead we have a far greater wonder to account for—Why did these hundreds of persons declare themselves to be eyewitnesses of His rising?

Those who declared that they had seen Him alive after His crucifixion, how came they to agree in such a statement and to persist in it so unanimously? They were simple folk, who had associated with Jesus for years. And they identified Him, after His rising, as the same Person who died. They were not ingenious enough to have invented such a story. They could have no reason in spreading the statement if they had not believed it, for they suffered for it. They were not gainers in any form, except as to spiritual things. They were thrust into prison and scourged and banished and most of them were slain for bearing this witness.

Some of them died by deaths too cruel to be described. But they none of them ever recanted, or admitted that they might be mistaken. Hundreds of witnesses asserted that this Jesus, whom they saw dead upon the Cross, did really rise again. And their belief of this fact filled them with a burning enthusiasm, which, while it produced in them a holy character, also caused them to speak with a marvelous boldness and full assurance which amazed their adversaries. They spoke earnestly, like men who felt that it was their life's work to bear witness to a Divine fact.

But the unbelievers set aside the testimony of these honest men. My unconverted Hearer, if you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the work which was crowned by His rising from the dead, you set aside the witness of Apostles, saints and martyrs. The number of martyrs has been very great from that day till now but you set aside the testimony borne by their lives and death. You also impute foolishness or deceit to your dearest friends, some of whom are with God and who died in the

faith, exhorting you to believe in Jesus Christ. Indeed, you make all of us who preach the Gospel to be liars. And we are not so.

You do not think so badly of us when we speak in everyday life—only when we tell you glorious things, which we have tasted and handled, of the good Word of God. We speak out of our experience of the power of Christ's blood when we pray you to accept His atoning sacrifice and yield yourselves to Him. We have no motive in persuading you to faith but that of love to your souls. We shall not be gainers by your conversion, nor losers by your ruin. But we love you, and therefore pray you believe those necessary Truths, without which you can never enter the kingdom of Heaven.

These people next did violence to Christ Himself and His precious blood. It does seem amazing to those of us who love Jesus and worship Him that any should reject Him. He comes so tenderly, so meekly, the Lamb of God! All that He does is so generous, so self-denying, that we marvel that you refuse Him. "He takes away the sin of the world"—why does the world despise Him? What has He done that you should refuse to become His disciples and accept His salvation? Do you not know that you do despite to His blood?

To me there is a great sanctity about the blood of man. I saw last Wednesday the Prayer Book which Bishop Juxon held in his hand as he stood by the side of Charles I on the scaffold at Whitehall. Two spots of blood are on the page wherein he was reading the prayers, as the axe fell upon the monarch's neck. I have no reverence for Charles I but I have reverence for drops of blood. I looked at them and they were no theme of jest for me—the blood of a man is sacred.

But what shall I say of the blood of the Son of God! God Himself, incarnate, in some mysterious manner taking into union with Himself our humanity and shedding His blood to redeem us! What is to be said of this? Look with reverence upon that precious blood. Can you think that this blood was shed to wash away sin, and yet trifle with it and go your way to your farm and to your merchandise, forgetful altogether of this amazing sacrifice? God grant that you may not be guilty of the blood of Christ! It is an enormous guilt and it lies on every unbeliever who has heard of Jesus and has rejected His great salvation.

These people had to do despite to all the marvels which lie wrapped up in the Gospel. To us, my dear Hearers, who believe in Jesus, the Gospel is the most wonderful thing that can ever be. The more we know of it, the more astounded we are at it. It is a compound of Divine and infinite things. When we study it, we go from wonder to wonder. Here we behold the heart of God and hear the voice of His infinite tenderness, His infallible wisdom, His stern justice and His supreme beneficence. How can all this be rejected by you? Surely, you do not know what is in the Gospel, or you would hearken to its every tone.

I sat yesterday with two tubes in my ears to listen to sounds that came from revolving cylinders of wax. I heard music, though I knew that no instrument was near. It was music which had been caught up months before and now was ringing out as clearly and distinctly in my ears as it

could have done had I been present at its first sound. I heard Mr. Edison speak—he repeated a childish ditty. And when he had finished he called upon his friends to repeat it with him. And I heard many American voices joining in that repetition. That wax cylinder was present when these sounds were made and now it talked it all out in my ear.

Then I heard Mr. Edison at work in his laboratory—he was driving nails and working on metal and doing all sorts of things and calling for this and that with that American tone which made one know his nationality. I sat and listened and I felt lost in the mystery. What of all this? What can these instruments convey to us?

But oh, to sit and listen to the Gospel when your ears are really opened! Then you hear God Himself at work. You hear Jesus speak—you hear His voice in suffering and in Glory and you rise up and say, “I never thought to have heard such strange things! Where have I been to be so long deaf to this? How could I neglect a Gospel in which are locked up such wondrous treasures of wisdom and knowledge, such measureless depths of love and Divine Grace?” In the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, God speaks into the ear of His child more music than all the harps of Heaven can yield. I pray you, do not despise it. Be not such dull, driven cattle that when God has set before you what angels desire to look into, you close your eyes to such glories and pay attention to the miserable trifles of time and sense.

This rejection of the Gospel of Christ is the more grievous because it is a decided act of the will. When a man refuses to be saved it is his own act and deed. Nothing in Scripture will support us in throwing the blame elsewhere. The devil himself cannot refuse Christ for a man. Man must do that for himself. Only you can bolt the door against yourself. There is a will in man and it is a sadly perverse will, so that the Savior said of it, “You will not come to Me, that you might have life.” The not coming of which the Lord complains is a direct act of the man’s own will. You choose to sin—you choose to remain uncleansed from guilt. You choose to abide under the wrath of God.

You have deliberately chosen to be without Christ for years—and therein you are choosing your own destruction. This is a fearful thing. It made me feel, when I was preparing my sermon, as if I must spend all the time over this first head. For I cannot willingly leave a single soul to be of the number of whom it is written, “You put it from you.” How can we bear to see you thus commit soul-suicide?

Notice! We have here the rejection of Christ regarded as a man’s own verdict upon himself. No man can claim a fairer jury than to let his own faculties sit in judgment upon himself. Listen! “You judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life.” This, then, is your own verdict, you who refuse the Gospel. You have not yielded to Christ and you are not saved. And thus you have “judged yourselves unworthy of everlasting life.” In the legal sense there is no worthiness in any man. Our conscious unworthiness is our only worthiness for mercy and that consciousness is worked in us by Divine Grace.

But in looking at the whole picture, you have felt that you were not the men to believe in Christ, you were not the women to be saved. You felt, rather, that you were the kind of people who should spend your zeal in attending the theater or the dance. You felt that you best answered the end of your being when you did your daily labor, or opened your shop and saved a little money. You felt that you were not called upon to think of more high and heavenly things. You judged yourselves worthy to live a temporary life and then, like beasts, to die and be no more. An eternal destiny of glory and immortality you have not judged yourselves worthy to obtain.

Remember, this is your own verdict upon yourself. If your verdict had run, "I am an immortal being. I shall outlive the sun and moon and I would therefore be prepared for my supreme destiny. I can only be so prepared by linking myself with the eternal Son of God, who, as the chief of men, shows us our manhood united to the Godhead. Only He gives those who are in Him to rejoice in God their Father," this would have led you to lofty aspirations. This conclusion you have not arrived at but you have brought in the verdict, "unworthy of eternal life," which, being interpreted, means—worthy to die.

I fear that your verdict will have to stand. How terrible will it be when the Lord will set His seal to your own judgment and say—"You are unworthy of eternal life—this is your own judgment upon yourself. You were not willing to be quickened into spiritual life. You shall remain in eternal death"! It will be Hell to a man to have his own voluntary choice confirmed and made unchangeable. Oh, that this judgment may not fall upon you! O Sirs, I dread above all things that throughout eternity you will be left to your own free wills, to continue in that condition of alienation from God which you have chosen, reaping what you have sowed! If you deliberately prefer sin to Christ and let go pardon, everlasting life and Heaven, who is to blame? Will you not curse yourselves to all eternity? And will not this be Hell?

Once more—this sad, this wretched putting from them of everlasting life, greatly grieves the Spirit of God. Paul and Barnabas were moved by it to speak in deep solemnity. In those godly men the Spirit of God largely dwelt and in them He revealed His thoughts. They had come to Antioch in pure love to souls. And they had hoped better things of their countrymen than to see them reject the Savior. As an audience, they had been most attentive while Paul recited the history of Israel and he and Barnabas hoped that many would have believed on the Son of David.

And when they found that the frequenters of the synagogue had become envious and jealous because the Gentiles were so eager to hear the Word, then Paul and Barnabas were grievously wounded. The Spirit of God is much more tender than the soul of Paul or Barnabas and He is sorely grieved when He sees Jesus rejected. It is His office to win for Jesus the love of men and He is vexed when men turn their backs on the loving Lord. What must the Holy Spirit have to bear from the multitudes of men and women who are putting the Gospel away from them! In no one case is

it a trifle to Him but in every instance He is grieved, even as of old it was written—"They rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit."

O gracious Spirit of God, still bear with wayward men! We beseech You, still have pity upon the ungodly, for madness is in their hearts. Still enlighten their darkness and melt the hardness of their hearts, for Jesus' sake.

There stands the case. They put everlasting life from them and judged themselves unworthy of it. What an unhappy state of things! It is too painful for me. I cannot speak longer upon it—I must hasten to my second point.

**II. THIS REJECTION OF CHRIST BY SOME LED TO A MORE EXTENDED EFFORT.** When Paul and Barnabas found that their message was rejected, what did they do? They met the Jews with this bold sentence, "Seeing you put it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

In consequence of the ill-manners of the Jews they did not turn away from their work. It never entered their minds to give up their ministry because it did not succeed among these Jews. They did not say, "Lo, we turn away from preaching Jesus—we will speak no more in the name of the Lord." Neither, my Brethren, may we speak thus. I know the heart grows sick when tender testimony is rejected. The constant reiteration of the same Gospel to ears that will not hear becomes wearisome work. It needs great faith to go on from day to day plowing a rock. Oh, shall we always have to cry to you in vain! Will you always be so perverse? Yet we dare not cease to plead with you. We cannot give you up.

We overcome the suggestion of our weariness, "I will speak no more in the name of the Lord." For love of you, the Gospel is as fire in our bones and we cannot cease to warn every man and plead with every man for Jesus. Instead of turning from the work, these holy men addressed themselves to those who had been somewhat neglected—"Lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

Beloved, if you have been mainly laboring with the children of godly parents and these refuse, turn to the slum children. If you have tried to bless respectable people and they remain unsaved, try those who are not respectable. If those to whom it was natural and necessary that the Word should first be spoken have put it away from them, turn to those who have been left out in the cold. Take the Lord's hint in this Apostolic history and distinctly turn to those people who are not yet Gospel-hardened. Turn to those who have not been brought up under religious influences but have been looked upon as without the camp.

That, I believe, is the Lord's mind towards the Church of today. Let her break up fresh soil and she will have richer harvests. Let her open new mines and she shall find rare riches. We too often preach within a little circle where the message of life has already been rejected scores of times. Let us not spend all our time in knocking at doors from which we have been repulsed. Let us try elsewhere. During this new week and throughout the rest of our lives, let us seek after the neglected, the utterly irreligious, the worldly and profane.

Be not amazed—I mean just what I say! Let the infidel and the superstitious be the object of our prayers. Let the frivolous and worldly be spoken with. This seems to me to be the parallel of Paul's conduct when he turned to the Gentiles who were given up to idols and served different lusts and were viewed as quite beyond the line of Divine Grace.

They enlarged the scope of their ministry under Divine command. They said, "We turn to the Gentiles. For so has the Lord commanded us." Their change of aim was not a freak of fancy. If you now turn your chief thoughts to the most neglected part of the community, you will have this as your warrant, "So has the Lord commanded us." It was right to begin with Chapel-goers and Church-goers and those instructed in the faith—it was necessary to begin with the children of the godly. But if they put it from them and count themselves unworthy of eternal life, it is now imperative upon us that we look after others.

O my Brethren, let us try to do so! Let us turn our energies towards getting in the people who are not familiar with the courts of the Lord's house, nor with the Gospel of His Son—for so has the Lord commanded us. There is this happy and yet unhappy circumstance to urge us on—the outsiders are by far the larger number. What were the Jews in number as compared with the Gentiles? If you work for Christ among those who are in our religious circles and fail to win them, the field is the world and the larger part of that field has never been touched as yet.

We have labored for London. But if London counts itself unworthy of eternal life, let us think of Calcutta, Canton and the Congo. If these near ones will not reward our endeavors, let us be of enterprising spirit and do as traders do, who, when they find no market at home, strike out new lines. This is precisely what the text would teach us. Let us launch out into the deep and let down our nets for a draught. If we cannot catch fish in the shallows, great shoals of fish are in the deeps and if we will launch out we shall come back with our boats loaded with the living freight.

The result of the rejection of Christ by some was the expansion of the sphere of the godly workers. It reminds us of the parable—they that were bid were not worthy. Therefore, go out into the highways and hedges and as many as you find bid to the supper.

**III.** Thirdly, please notice that THIS ENLARGEMENT OF EFFORT WAS ENCOURAGED BY THE PROMISE OF GOD. "For so has the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set you to be a light of the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."

Let us notice this—God has set Jesus to be a light, and a light He must be. God's appointment is no empty thing. No man thinks of setting up a light if nobody will ever see it. And if God has appointed Christ to be a light, depend upon it some are to see that light. But all men are blind by nature. Alas, it is even so. But if God has set His Son to be a light, I conclude that He is about to open the eyes of the blind, that they may see this light. If I saw a wise man going into a blind asylum, laying on gas or making preparation for the electric light, I should feel sure that he had a view to people who can see. And if none but blind people could come into

the building, I should conclude that he anticipated a time when the poor blind folks would find their eyes again and would be able to use the light.

So, as the Lord has set Jesus to be a light, you may be sure that He means to open blind eyes. Jesus will enlighten the people, souls will be saved. God has set His King upon the holy hill of Zion and He has not set Him there for a King without intending to give Him a kingdom. God will not allow His Son to be a Savior who never saves, a Redeemer who does not redeem. Our Lord is set to enlighten every class. The Jew no longer has a monopoly on the light of Heaven. God has not appointed His Son to save a few dozen people who go to a particular meeting house. He has set Him to be a light to the *nations* and He means He shall be so. This encourages us to labor among all classes. Jesus is a fit light for the upper ten thousand and some of them shall rejoice in that light—he is equally set to be a light to the teeming millions and they shall rejoice in Him, too.

What God has appointed must be carried out. Jesus is yet to be a light to outcast people—to the persons of whom we have never thought favorably, the classes whom even philanthropy has felt ready to abandon. This is God's set purpose concerning His Son Jesus and His omnipotence will carry it out. We are further told that our Lord Jesus is set to be salvation. Be you therefore sure that He will save. If Jesus is set for salvation, men shall be saved. Let us believe in Christ's power to save. We have only a spattering of faith in Him. Why do you not talk of Jesus to that fellow who swears in the street? You say that it would be of no use. What is this but distrust of the Gospel?

Why do you not test the power of the glad tidings upon persons of bad character? Is it not that you think the Gospel would be of no use in such a case? You think that some quarters of the town cannot be reached by the Truth of God—thus you have a *local* Christianity—a God of the hills and not of the valleys—a religion in which the power varies according to longitude and latitude. God forgive our unbelief and at the same time kill it!

The great Father has set Christ Jesus to be “salvation unto the ends of the earth.” So then, if any are further off than others, they are especially included. If any seem so far gone that they stand on the verge of creation, out of the reach of civilization and charity—these are the people whom Jesus is set to save. He can save to both ends of the earth and all that lies in between. To the most debauched, depraved, drunken and desperate, Jesus is set to be salvation. From that poverty which has been brought on by vice and that degradation which is the consequence of sin, Jesus can uplift mankind.

Where even the image of manhood seems obliterated and the brute reigns supreme, the Lord Jesus can set the superscription of God. To the lost, Jesus is set to be a Savior. The triumphs of the Gospel at the first were largely among the lowest of the low. Slaves and outcasts embraced Christianity and rose to holiness. It was by such that the Lord overthrew the idols of Greece and Rome. The Lord can work such wonders again and He will. Only let us believe it and tell out unceasingly the Gospel of Jesus in the unlikeliest places and the promise will be fulfilled—“I have set you

to be a light of the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.”

**IV.** Observe, in the fourth place, that THIS ENLARGEMENT OF EFFORT WAS ENCOURAGED BY SPEEDY SUCCESS—“And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the Word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.”

First, the Gentiles were glad. Could you not see their eyes sparkle as they learned that Jesus was their salvation? They sat in the synagogue, where they were only tolerated, the Jews looking very jealously at them. But now they heard good news, for the living God had thought of them and sent to them salvation. No more would they care for the dark eyes of the Jews. They smiled as they saw the door of Divine Grace set open before them. Paul and Barnabas must have felt glad to address so glad a congregation. We little guess with what joy the message of mercy would be received by those who had never yet heard it.

Go and see what it will do. How I should like a congregation of people who have never heard of Jesus Christ before! I should expect to have a blazing time of it, like the man who set light to a straw stack and found that he had a world of fire before him in no time. To hear of salvation by the blood of Jesus for the first time must be a sensation indeed! As for many of my hearers, they have heard of Jesus so long that the topic is stale. I feel you will never accept the Savior but will die in your sins. Those who have never heard of Jesus at all often hear the Gospel with great interest and believe unto eternal life.

The Gentiles accepted the Word. They did not sit down and quibble and raise questions and so forth. But it is written, “they were glad and glorified the Word of the Lord.” This is more than many ministers do. Look at our divines now! What are they doing? They are not glorifying the Word of God but taking the glory from it. According to some of them the Word of God in His Book is full of blunders—how much less trustworthy must it be as it is preached! The shepherds are now destroying the pastures. Holy Scripture, according to them, is not infallible. The sure word of testimony is no longer sure according to modern ideas. With these I have no fellowship. O my Soul, come not into their secret! Let us loathe such dishonoring of the Word of God. Let us get far away from all pretense of communion with these enemies of our faith.

Get among the poor, the lowly, the sinful. Tell them the glad news of pardon bought with blood. I warrant you, they will not turn critics and quibble and find fault. But they will, many of them, believe unto eternal life. The man who has grown accustomed to luxuries is the man who turns his meat over and picks off a bit here and a bit there—this is too fat and that is too gristly. Bring in the poor wretches who are half-starved. Fetch in a company of laborers who have been waiting all day at the docks and have found no work and in consequence have received no wage.

Set them down to a joint of meat. It vanishes before them. See what masters they are of the art of knife and fork! They find no fault—they never dream of such a thing. If the meat had been a little coarse, it would

not have mattered to them. Their need is too great for them to be dainty. Oh, for a host of hungry souls! How pleasant to feed them! How different from the task of persuading the satiated Pharisees to partake of the Gospel! Go for them, Beloved! Lay yourselves out to reach poor, needy souls. They will come to Jesus, though the self-righteous will not. A great success awaits those who will again “turn to the Gentiles.” Oh, for such a turning on the part of all who love the Gospel of Free Grace!

**V.** I finish with the fifth point. THIS ENLARGEMENT AND ALL ITS BLESSED RESULTS, WERE ORDAINED IN THE PURPOSE OF GOD. The record runs thus—“They were glad and glorified the Word of the Lord: *and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*” Attempts have been made to prove that these words do not preach predestination. But these attempts so clearly do violence to language that I will not waste time in answering them. A great discussion has been carried on between those who believe in the free will of man and others who believe in the Free Grace of God. There is no real reason for this dispute, except when the man who believes in free will denies God’s freedom in Divine Grace, or when the man who magnifies Free Grace denies that man has any will.

It is possible for both parties to be wrong—and, in a measure, for both to be right. Beloved, I used the first part of my text fairly and I was not afraid to acknowledge the existence of free will, and to deplore its doings. Now I read, “as many as were ordained to eternal life believed,” and I shall not twist the text. But I shall glorify the Grace of God by ascribing to it every man’s faith. Those who believed in Jesus believed in Him because they were ordained unto eternal life. I will not take away a jot of what I believe to be the Truth of God on either side of a debate.

From the Word of God I gather that damnation is all of man, from top to bottom—and salvation is all of Divine Grace, from first to last. He that perishes chooses to perish. But he that is saved is saved because God has chosen to save him. Though some cannot make these statements agree, they are nevertheless equally true—“You have destroyed yourself. But in Me is your help found.”

We believe that the Lord knows them that are His and knows them before they are openly manifested, so that He says of a certain place, “I have much people in this city.” Do you think that the Lord does not foreknow? How, then, can He prophesy? If God foresees a certain thing is to be, why, then, it must be. And has not this all the ingredients of predestination? Moreover, “whom He did foreknow, He did predestinate.” Is it not God that gives the disposition to believe? If men are disposed to have eternal life, does not He, in every case, dispose them? Is it wrong for God to give Grace? If it is right for Him to give it, is it wrong for Him to *purpose* to give it?

Would you have Him give it by accident? If it is right for Him to purpose to give Grace today, it was right for Him to have purposed it before this date. He is a God that changes not, and what He performs today is not the purpose of today but the purpose of all eternity—“For known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.” God knows and God appoints those who shall believe and be saved.

But please note this fact—God can effect His purpose with man without violating his will. He can leave man a man, with full use of his faculties and yet turn his mind as He pleases. The will is never more free than in conversion and yet it is never more under subjection to Divine power. I do not know how the Lord governs the will—if I did know, I should be God. God does not new-create men as a baker makes loaves of bread, or a potter makes vessels, by manual skill and force. No, He treats men as men—He deals with free agents as free agents. And yet He has as much power over them as the baker over the dough, or the potter over the clay.

His supreme will acts Omnipotently and yet works with a holy delicacy which never violates the attributes of the mind. He makes men as much free agents in repentance, faith and holiness, as they were when they ran greedily into sin. He makes His people willing in the day of His power and thus glorifies His wisdom, His power and His love. God has a purpose to save those whom He gave to His Son Jesus and all these must come to Jesus for that salvation. I want you to believe this when you are at work for your Lord.

When I have come into this pulpit on a Thursday night, I have thought, “It is very wet and I shall not have many people.” But I have said to my friends in the vestry, “We shall have a picked congregation. God will send those whom He means to bless.” I do not come here and preach a “perhaps.” What is to be done by preaching the Gospel is determined from before all time and it will be accomplished. If I were dependent upon the will of my hearers and there were no supreme power over their wills, I should preach with a faint heart.

But he that preaches the Gospel with omnipotence at the back of him has a blessed and fruitful service. Is not this cheering for the preacher? We shall not labor in vain, nor spend our strength for nothing. Heaven and earth shall pass away but the Gospel shall not fail. Men may rage against the Gospel and think to defeat its purpose. But the counsel of the Lord shall stand. All that the Lord intended in creation and in Providence and in Grace will be assuredly accomplished to the last jot and tittle.

In the Kingdom of Grace there shall be nothing to mar the glory of the Lord’s triumph when the record has been fully written. This is a great comfort to the worker. Let him be always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as his labor is not in vain in the Lord. Bowed to the earth with horror at the guilt involved in the willful rejection of the Lord Jesus by our hearers, we nevertheless triumph in the firm conviction that God, who sends us, will go with us and that His purpose shall stand. We believe in the sovereignty of God, not only in His right to do as He wills with His own Grace but also in His power to do so.

Our text is equally full of comfort to the obedient hearer. For if you believe, it follows that you are ordained unto eternal life. If you believe the Gospel of Truth—if you believe in the Divine sense of trusting the Lord Jesus Christ—if you cast your guilty souls on Jesus and look to Him as lifted up, even as the brazen serpent was lifted in the wilderness—you are ordained unto eternal life. Trouble not yourself about election but rather encourage yourself with it. This is sure evidence of your election, that you

believe in Jesus. For “as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” If you believe, you are ordained to possess on earth the holy life which temptation cannot destroy and to enjoy forever that heavenly life which eternity will not exhaust. Faith gives you a life in Christ which can no more die than the eternal Lord on whom it rests. Oh, that the sweet constraint of almighty love may lead trembling souls to trust Jesus at once and live forever!

I wish especially to speak to any here present who are not familiar with the Gospel. I speak to rank outsiders, to people who know nothing of these things. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved”—saved at once. “But I never go to a place of worship.” I mean exactly you, my Friend. “But I have been a swearer.” I am thinking of the blasphemer. “But I have been an awful drunkard.” To you I speak this Gospel. “Alas,” cries one, “I shrink from your eyes. I crept in here this morning but I am a daughter of shame.” I say to you, even to you—“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

You are aimed at in the mission of Jesus. Trust Him and you are saved. “But I have been violent against the Gospel.” You are the very man that I am especially looking for. I prayed for you before I came to this place—for I prayed that Saul of Tarsus might this day become Paul the Apostle. I long to win, by this sermon, some outrageous enemy of God—that he may become a fervent friend of Jesus. You are as black as a crow, and almost as bad as the devil—therefore I long to see you converted at once, to become a leader in the Church of God.

Oh, for a batch of great saints made out of great sinners! Oh, that your energy, now used to fight against God, may be subdued by Sovereign Grace and employed in defending and spreading the Gospel of Jesus! Shall it be so, my Friend? Oh, that some woman that is a sinner would come and wash our Lord’s feet with tears and wipe them with the hairs of her head! Come, you with long hair, unbind your tresses and honor them by this service. If they have been a net in which to entangle precious lives, make them a towel for your Savior’s feet.

Come, Sinners, come to Him who loves you! Bring them, O Lord! Hear us, O Jehovah, as we entreat You to save them by the blood of Your Beloved Son! Hear us now, we beseech You and save myriads! Amen and Amen and Amen!

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# GOSPEL MISSIONS

## NO. 76

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 27, 1856,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

**ON BEHALF OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY.**

***“And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.”  
Acts 13:49.***

I SHALL not confine myself to the text. It being an old custom to take texts when we preach, I have taken one, but I shall address you, at large, upon a subject which I am sure will occupy your attention and has done for many days and years past—the subject of Gospel missions. We feel persuaded that all of you are of one mind in this matter—that it is the absolute duty as well as the eminent privilege of the Church to proclaim the Gospel to the world. We do not conceive that God will do His own work without instruments and, as He has always employed means in the work of the regeneration of this world, He will still continue to do the same. And so it becomes the Church to do its utmost to spread the Truth of God wherever it can reach the ear of man. We have not two opinions on that point. Our Doctrines, although they are supposed to lead to apathy and sloth, have always proved themselves to be eminently practical. The fathers of the missions were all zealous lovers of the Doctrines of the Grace of God and we believe the great supporters of missionary enterprise, if it is to be successful, must always come from those who hold God's Truth firmly and boldly and yet have fire and zeal with it and desire to spread it everywhere! But there is a point on which we have great division of opinion and that is as to the reason why we have had so little success in our missionary labors. There may be some who say the success has been proportionate to the Agency and that we could not have been more successful. I am far from being of their opinion and I do not think they, themselves, would express it on their knees before Almighty God! We have not been successful to the extent we might have expected, certainly not to an Apostolic extent, certainly with nothing like the success of Paul or Peter, or even of those eminent men who have preceded us in modern times who were able to evangelize whole countries, turning thousands to God. Now, what is the reason for this? Perhaps we may turn our eyes on high and think we find that reason in the Sovereignty of God, which has withheld His Spirit and has not poured out His Grace as aforetime. I shall be prepared to grant all men may agree on that point, for I believe in the ordination of everything by Almighty God. I believe in a present God in our defeats as well as in our successes. A God as well in the motionless air as in the careering tempest. A God of ebbs as well as a God of floods. But still we must look at *home* for the cause!

When Zion travails, she brings forth children—when Zion is in earnest, God is in earnest about His work. When Zion is prayerful, God blesses her. We must not, therefore, arbitrarily look for the cause of our failure in the will of God. We must also see what is the difference between ourselves and the men of Apostolic times and what it is that renders our success so trifling in comparison with the tremendous results of Apostolic preaching. I think I shall be able to show one or two reasons why our holy faith is not so prosperous as it was then. In the first place, *we have not Apostolic men*. In the second place, *they do not set about their work in an Apostolic style*. In the third place, we have not Apostolic Churches to back them up. And in the fourth place, we have not the Apostolic influence of the Holy Spirit in the measure which they had it in ancient times.

**I. First, WE HAVE FEW APOSTOLIC MEN IN THESE TIMES.** I will not say we have none. Here and there we may have one or two, but unhappily their names are never heard! They do not start out before the world and are not noted as preachers of God's Truth. We had a Williams, once, a true Apostle, who went from island to island, not counting his life dear unto him. But Williams was called to his reward. We had a Knibb, who, too, led for his Master with seraphic earnestness and was not ashamed to call an oppressed slave his Brother. But Knibb, too, has entered into his rest. We have one or two still remaining, precious and treasured names. We love them fervently and our prayers shall always rise to Heaven on their behalf. We always say, in our prayers, "God bless such men as Moffat! God bless those who are earnestly toiling and successfully laboring!" But cast your eyes around and where can we find many such men? They are all good men. We find no fault with them. They are better than we—we, ourselves shrink into nothingness compared with them! But we must still say of them that they are less than their fathers. They differ from the mighty Apostles in many respects, which we think even they would not be slow to acknowledge. I am not speaking of only missionaries, but of ministers, too, for I take it we have as much to mourn over in regard to the spread of the Gospel in England as in foreign lands—and much to regret the lack of men filled with the Holy Spirit and with fire!

In the first place, we have not men with Apostolic zeal. Converted in a most singular way, by a direct interposition from Heaven, Paul, from that time forward, became an earnest man. He had always been earnest in his sin and in his persecutions. But after he heard that Voice from Heaven, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" and had received the mighty office of an Apostle and had been sent forth a chosen vessel to the Gentiles, you can scarcely conceive the deep, the awful earnestness which he manifested! Whether he ate, or drank, or whatever he did, he did all for the Glory of his God! He never wasted an hour. He was employing his time either in ministering with his own hands unto his necessities, or else lifting those hands in the Synagogue, on Mars-Hill, or anywhere where he could command the attention of the multitude! His zeal was so

earnest and so burning that he could not (as we unfortunately do) restrain himself within a little sphere, but he preached the Word everywhere. It was not enough for him to have it handed down that he was the Apostle of Pisidia, but he must go also to Pamphylia! It was not enough that he should be the great preacher of Pamphylia and Pisidia but he must also go to Attalia—and when he had preached throughout all Asia—he must take a ship to Greece and preach there, also! I believe Paul did not only once hear in his dream the men of Macedonia saying, “come over and help us,” but every day and hour he heard the cry in his ears from multitudes of souls, “Paul, Paul, come over and help us.” He could not restrain himself from preaching! “Woe is unto me” he said, “if I preach not the Gospel. God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of Christ.” Oh, if you could have seen Paul preach, you would not have gone away as you do from some of us—with half a conviction that we do not mean what we say. His *eyes* preached a sermon without his lips and his lips preached it, not in a cold and frigid manner, but every word fell with an overwhelming power upon the hearts of his hearers! He preached with power because he was in downright earnest. You had a conviction, when you saw him, that he was a man who felt he had a work to do and must do it and could not contain himself unless he did it. He was the kind of preacher whom you would expect to see walk down the pulpit stairs straight into his coffin and then stand before his God, ready for his last account! Where are the men like that man? I confess I cannot claim that privilege and I seldom hear a solitary sermon which comes up to the mark in earnest, deep, passionate longing for the souls of men!

We have no eyes, now, like the eyes of the Savior, which could weep over Jerusalem. We have few voices like that earnest impassioned voice which seemed perpetually to cry, “Come unto Me and I will give you rest.” “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not.” If ministers of the Gospel were more hearty in their work of preaching—if, instead of giving lectures and devoting a large part of their time to literary and political pursuits, they would preach the Word of God and preach it as if they were pleading for their own lives—ah, then, my Brothers, we might expect great success! But we cannot expect it while we go about our work in a half-hearted way and have not that zeal, that earnestness, that deep purpose which characterized those men of old.

Then, again, I take it we have not men in our days who can preach like Paul—as to their faith. What did Paul do? He went to Philippi—did he know a soul there? Not one! He had his Master’s Truth and he believed in the power of it. He was unattended and devoid of pomp, or show, or parade. He did not go to a pulpit with a soft cushion in it to address a respectable congregation—he walked through the streets and began to preach to the people! He went to Corinth, to Athens, alone, single-handed, to tell the people the Gospel of the blessed God! Why? Because he had *faith* in the Gospel and believed it would save souls and hurl down idols from their thrones! He had no doubt about the power of the

Gospel. But nowadays, my Brothers, we have not faith in the Gospel we preach. How many there are who preach a Gospel which they are afraid will not save souls and therefore they add little bits of their own to it in order, as they think, to win men to Christ? We have known men who believed Calvinistic Doctrines, but who preached Calvinism in the morning and Arminianism in the evening because they were afraid God's Gospel would not convert sinners! So they manufactured one of their own. I hold that a man who does not believe God's Gospel is able to save men's souls, does not believe it at all! If God's Truth will not save men's souls, man's lies cannot! If God's Truth will not turn men to repentance, I am sure there is nothing in this world that can! When we *believe* the Gospel to be powerful, then we shall see it is powerful! If I walk into this pulpit and say, "I know what I preach is true," the world says I am an egotist. "The young man is dogmatic." Yes, and the young man means to be! He glories in it, he keeps it to himself as one of his peculiar titles, for he does most firmly believe what he preaches! God forbid that I should ever come tottering up the pulpit stairs to teach anything I was not quite sure of, something which I *hoped* might save sinners, but of which I was not exactly certain! When I have faith in my Doctrines, those Doctrines will prevail, for confidence is the winner of the palm. He who has courage enough to grasp the standard and hold it up will be sure enough to find followers! He who says, "I know," and asserts it boldly in his Master's name, without disputing, will not be long before he will find men who will listen to what he says and who will say, "This man speaks with authority and not as the Scribes and Pharisees." That is one reason why we do not succeed—we have not faith in the Gospel!

We send educated men to India in order to confuse the learned Brahmins. Nonsense! Let the Brahmins say what they like—have we any business to dispute with them? "Oh, but they are so intellectual and so clever." What have we to do with that? We are not to seek to be clever in order to meet them. Leave the men of the world to combat their metaphysical errors. We have merely to say, "This is Truth—he that believes it shall be saved and he that denies it shall be damned." We have no right to come down from the high ground of Divine authoritative testimony. And until we maintain that ground and come out as we ought to do—girded with the belt of Divinity—preaching not what *may* be true, but asserting that which God has most certainly revealed—we shall not see success! We need a deeper faith in our Gospel! We need to be quite sure of what we preach. Brothers, I take it we have not the faith of our fathers. I feel myself a poor driveling thing in point of faith. Why, I thought, sometimes, I could believe anything. But now a little difficulty comes before me. I am timid and I fear. It is when I preach with unbelief in my heart that I preach unsuccessfully. But when I preach with faith and can say, "I know my God has said that in the same hour He will give me what I shall preach and, therefore, careless of man's esteem, I preach what I believe to be true," then it is that God rewards faith and crowns it with His own crown!

Again—we have not enough *self-denial*. And that is one reason why we do not prosper. Far be it from me to say anything against the self-denial of those worthy Brothers who have left their country to cross the stormy deep and preach the Word. We hold them to be men who are to be had in honor. But still I ask, where is the self-denial of the Apostles, nowadays? I think one of the greatest disgraces that ever was cast upon the Church in these days was that last miss in Ireland. Men went over to Ireland, but like men who have valor's better part, brave bold men, they came back again, which is about all we can say of the matter. Why do they not go there again? Why, they say, the Irish "hooted" them! Now, don't you think you see Paul taking a microscope out of his pocket and looking at the little man who should say to him, "I shall not go there to preach because the Irish hooted me"? "What?" he says, "is this a preacher?—What a small edition of a minister he must be, to be sure!" "Oh, but they threw stones at us! You have no idea how badly they treated us!" Just tell that to the Apostle Paul. I am sure you would be ashamed to do so. "Oh, but in some places the police interfered and said that we should only create a riot." What would Paul have said to that? The police interfering? I did not know that we had any right to care about governments. Our business is to preach the Word of God and if we must be put in the stocks there let us lie! There would come no hurt of it at last. "Oh, but they might have killed some of us." That is just it. Where is that zeal which counted not its life dear so that it might win Christ? I believe that the killing of a few of our ministers would have prospered Christianity! However we might mourn over it and none more than myself, I say the murder of a dozen of them would have been no greater ground for grief than the slaughter of our men by hundreds in a successful fight for hearths and homes! I would count my own blood most profitably shed in so holy a struggle! How did the Gospel prosper aforesaid? Were there not some who laid down their lives for it? And did not others walk to victory over their slain bodies and must it not be so now? If we are to fall back because we are afraid of being killed, Heaven knows when the Gospel is to spread over the world—we do not. What have other missionaries done? Have they not braved death in its direst forms and preached the Word amid countless dangers? My Brothers, we say again, we find no fault, for we, ourselves, might err in the same manner. But we are sure we are, therein, not like Paul. He went to a place where they stoned him with stones and dragged him out as dead. Did he say, "Now for the future I will not go where they will ill-treat me?" No, for he says, "Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, thrice I suffered shipwreck." I am sure we have not the self-denial of the Apostles. We are mere carpet-knights and Hyde-Park warriors. When I go to my own house and think how comfortable and happy I am, I say to myself, "How little I do for my Master! I am ashamed that I cannot deny myself for His Truth and go everywhere preaching His Word." I look with pity upon people who say, "Do not preach so often. You will kill yourself." O my God! What would Paul have said to such a thing as that? "Take care of

your constitution, you are rash, you are enthusiastic.” When I compare myself with one of those men of old, I say, “Oh that men should be found calling themselves Christians, who seek to stop our work of faith and labor of love for the sake of a little consideration about the ‘constitution,’ which gets all the stronger for preaching God’s Word.”

But I hear someone whispering, “You ought to make a little allowance.” My dear Friend, I make all allowances. I am not finding fault with those Brothers, they are a good sort of people. We are “all honorable men.” But I will only say that in comparison with Paul, we are less than nothing and vanity! We are little insignificant Lilliputian creatures who can hardly be seen in comparison with those gigantic men of old!

One of my Hearers may, perhaps, hint that this is not the sole cause and he observes, “I think you ought to make excuse, for ministers now cannot work miracles.” Well, I have considered that, too, and certainly it is a drawback. But I take it not a very great one. For if it had been, God would not have allowed it to end. He gave that gift to the Church in its infancy, but now it needs it no longer. We make a mistake in attributing too much to miracles. What was one of them? Wherever the Apostles went, they could speak the language of the people. Well in the time it would have taken Paul to walk from here to Hindustan, we could learn Hindustani! Now we go over in a very little time by the means of travel now provided—so that is no great gain here. Then again, in order to make the Gospel known among the people, it was necessary that miracles should be worked so that everyone might talk about it. But now there is a printing press to aid us. What I say today, within six months will be read across the Alleghenies. And so with other ministers—what they say and what they do can soon be printed off and distributed everywhere! So we have facilities for making ourselves known which are not much behind the power of miracles. Again, we have a great advantage over the Apostles. Wherever they went, they were persecuted and sometimes put to death. Now, although occasionally we hear of the massacre of a missionary, the occurrence is rare enough. The slaughter of an Englishman anywhere would provoke a fleet of men-of-war to visit the offense with chastisement! The world respects an Englishman wherever he goes—he has the stamp of the great Caesar upon him—he is the true cosmopolitan person—the citizen of the world. That could not be said of the poor despised Jews. There might be some respect paid to Paul, for he was a Roman citizen, but there would be none paid to the rest. We cannot be put to death, now, without a noise being made. The murder of two or three ministers in Ireland would provoke a tumult through the country. The government would have to interpose. The orderly of the land would be up in arms and then we might preach with an armed police force around us—and so go through the land, provoking the priests, startling anti-Christ and driving superstition to its dens forever!

**II.** In the second place, WE DO NOT GO ABOUT OUR WORK IN AN APOSTOLIC STYLE. How is that? Why, in the first place, there is a general complaint that there is *not enough* preaching by ministers and mis-

sionaries. They sit down interpreting, establishing schools and doing this, that, and the other. We have nothing to find fault with in this but that is not the labor to which they should devote themselves. Their office is *preaching*—and if they preached more, they might hope for more success. The missionary Chamberlain preached once at a certain place and years afterwards disciples were found there from that one sermon. Williams preached wherever he went and God blessed him. Moffat preached wherever he went and his labors were rewarded. Now we have our churches, our printing presses, about which a great deal of money is spent. This is doing good but it is not doing the most good! We are not using the means which God has ordained and we cannot, therefore, expect to prosper. Some say there is too much preaching nowadays in England. Well, it is the tendency of the times to decry preaching, but it is “the foolishness of preaching” which is to change the world! It is not for men to say, “If you preached less, you might study more.” Study is required well enough if you have a settled Church but the Apostles needed no study. I apprehend that they stood up and delivered out the simple cardinal truths of religion, not taking one text, but going through the whole catalog of the Truth of God. So I think in itinerant evangelical labors, we are not bound to dwell on one subject, for then we need to study. But we shall find it profitable to deal out the whole Truth wherever we go. Thus we should always find words to hand and Truths of God always ready to teach the people.

In the next place, I conceive that a great mistake has been made in not *affirming the Divinity of our mission* and standing fast by the Truth, as being a revelation not to be *proved* by men but to be *believed*—always holding out this—“he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” I am often grieved when I read of our missionaries holding disputes with the Brahmins. And it is sometimes said that the missionary has beaten the Brahmin because he kept his temper—and so the Gospel had gained great honor by the dispute. I take it that the Gospel was *lowered* by the controversy! I think the missionary should say, “I am come to tell you something which the One God of Heaven and earth has said and I tell you, before I announce it, that if you believe it you shall be saved and if not, you shall be damned. I am come to tell you that Jesus Christ, the Son of God became flesh, to die for poor unworthy man. That through His mediation, death and suffering, the people of God might be delivered. Now, if you will listen to me, you shall hear the Word of God—if you do not, I shake the dust off my feet against you and go somewhere else.” Look at the history of every impostor—it shows us that the claim of authority insures a degree of progress. How did Mohammed come to have so strong a religion in his time? He was all alone and he went into the marketplace and said, “I have received a revelation from Heaven.” It was a lie, but he persuaded men to believe it. He said, “I have a revelation from Heaven.” People looked at his face, they saw that he looked upon them earnestly, as believing what he said and some five or six of them joined him. Did he *prove* what he said? Not he.

“You must,” he said, “believe what I say, or there is no Paradise for you.” There is a power in that kind of thing and wherever he went his statement was believed—not on the ground of reasoning, but on *his* authority—which he declared to be from Allah! And in a century after he first proclaimed his lies, a thousand sabers had flashed from a thousand sheaths and his word had been proclaimed through Africa, Turkey, Asia and even in Spain! The man *claimed* authority—he *claimed* divinity, therefore he had power.

Take again the increase of Mormonism. What has been its strength? Simply this—the assertion of power from Heaven. That claim is made and the people believe it. And now they have missionaries in almost every country of the habitable globe and the book of Mormon is translated into many languages. Though there never could be a delusion more transparent, or a counterfeit less skillful and more lying upon the very surface, yet this simple pretension to power has been the means of carrying power with it! Now, my Brethren, we *have* power, we *are* God’s ministers, we preach *God’s* Truth. The great Judge of Heaven and earth has told us the Truth and what have we to do to *dispute* with worms of the dust? Why should we tremble and fear them? Let us stand out and say, “We are the servants of the living God. We tell you what God has told us and we warn you, if you reject our testimony, it shall be better for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment than for you.” If the people cast that away, we have done our work. *We have nothing to do with making men believe. Ours is to testify of Christ everywhere, to preach and to proclaim the Gospel to all men!*

But there is one passage in the Bible which seems to militate against what I have said if the common translation is true—the passage which says that Paul, “disputed in the school of one Tyrannus.” But this is better rendered in English, he, “dialoged in the school of one Tyrannus.” Albert Barnes says that “disputed is not a happy translation,” for there is no such idea conveyed by the word. Jesus, when He preached, “dialoged.” When the man came and said to Him, “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He “dialoged” with him. When another said unto Him, “Speak, Lord, unto my brother, that he divide with me the inheritance,” Christ did not dispute with him, but He “dialoged.” His usual style was to address the people and but rarely to dispute with men. We might give up all the books that have been written in defense of Christianity if we would but preach Christ. If instead of *defending* the outposts, we were to say, “God will take care of them,” and were at once to make a sortie on the enemy, then by God’s Holy Spirit we should carry everything before us. O, Church of God! Believe yourself invincible and you are invincible! But stay to tremble and fear and you are undone. Lift up your head and say, “I am God’s daughter, I am Christ’s bride.” Do not stop to prove it, but *affirm* it. March through the land and kings and princes shall bow down before you, because you have taken your ancient prowess and assumed your ancient glory!

I have one more remark to make here with regard to the style in which we go to work. I fear that we have not enough of the Divine method of *itinerancy*. Paul was a great itinerant—he preached in one place and there were 12 converted there. He made a Church at once. He did not stop till he had five hundred. But when he had twelve, he went off to another place. A holy woman takes him in—she has a son and daughter. They are saved and baptized—there is another Church. Then he goes on. Wherever he goes, the people believe and are baptized. Wherever he meets a family who believe, he or his companion baptizes all the house and go about their way, still forming Churches and appointing elders over them! We, nowadays, go and settle in a place, make a station of it and work around it by little and little and think that is the way to succeed. No, no! Ravage a continent! Attempt great things and great things shall be done. But they say if you just pass over a place, it will be forgotten like the summer shower which moistens all but satisfies none. Yes, but you do not know how many of God’s elect may be there! You have no business to stop in one place straight on. God’s elect are everywhere. I proclaim if I could not itinerate this country of England, I could not bear to preach! If I preached *here* always, many of you would become Gospel hardened. I love to go ranging here, there and everywhere! *My* highest ambition is this—that I may be found going through the entire land, as well as holding my headquarters in one position. I do hold that itinerancy is God’s great plan. There should be fixed ministers and pastors, but those who are like Apostles should itinerate far more than they do!

**III.** But I have a third thing to say which will strike home to some of us—that is that WE HAVE NOT APOSTOLIC CHURCHES. Oh, had you seen an Apostolic Church—what a different thing it would appear to one of our Churches! As different, I had almost said, as light from darkness. As different as the shallow bed of the brook that is dried by summer is from the mighty rolling river, always full, always deep and clear and always rushing into the sea! Now, where is our *prayerfulness* compared with theirs? I trust that we know something of the power of prayer, here, but I do not think we pray like they did. “They broke bread from house to house and did eat their meat with singleness of heart, giving glory to God.” There was not a member of the Church, as a rule, who was half-hearted. They gave their souls wholly to God. And when Ananias and Sapphira divided the price, they were struck with death for their sin. Oh, if we prayed as deeply and as earnestly as they did, we would have as much success! Any measure of success we may have had here has been entirely owing under God to your prayers! And wherever I have gone, I have boasted that I have a praying people. Let other ministers have as prayerful a people. Let missionaries have as many prayers from the Church and, all things being equal, God will bless them and there will be greater prosperity than ever!

We have not the Apostolic mode of *liberality*. In the Apostles’ days they gave all their substance. It was not *demande*d of them, then, and it is not now! No one thinks of asking such a thing—still we have run to the other

extreme—many give nothing at all! Men who have thousands and tens of thousands are so eternally considerate of their families, albeit they are provided for, that they give nothing more than the servant girl who sits next to them. It is a common saying, that members of Christian Churches do not give in proportion to their wealth. We give because it is genteel and respectable. A great many of us give, I hope, because we love the cause of God. But many of us say, “There is a poor bricklayer working hard all the week and only earning just enough to keep his wife and family—he will give a shilling. Now I have so many pounds a week—I am a rich man—what shall I give? Why I will give half-a-crown.” Another says, “I will give ten shillings this morning.” Now, if they measured their wealth in comparison with his, they would see that he gives all he has left above his maintenance, while they give comparatively nothing. My Brothers and Sisters, we are not half-Christians—that is the reason why we have not half success! We are Christianized, but I question whether we are thoroughly so. The Spirit of God has not entered into us to give us that life and fire and soul which they had in those ancient times.

**IV.** But lastly, as the result of the other things which have gone before and perhaps partly as the cause of them, too, WE HAVE NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THAT MEASURE WHICH ATTENDED THE APOSTLES. I see no reason whatever, why, this morning, if God willed it, I should not stand up and preach a sermon which should be the means of converting every soul in the place! I see no reason why I should not, tomorrow, preach a sermon which should be the means of the salvation of all who heard it, if God the Spirit were poured out! The Word is able to convert, just as extensively as God the Spirit pleases to apply it. And I can see no reason why, if converts come in by ones and twos, now, there should not be a time when hundreds and thousands shall come to God! The same sermon which God blesses to ten, if He pleased, He could bless to a hundred! I know not but that in the latter days, when Christ shall come and shall begin to take the kingdom to Himself, every minister of God shall be as successful as Peter on the day of Pentecost. I am sure the Holy Spirit is able to make the Word successful and the reason why we do not prosper is that we have not the Holy Spirit attending us with might and energy as they had then. My Brothers, if we had the Holy Spirit upon our ministry, it would signify very little about our talent. Men might be poor and uneducated, their words might be broken and ungrammatical, there might be no polished periods of Hall, or glorious thunders of Chalmers. But if there were the might of the Spirit attending them, the humblest Evangelists would be more successful than the most pompous of Divines, or the most eloquent of preachers! It is extraordinary *Grace*, not talent, that wins the day—extraordinary *spiritual* power, not extraordinary mental power! Mental power may fill a Chapel, but spiritual power fills the Church! Mental power may gather a congregation, but spiritual power will save souls! We need spiritual power. Oh, we know some before whom we shrink into nothing as to talent, but who have no spiritual power. And when they speak they have not the Holy Spirit with them. But we know

others—simple-hearted, worthy men who speak their country dialect and who stand up to preach in their country place—and the Spirit of God clothes every word with power! Hearts are broken, souls are saved and sinners, by God's Grace, are born-again! Spirit of the living God, we need *You*. You are the life, the soul. You are the source of Your people's success. Without You they can do nothing. With You they can do everything!

Thus I have tried to show you what I conceive to be the causes of our partial success. And now permit me, with all earnestness, to plead with you on behalf of Christ and Christ's Holy Gospel, that you would stir yourselves up to renewed efforts for the spread of His Truth! That you would strive to more earnest prayers that His Kingdom may come and His will be done on earth even as it is in Heaven! Ah, my Friends, could I show you the tens of thousands of spirits who are now walking in outer darkness. Could I take you to the gloomy chamber of Hell and show you myriads upon myriads of heathen souls in unutterable torture, not having heard the Word, but being justly condemned for their sins—then I think you could ask yourselves, "Did I do anything to save these unhappy myriads? They have been damned and can I say I am clear of their blood?" Oh, God of Mercy, if these garments are clear of my fellow creatures' blood, I shall have eternal reason to bless You in Heaven! Oh, Church of Christ! You have great reason to ask yourself whether you are quite clean in this matter. You say, too often, you sons of God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" You are too much like Cain! You do not ask yourselves whether God will require your fellow-creatures' blood at your hands. Oh, there is a Truth of God which says, "If the watchman warns them not, they shall perish, but their blood will He require at the watchman's hands." Ah, there ought to be more of us who are preaching to the heathen and yet, perhaps, we are indolent and doing little or nothing. There are many of you—yes, *all of you*—who ought to be doing far more than you are for evangelical purposes and the spread of Christ's Gospel. Oh, put this question to your hearts—"shall I be able to say to the damned spirit if he meets me in Hell, 'Sinner, I did all I could for you'?" I am afraid some will have to say, "No, I did not! It is true I might have done more. I might have labored more, even though I might have been unsuccessful, but I did not do it."

Ah, my dear Friends, I believe there is great reason for some of us to suspect whether we believe our religion at all. An infidel once met a Christian and said, "I know you do not believe your religion." "Why?" asked the Christian. "Because," said the other, "for years you have passed me on my way to my house of business. You believe, do you not, there is a Hell into which men's spirits are cast?" "Yes, I do," said the Christian. "And you believe that unless I believe in Christ, I must be sent there?" "Yes." "You do not, I am sure, because if you did, you would be a most inhuman wretch to pass me, day by day, and never tell me about it or warn me of it." I do hold that there are some Christians who are verily guilty in this matter! God will forgive them—the blood of Christ can even wash that out—but they are guilty! Did you ever think of the tremendous

value of a single soul? My Hearers, if there were but one man in Siberia unsaved and all the world were saved besides, if God should move our minds, it would be worthwhile for all the people in England to go after that one soul! Did you ever think of the value of a soul? Ah, you have not heard the howls and yells of Hell! You have not heard the mighty songs and hosannas of the glorified—you have no notion of what eternity is—or else you would know the value of a soul! You who have been broken by conviction, humbled by the Spirit and led to cry for mercy through the Covenant Jesus—you know something of what a soul's value is, but many of my Hearers do not. Could we preach carelessly, could we pray coldly, if we knew what a precious thing it is about which we are concerned? No, surely we should be doubly in earnest that God would please to save sinners! I am sure the present state of affairs cannot go on long—we are doing next to nothing. Christianity is at a low ebb. People think it will never be much better—that it is impossible to do wonders in these days. Are we in a worse condition than the Roman Catholic nations were when one man, a Luther, preached? Then God can find a Luther now! We are not in a much worse state than when Whitefield began to preach and yet God can find His Whitefields now! It is a delusion to suppose that we cannot succeed as they did. God helping us we will! God helping us by His Spirit, we will see greater things than this! At any rate, we will never let God's Church rest if we do not see it prosper. But we will enter our earnest hearty protest against the coldness and the lethargy of the times—and as long as this, our tongue, shall move in our mouth—we will protest against the laxity and false Doctrine so rampant throughout the Churches.

And then that happy double reformation—a reformation in Doctrine and Spirit, will be brought about together! Then God knows but what we shall say, “Who are these that fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows,” and before long the shout of Christ shall be heard! He, Himself, shall descend from Heaven. And we shall hear it said and sung, “Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! The Lord God Omnipotent reigns!”

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

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

# THE CRIPPLE AT LYSTRA

## NO. 559

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

***“The same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on your feet. And he leaped and walked.”***  
**Acts 14:9, 10.**

I HAVE read in your hearing the story of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas in the town of Lystra. The name of Christ was totally unknown there. They were a sort of country people, partly pastoral and partly agricultural, who seem to have been deeply sunken in superstition. At the gates of their city there stood a great temple dedicated to Jupiter and they appear to have been his zealous votaries. Coming down from the mountainside Paul and Barnabas enter the town and when a fitting time has come, they stand up in the marketplace, or the street, and begin to talk concerning Jesus, the Son of God, who had come down from Heaven, had suffered and died and had again ascended up on high.

The people gather round them. Among the rest a cripple listens with very marked attention. They preach again. The crowds are still greater and on one occasion, while Paul is in the middle of a sermon, using his eyes to watch the audience as all preachers should do, and not looking up at the ceiling, or at the gallery front as some preachers are likely to do, he marks this cripple, fixes his eyes upon him and looks earnestly in his face. Either by the exercise of his judgment, or by the promptings of Revelation, the Apostle gathers that this man has faith—faith to be healed.

In order to attract the attention of the people, to glorify the name of Christ, to publish more widely His glorious fame and to make the miracle well known, Paul stops the sermon and with a loud voice cries, “Stand upright on your feet.” The cripple leaps and praises God! The population are all amazed and knowing that there was a tradition that Jupiter and Mercury had once appeared in that very town, a tradition preserved in the Metamorphoses of Ovid to the present day, they at once conclude that surely Jupiter and Mercury must be come again!

They fix upon Barnabas, who was probably the elder and the nobler looking man, for Jupiter. And as Jupiter was always attended by Mercury, as a messenger and who was the god of eloquence, they conclude that Paul must be Mercury. They rush to the temple. They tell the priests that the gods have come down. The priests, only too ready to foster popular credulity and pander to it, bring forth the sacred bullocks and the garlands, and are about to offer sacrifice before Paul and Barnabas.

Such homage these men of God indignantly refuse. They tear their clothes. They beseech them to do no such thing, for they are nothing but

men—yet hardly with earnest words can they stop the people. But the next day certain Jews came there and produced a counter irritation in the simple minds of the people. No very difficult task where a rude fanaticism rouses the wild passions of the mob. Such an assembly must rage, whether it be with redundant applause or with derisive jeers. Accordingly, Paul finds himself exposed to peril. He is stoned through the streets, dragged forth as dead and by the very men who worshipped him but yesterday as a god, left to die as a villain outside the city gates.

But Paul's preaching had not been in vain. There were some few disciples who remained faithful. His ministry was rewarded and owned of God. There are two or three points in this narrative to which I shall call your attention tonight, making, however, the lame man the center of the picture. We shall notice, first of all, what preceded this lame man's faith. Secondly, wherein lay his faith to be healed. And thirdly, what is the teaching of the miracle itself and the blessing which the lame man obtained through faith.

**I. WHAT WAS IT WHICH PRECEDED HIS FAITH?** That "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God," is a great and universal rule. But the hearing of what? Doubtless the hearing of the Gospel is intended. On turning to your Bibles you will find it is written—"And there they preached the Gospel." What? Paul, do you not change your voice? You have preached the Gospel in the cities of Iconium and Antioch where there were enlightened and intelligent hearers. If the Gospel suited them, surely it will not do for these wolfish boors! Why go and preach to these poor, ignorant, superstitious fanatics the very same Truths of God which you spoke to your enlightened Jewish Brethren?

But he does so, my Friends. The very Gospel which he preached at Damascus in the synagogue he preaches here at Lystra in the market-place. He makes no difference between the education of his hearers in different places. He has the same Gospel to preach to them both. You remember that Paul went to Ephesus and Ephesus, as a city, was besotted with a belief in sorcery. The people had given themselves up to practice magical arts. What is the right way to begin to preach at Ephesus? Deliver a course of lectures upon the impossibility and absurdity of such superstition?

No, Sir, nothing of the kind! Preach Christ, preach the Gospel! And as Jesus Christ is lifted up they bring their magical books and make a bonfire of them in the open forum. But here is a polished governor, Sergius Paulus, sitting upon the judgment seat. What shall be preached to him? Would it not be well to begin with a dissertation on politics and to show that the Christian religion does not interfere with proper government, that it does not stir up the people to anarchy? No, Sir, nothing of the kind.

There is nothing for Sergius Paulus any more than there is for Elymas the sorcerer, but the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Paul goes to Athens. Now the Athenians are the most learned and philosophical of the whole race of men. What will Paul preach there? The Gospel, the whole

Gospel and nothing but the Gospel. He may change his *tones*, but never his *matter*. It is the same remedy for the same disease, be the men what they may. He comes to Corinth and here you have not only polished manners, but the very refinement of vice. It is a city, an emporium of trade and a sort of central depot of sin. What then? Will he now, to please the trader, assume a different dialect? Not he!

The Christ for Athens is the Christ for Corinth, too. And now see him. He has come to Lyconia and is preaching at Lystra. Here is an ignorant set of people who worship an image. Why does he not begin by preaching of the Deity? Why does he not talk to them of the Trinity in unity? Why does he not try and confute their notions about their gods? No, my dear Sir, he will do nothing of the kind—that may be done incidentally—but the first and the last thing that Paul will do at Lystra is there he will preach the Gospel!

O glorious Gospel of the blessed God! Wherever we take you, you are suited to the wants of men. Take you to Persia with all its gems and jewels and you do suit the monarch on his throne. Or take you to the naked savage with all his poverty and squalid filth and you do suit him, too. You may be preached, thrice glorious Wisdom of God, to the wisest of men! But you are not too great a mystery to be understood and believed even by the fools and the babes. The things which are not can receive you as well as the things which are. Never, I pray you, Brethren, lose heart in the power of the Gospel!

Do not believe that there exists any man, much less any race of men, for whom the Gospel is not fitted. Wherever you go, do not cut and trim and shape and alter. Just bring out the whole Truth as God has taught it to you and rest assured that you will be unto God a sweet savor of Christ in every place, both in them who are saved and in them who perish. What then, was this Gospel which the Apostle Paul did preach everywhere? Well, it was a Gospel which had in it three things, certain facts, certain doctrines and certain commands. It was a Gospel of facts.

Every time Paul stood up to preach he told the following unvarnished tale—God, looking upon the race of men, beheld them lost and ruined. Out of love to them He sent His Only-Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was born of the virgin Mary, lived some thirty-two or thirty-three years a life of spotless innocence and perfect obedience to God. He was God—He was Man. In due time He was delivered up by the traitor Judas. He was crucified and actually put to death. Though He was the Lord of Life and Glory, who only has immortality, yet He bowed His head and gave up the ghost.

After three days He rose again and showed Himself to many of His disciples, so that they were well assured He was the same Person who had been put into the grave. And when forty days were finished He ascended up to Heaven in the sight of them all, where He sits at the right hand of God and shall also come, before long, a second time to judge both the quick and the dead. These were the facts which Paul would state. God

was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

Briefly, these were the facts which Paul would preach and if any one of these facts is preached doubtfully, or is left out of any ministry, then the Gospel is *not* preached. The foundations upon which the Gospel rests have been removed and then what can the righteous do? Following upon these facts, Paul preached certain doctrines, the doctrines flowing out of the facts. To wit, he preached that Jesus Christ had offered a full Atonement to Divine wrath for the sin of His people, so that whoever would believe on Him and trust Him, should be saved. The doctrine of the Atonement would form the most prominent feature in the Gospel of the Apostle Paul. Christ also has suffered for us, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. "God commends His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly."

Then would come the doctrine of Pardon. Paul with glowing tongue would tell how God could be just and yet the Justifier of him who believes. How all manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven unto men—the simple condition being that the man believes in Christ and this not so much the man's own work as a gift of the Holy Spirit. Everywhere Paul would be unmistakable in this—"You chief of sinners, look to the wounds of Jesus and your sins shall be forgiven you." Equally clear would he be upon the doctrine of Justification. "Christ," he would say, "will wash you. No, more, He will clothe you. The perfect holiness of His Character shall be imputed unto you, and being justified, you shall have peace with God and there shall be no condemnation, because you are in Christ Jesus."

I think I see the flashing eyes of the Apostle. I think I listen to his earnest voice while he pleads with men to lay hold upon eternal life, to look to Jesus Christ, to forsake the deeds of the Law, to put their trust in nothing which comes from man, but to look to Jesus and to Jesus only. These great truths—Atonement, Pardon and Justification—with all the other Truths connected with them, of which we cannot now speak particularly, were just the Gospel which the Apostle Paul preached. And out of these, we said, their sprung certain commands. The commands were these—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

Nor do I suppose that the Apostle for a moment stammered to preach that other command—"Arise and be baptized." He would not preach half the Gospel, but the whole of it—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believes not shall be damned." And often, after his hearers had cried, "What must we do to be saved?" and they had believed in Christ, they would say to him—"See, here is water, what does hinder me to be baptized?" The Apostle, then, preached a Gospel which was made up of certain authenticated *facts*, out of which there flowed certain most gracious evangelical doctrines which were enforced and driven home with Divine authority by Christ's own *commands*.

“Well,” says one, “do you think the world will be turned upside down by this?” Sirs, it has been and it will be again. In vain do those who seek after human learning and who aim at dreamy sentiment or spurious science in preference to the standard teaching which is from above, attempt to find a nobler instrument. This is the great battering ram which shall yet shake the bastions of error. This is the sword, the true Excalibur, which, if any man knows how to wield it, shall cut through joints and marrow and make him more than a conqueror.

He who gets a hold of the Gospel of Christ and knows how to use it, has that before which the devils tremble and in the presence of which angels adore, which cherubs long to look into and which God Himself smiles upon as His noblest work. The Truth we proclaim is not that which is discovered *by* us, but that which has been delivered *to* us. Do you ask, then, where this man’s faith came from? It came from Paul’s preaching of the Gospel.

**II.** Now WHEREIN LAY THIS MAN’S FAITH? Paul looked at the man, we are told, and perceived, “that he had faith to be healed.” What does this mean, “faith to be healed”? In this man’s case I think it was something like this. Poor fellow! As he listened to Paul’s preaching he thought, perhaps—“Well, that looks true. That seems to be the truth. It is the truth. I am sure it is true. And, if it is true that Jesus Christ is so great a Savior, perhaps I may be healed. These lame legs of mine which never would carry me anywhere, may yet come straight. I—I—I think they may. I hope they may!

“I believe they may! I know it can be done if Christ wills it! I believe that and from what Paul says of Christ’s Character, I think He must be willing to do it! I will ask the Apostle. The first convenient season that I have I will lift up my cry, for I believe it can be done and I think there is a perfect willingness, both in the mind of the Apostle and of the Master that it should be done! I believe it will be done and that I shall yet stand upright.” Then Paul said to him, “Stand upright on your feet,” and he did so in a moment, for “he had faith to be healed.”

Do you think I am overstraining the probabilities of the case? You will perhaps say, “It does not appear that Paul had any communication with the poor cripple before the miracle was performed.” Now I venture to draw quite an opposite inference. I know from my own experience that it is no uncommon thing for some one individual to arrest the preacher’s attention. The group of countenances which lay before him in a large assembly like the present, might to the first glance of a stranger, look confused and inexplicable—as a Chinese grammar does to those who know not the language.

But you need not doubt that a practiced eye can learn to read the one as well as the other. The languor and indifference of some. The curious enquiring look of others. The cold, critical attention of a considerable number and the countenances of those who are rather absorbed in a train of thought just awakened in their own minds—these have all a peculiar

impressiveness and form a picture which often reacts upon us and kindles a vehement desire in our breasts to reach the souls of those who, for a brief hour, hang upon our lips.

But there will sometimes be one who has faith dazzling in his very eyes, as they are fixed with an intentness of which it were vain for me to attempt a description! They seem to drink in every word and every syllable of a word, till the preacher becomes as absorbed in that man as the man had been in the preacher. And while he pursues the discourse, gaining liberty at every step till he forgets the formality of the pulpit in the freedom of conversation with the people, he perceives that at last this man has heard the very Truth of God which meets his case! There is no concealing it. His features have suddenly relaxed.

He still listens, but it is no longer with painful anxiety. A calm satisfaction is palpable on his face now. That soul of communion which is in the eye has unraveled the secret. Preacher and hearer, unknown to all the rest of the audience, have secretly saluted each other and met on the common ground of a vital faith. The anxious one feels that it can be done. And I can readily conclude that the Apostle perceived that feeling with greater certainty than he would have done had the man whispered it in his ears! So have I sometimes known that the exhortation to believe has become from these lips a positive command to the struggling conscience of someone who has been brought to a point where the remedy is instantly applied and the cure instantly effected. Most unquestionably there is such a thing as faith to be saved.

I do not know how many here may possess it, but, thank God there are hundreds of you here who have faith that you are saved. That is better—that is the ripest faith—the faith which knows you are saved and rejoices in hope of the Glory of God. Alas, there are others who have no faith at all. But it is with those who have faith and that only faith to be saved, not faith that you *are* saved, I am more particularly concerned at this moment. Shall I describe this, “faith to be saved”? For I believe that there may be some here who may just now stand upright on their feet! Some who may at this time leap for joy of heart because they are saved and did not know it!

You have “faith,” but you have not fully exercised it. Now you believe that Jesus Christ is God’s Son? “Yes.” That He has made a full Atonement for His people? “Yes.” You believe that they are His people who trust Him? “Yes.” You believe He is worthy to be trusted? “Yes.” You have nothing else to trust to? “No, Sir.” You depend on nothing which you have ever *felt*, or *thought*, or *done*? “No, Sir, I depend on nothing but Christ.” And you do, after a sort of fashion, trust Christ. You hope that one of these days He will save you and you think, and sometimes you almost know, He will.

You are ready to trust Him. You do believe He is able. You do not think He is unwilling—you have got faith in His ability and you have almost got faith in His willingness! Sometimes you half think to yourself, “I am a child of God.” But then, there is some ugly “but” comes in. Those lame

legs again! Those lame legs again! You are still afraid. You have “faith to be saved,” but you have not the full assurance of faith which can utter forth this joyous psalm, “Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song. He also is become my salvation.”

Well now, I do not know whether I have picked you out—whether I have given a right description of you or not. I remember the time when I was in that state. I can honestly say I did not *doubt* Christ. I then partly believed that He would save me. I knew He was worthy of my trust and I did trust Him as far as this—that I resolved if I did perish, I would perish crying to Him—and that if I was cast away, it should be clinging to the Cross. I believe I had “faith to be saved,” and was for months in bondage, when there was no necessity that I should have been in bondage at all! For, when there is “faith to be saved,” then the man only needs that gracious command—“Stand upright on your feet,” and forthwith he leaps out of his infirmity and walks freely in the integrity of his heart!

**III.** I shall not enlarge further upon this because I want to go to THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF THE MIRACLE, AND OF THE BLESSING CONFERRED. Are there not many who, though they have “faith to be saved,” are still entirely lame or painfully limping? The reasons may be different in different cases. Some have been so stunned by the grief which they have suffered on account of sin—and the frightful convictions through which they have passed—that while they do believe that Christ is able and willing to save, they cannot get a hold of the fact that they are saved.

Such is the faintness of spirit and the languishing of soul brought on by long despair. “Stand upright on your feet,” you trembling Sinner! If you believe in Jesus, whatever your fears may be, there is no cause for them. As for your sins, they were laid on Him—every one of them—and though you have been sore broken in the land of dragons, thus says the Lord unto you, “I have put away your sin. You shall not die. I have blotted out like a cloud your transgressions and like a thick cloud your sins.”

Rejoice, then, and be glad! If you trust Christ, you are saved, though as yet it only looks like faith which heralds the tidings of a salvation which has not yet arrived. Still, it is the Grace of God which brings salvation which has enabled you to believe. And he who believes on the Son has everlasting life. O receive the welcome message! Spring up at the sound of the words! Stand upright on your feet and rejoice! Some are still lame, though they have faith, through *ignorance*. They do not know what being saved is. They entertain wrong expectations. They are trusting in Christ, but they do not feel any surprising emotions.

They have not had any remarkable dreams, or visions, or striking emotions of excited joy and therefore, though they have “faith to be saved,” they have not the faith of a present salvation. They are waiting for *something*, they hardly know what, to embellish their faith, or to fortify it with signs and wonders. Now, poor Soul, why do you wait? These things are not necessary for salvation. In fact, the fewer you have of them, I think,

the better—especially of things which are visionary. I rather tremble for those who talk much about sensible evidences. They are too often the frivolities of unstable hearts.

Beloved, though you may have never had any ecstatic joys, or suffered any deep depression of your spirits, if you are resting on Christ it does not matter one whit what your *feelings* have been or have not been. Do you expect to have an electric shock, or to go through some mysterious operation? The operation is mysterious, too mysterious for you to discern it. But all that you have to do with is this—“Do I believe in Jesus? Am I simply depending upon Him for everything?” If you do, you are saved, and I pray you to believe this. Stand upright on your feet and leap for joy, for whether you believe it or not, if you are now depending upon Christ, your sins are forgiven you! You are a child of God! You are an heir of Heaven!

How many, too, are kept lame because of a fear of self-deception. “I do trust Christ, but I am afraid lest I should deceive myself. Suppose I were to get confidence and it should be presumption! Suppose I should think myself saved and I am not?” Now, Sir, if you were dealing with *yourself* there would be reason to be afraid of presumption, but your faith has to deal with *God*, who cannot deceive you and with *Christ* who will never tempt you to be a deceiver. Does not the Lord Jesus Christ Himself tell you that if you believe in Him you are saved? You believe that, do you not? Then, Soul, if you believe on Him, it is not presumption to say, “I am saved.”

Away with all that affectation of modesty which some good people think to be so pretty—saying, “I hope,” “I trust,” but, “I feel such doubts, such fears and such gloomy misgivings.” My dear Sir, that is *not* humility—that is a vain unseemly questioning of God. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ tells you and He gives His own unequivocal word for it, that if you rest upon Christ you rest upon a Rock. That if you believe in Him you are not condemned. Is it an evidence of the lowliness of your heart that you suspect the veracity of God, or the faithfulness of His promise? Surely this is not fruit of the meekness of wisdom!

No, Beloved. It may seem too good to be true, but it is not too good for my God to give, though it is too good for you to receive. You have His word for it, that if you trust His Son to save you and simply trust Him and Him alone, even if the pillars of the heavens should shake, yet you would be saved. If the foundations of the earth should reel and the whole earth should, like a vision, pass away, yet this eternal promise and oath of God must stand fast. Others again, cannot stand upright on their feet because they are afraid that if they did begin they would go back again and so bring dishonor to Christ.

This would be a very proper fear if you had anything to do with keeping yourselves. If you had to carry yourselves to Heaven it would be reasonable enough for you to despair of doing it. Of your own impotence it is impossible you can be too deeply convinced. You cannot do anything whatever! But Christ gives you His promise to preserve you even to the end. If

you believe on Him you shall be saved! He does not say you shall be saved for a year, or for twenty years and then, perhaps, be lost at last. No! But, "he that believes and is baptized, shall be saved." If one man who believes in Christ is cast away, that promise of Christ is not true. Brethren, it is true and it must be true and let its glorious truth be sweetly familiar with you now—if you give your soul to Christ—putting simple faith in His Person as the Son of God and in His work as the Mediator between God and man, you shall as surely see His face within the pearly gates of Heaven as your eyes see me tonight!

There may be a question about your seeing *me*, but there can be no question about Christ fulfilling His promise and keeping His word. Now sit down in the dust no longer, you doubting, mourning, trembling Sinner! With a loud voice I say unto you, as Paul did, "Stand upright on your feet!" Why do you mourn? There is nothing to mourn about! Your sins are forgiven! Your eternal salvation is secure! A crown in Heaven is provided for you and a harp of gold awaits you! If you believe in Jesus none can lay anything to your charge. Not even the principalities of darkness shall be able to prevail against you! Eternal love secures you against the malice of Hell. Stand upright, then, on your feet, for if you believe you are saved, completely saved, saved in time and for eternity, saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!

Then possibly there is one here who cannot stand upright because of his many sins. Ah, while I have been talking about Christ it may be something has been saying in your heart, "Ah, ah, what is it? Christ taking men's sins, suffering in their place? That suits me. Is God doing this? Ah, then He must be able to save and I am told that whoever trusts in Him shall never perish. Is it so? Why, here I am—I who have not been in a place of worship for months, for years! I have strayed in here tonight and if what this man says is true, well then I will even venture my soul upon it. I have got nothing, I know, but he says there is nothing wanted. I am not prepared to trust Christ, but he says there is no preparation required, and if I trust Jesus Christ just as I am, Christ will save me! Why, I will do it! By the Grace of God I will do it! Can He save *me*?"

Then comes in the bitter reflection—"Look what a sinner I have been! Why, I should be ashamed to say how foully I have sinned. He must shut me out! I have been too great a villain, too gross an offender. I have cursed and sworn at such a rate. He cannot mean that if I trust Christ I shall be saved. I believe He can save me. I see the fitness of the plan and the excellency of it. I believe it, but see what a sinner I am!" Sinner, stand upright on your feet, for "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Return, you Wanderer, return to your Father's house! He comes to meet you. On your neck He will fall and you shall be His child forever. Only believe in His Son Jesus Christ, and though this is the first time you have ever heard His Word, I would settle mine eyes upon you earnestly and say, "Stand upright on your feet!"

Oh, how often I do wish that somebody had come to me when I was under depression of mind and had told me about the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ! I think I should have stood upright on my feet long before I did, but, alas, I kept hearing about what people *felt* before they believed in Christ—very proper preaching—and I was afraid I did not feel it, though now I know I did. I heard a great deal about what Christians *ought to be* and a great deal more about *God's elect*, what they are in His esteem—but I did not know whether I was one of God's elect and I knew I was not what I ought to be.

O for the trumpet of the archangel to sound the words, "Believe and live," as loud as the voice which shall wake the dead in their graves! And O for the quickening Spirit to go with voice, as it shall go with the ringing of the archangel's trumpet when the graves shall open and the dead shall arise! Go, you who know it and tell it everywhere, for there are multitudes, I doubt not, who are really seeking Christ and who have His Spirit in them! But it is like as the Prophet has it, "The children have come to the birth and there is no strength to bring forth." They have come to the very edge of light and they only want one helping hand to bring them into noonday.

They are slipping about in the Slough of Despond and they are almost out of it, but they want just a helping hand to pull them out. This hand of help is stretched out by thus telling them, telling them plainly, it is in JESUS their help is found and that trusting Him, relying upon Him, they shall never perish! Neither shall any pluck them out of His hand. I would to God that some of you who have been long hearing me, might be found in this class. I have been bowed down in spirit at some sad things which have been brought to my hearing of late.

I know that there are some here and there always have been some few attending my ministry who have a personal affection for me and who listen to the Word with very great attention and who, moreover, are very greatly moved by it. But some of these have some besetting sin which they either cannot or will not give up. They do renounce it for a time, but either bad associates, or else the strength of their passions take them away again. O Sirs! I would you would take warning! There was one of whom we had some sort of hope who listened to our ministry. There came a turning point with him. It was this—either that he must give up sin, or else give up coming to the Tabernacle. And what—oh, what became of him?

I could indicate the place where he sat. He died of delirium tremens! And I do not wonder. When you have heard the Gospel preached Sunday after Sunday—when your response to the solemn appeals you have earnestly listened to has only been that you *reject* Christ and *refuse* eternal life—is it any marvel that in making the choice of your own damnation, reason should resign its seat as director of your actions, and cease to curb your headstrong will, leaving the maddened passions to dash on with reckless fury and precipitate your destruction?

Am I clear of their blood? I have asked myself the question. I may not be in some things, but I know I am as far as my ministry is concerned. I have not shunned to declare unto any of you the whole counsel of God. When I have known any vice, or any folly—which of you have I been afraid of—or before whom of you all have I trembled? God is my witness! He have I served in the spirit. And if these turn aside unto their crooked ways, they have not done it without well knowing the consequences. No! They have not done it without being warned and entreated and persuaded to look unto Jesus Christ!

And I do entreat some of you—you know to whom I refer—I do warn those of you who have a conscience which is not seared, but who, nevertheless, persevere in your sins—I warn you by the love of God, do me this one favor at the last—if you choose your own ruin, bear witness for me that I have not hesitated to warn you of it! I had infinitely rather, however, that you would do *yourselves* this great favor—to love your own souls. If you have anything to throw into the fire, throw it in, but let it not be your *soul*. If you have anything to lose, go and lose it, but do not lose your *soul*. Sirs, if you must play the fool, indulge your sport at a cheaper rate than this. If sin is worth having, then I pray you pay a cheaper price than your own *souls* for it!

It does seem to me so pitiful, so sorrowful a thing, that you who have been so short a time among us and are passing away before my very eyes, should still prefer the fleeting joy of the moment to the eternal joy—and risk everlasting torment for temporary mirth. By the tears of Jesus when He wept over Jerusalem! By the blood of Jesus which He shed for guilty men! By the heart of the eternal Father who wills not the death of a sinner but had rather that he should turn unto Him and live—I pray you be wise and consider your ways! Choose this day whom you will serve and may the Lord guide your choice. May you fall into the arms of Divine Mercy and say, “If You will help me, Jesus, here I am. I give myself to You.”

May my Master teach me how to address you if I do not know how to gasp the words of simplicity, tenderness, terrible apprehension, and persuasive power. If there were any words in any language that would melt you, this tongue is at your service to utter them. If there is any form of speech, though it should make me to be called vulgar and subject me to the shame and hissing which once I endured—if the furnace could be heated seven times hotter than that—I would but laugh at it if I might but win your souls! Tell me, Sirs, how shall I put the case? Would you have argument? I wish that I could reason with you. Would you have tears? There, let them flow! You dry eyes, why do you not weep more for these perishing souls? Would you have God’s Word without my word?

Sirs, I would read it and let my tongue be dumb if that would teach you. Would my death save you? That God who sees in secret knows that tonight it were a joy to me to enter into my rest and so it were little for me to talk of being willing to give a life for you and it were, indeed, but a trifle to me. Oh, why will you perish? Why should I plead with you and you not

care for yourselves? What is it that besets you? Poor Moths! Are you dazzled with the flames? Are you not content to have singed your wings? Must the flames also consume body and soul? How can you make your bed in Hell?

How can you abide with eternal burnings? In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I command you—for I can do no less—I command you to turn unto Him and live! Believe on Him and you shall be saved! But remember, at your hazard you reject the message tonight. It may be the last message that shall ever come to your soul with power, if you cast this away—

***“What chains of vengeance must they feel,  
Who slight the bonds of love?”***

I would have you saved NOW! I cannot talk about tomorrow. I would have you decide at once! Oh, you have come as far as this twenty times, and have you gone back again? You have been aroused, you have made vows and you have broken them—resolutions and you have belied them. O Sirs, for God’s sake, do not lie to the Almighty again! Now be true this time. May the Spirit of God make you speak the truth, even though you should be compelled to say through your wickedness, “I will not submit myself unto the Son of God.”

Do speak the truth. Procrastinate not. As Elijah said, “How long do you halt between two opinions?” So say I. If God is God, serve Him! But if Baal is God, serve him! But do not keep on coming here and then going to the pot-house. Do not come and take your seat here and then go to the brothel. Sirs, do not do this foul scandal for God’s sake, and for your own sake. If you will serve the devil serve him and be a true servant to him. If you mean to go to Hell, go there! But if you seek eternal life and joys to come, give up these things! Renounce them! Why drink poison and drink medicine, too? Have done with one or the other and be honest. Be honest to your own souls. May the Lord grant that tonight some may have given to them, not only, “faith to be saved,” but the faith which saves, for His name’s sake. Amen.

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# **FAITH PURIFYING THE HEART**

## **NO. 1349**

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 15, 1877,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Purifying their hearts by faith.”  
Acts 15:9.***

THE Jewish or Pharisaic party violently opposed the Gospel from without. Wherever the Apostles went, the Jews who believed not, being moved with envy, stirred up the people against them. They could not endure to hear of the salvation of the Gentiles by Grace through faith! It grated on their ears, for they thought that this doctrine was contrary to the Law of Moses in which they boasted. They were children of the bondwoman under the old Covenant of Works and they could not endure that the children of the promise should come to the inheritance. They struggled and rebelled against the Gospel of salvation by Grace, for it went against their natural pride and their national exclusiveness.

Yes, and even when any of them, as blessed be the Grace of God was the case, became converted, the old man was still within them and the spirit of bondage was still apt to assert itself. Those who had been of the sect of the Pharisees brought a good share of Pharisaic tendencies with them into the Church—and these were dangerous to the young kingdom of Christ. I scarcely know whether legal principles were not able to do more mischief inside the Church by perverting pure doctrine than they could do outside the Church by exciting persecution.

One can hardly imagine how the Gospel could have escaped being overlaid and smothered by Judaism, like a baby by its mother, had it not been for the preserving Grace of God and the indwelling Spirit within the Church of God. You know, Brothers and Sisters, how we mourn, today, that certain who claim to be Christians are laboring most zealously to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. They invent pompous ceremonies, observe days and months and are bound by rubrics and regulations—all of which are an idle and needless servitude to outward forms.

Certain others would bind us with creeds and ordinances not plainly taught in the Word of God, nor agreeable thereto—of which Peter and John knew nothing whatever—having no force but that which comes of human authority. The old Pharisaic spirit is a great forger of bonds and builder of prisons! It would subject us to ordinances of, “Touch not, taste not, handle not,” and fetter us with rules of many sorts—for it cannot understand the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. It teaches this and it teaches that, whereof the Apostles would have said, “We gave no such commandment.”

We must contend against this spirit as much now as ever! We must refuse to be entangled, again, with the yoke of bondage. Christ is all! We are

complete in Him and we will not permit a single letter to be added to His perfect Law of Liberty. Peter, at the great Jerusalem council was enabled, through his experience to answer those who said that unless a man was circumcised he could not be saved. Depend upon it, Brothers and Sisters, there is nothing like practical work for Christ to teach us Christ's Truth!

For the most part, the heretics of the present day are a clique of literary men, adept at the pen, but quite unable to speak. It may be that their failure in this direction sours them and sets them upon opposing the Gospel ministry. At any rate, they are a set of theorizers who know nothing of practical service for the Lord! And so they make up all manner of nonsense according to their own fancies. They sit in their studies and do *nothing*—and then criticize those who are doing hard service and are successful in it. They are so busy with nibbling their quills and polishing their periods that they care nothing about saving souls! And they are so intent upon making discoveries which shall manifest their own gigantic intellects that they cannot soil their hands with practical work among the poor and ignorant.

Having nothing upon their hearts, their whole nature runs to their head and the head being unbalanced by a busy heart takes to spinning cobweb theories and novelties of heresy. Fiercely liberal, the spirit which they manifest against the orthodox is grandly bigoted—in *this* they are earnest—but in little else except in engendering grievous errors which are ravaging the Churches and ruining souls. Among the do-nothings all mischief begins! Give a man practical work for Jesus and keep him at it, and he will, like Peter, learn as he goes and, like a river, filter as he flows. Peter could not continue to believe in restricting the Gospel to the Jews after the Lord had bid Cornelius send for him from Joppa, that he might teach him the Gospel—his actual service refined his theory!

If those who ruled botanical science never saw a flower, would you wonder if they ran into gross heterodoxies of belief? A naturalist who never saw a living animal would not be likely to be very sound in zoology and, even so, those who never deal with the souls of men—who never see penitents under conviction, nor hear the songs of new-born Believers in Christ, nor see men rejoice in affliction and triumph in death—are sure to blunder when they set up for teachers. They lean back in their study chairs and blow bubbles and vent doubts to the subverting of the faith of many godly but feeble souls—and all for the need of something better to do.

I prescribe as medicine for them and I heartily wish they would take it, to *do something* for Christ and the good of fallen men. Peter got out of what would otherwise have been his natural condition of bigotry by being exercised in the service of his Master. Peter tells us how he came to see that circumcision was not necessary. At the Divine bidding, he went in and preached to Cornelius and his household—and while he was preaching they believed! He had not finished his sermon before they had all become Believers and he adds, "God the heart-knower bore them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as He gave unto us."

They believed and he knew that their faith had purged their hearts, for the Lord sent the Holy Spirit upon them then and there! The Holy Spirit dwells not in unclean hearts! But when the temple of the heart has been purified, there He comes. Though these men had never been circumcised, yet they were purified in heart, for the Spirit of God rested upon them—it was evidently the same Spirit which had descended upon the circumcised ones at Jerusalem since it produced the same results—“for they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.” Now, if the Spirit puts no difference between the circumcised and the uncircumcised, why should the Church do so? Peter therefore said, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?”

He therefore commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord and thus affirmed his belief that faith had purified them. He saw that the Lord had given the choicest of Gospel blessings to uncircumcised Believers, even the power of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, he felt that they were to be received into the Church without circumcision. Peter’s argument is eminently clear and convincing. You and I cannot be impartial because we, being Gentiles, are naturally pleased with an argument which includes us in the blessing.

But if we were sitting as judges to listen to the pleading of the Apostle, I feel sure we would say—Whether it blesses us or curses us, the reasoning is unanswerable—if God would not give the Spirit unless the heart had been purified, then these men’s hearts were purified and it is evident that they were purified by faith, alone, seeing that they were uncircumcised and altogether outside the Jewish Law. Seeing, then, that they are pure in heart, what need can there be of further purification? What need to lay upon them the outward and visible sign, the putting away of the filth of the flesh, when it is proven by the Divine witness What they are pure in heart already? It is well argued, Peter, and we rejoice in the conclusion!

Now let us consider the point upon which the argument depends, the statement which made, to a great extent, the hinge of Peter’s reasoning—namely, that by *faith* the hearts of the Gentile Believers had been purified. First, consider the agent of this purifying, “by faith.” Secondly, the secret of its power—it was *God* that purified them by faith. Thirdly, the seat of its action—“purifying their hearts.” And, fourthly, (what is not in the text, but which we gather from our own experience), the mode of its operation, or how faith purifies our hearts.

**I.** First, then, dear Friends, let us speak of THE AGENT OF HEART PURIFICATION—FAITH. There was nothing but faith in the case of Cornelius, nothing but ordinary faith such as you and I possess—faith born of hearing and resting alone on Jesus. Faith alone did it! Read Peter’s sermon to Cornelius and you will perceive that his faith was not created by Peter’s eloquence and did not stand in the wisdom of man. Peter told a very simple story about the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth—just such a story as a converted lad from our Sunday schools might relate, in fact, “the old, old story.”

And while he was telling it, I hope not so hoarsely as I am compelled to do this morning, the power of God was present and the centurion and his family believed the testimony. The innate power of the story, itself, by God's blessing, worked faith in the hearts of his hearers and they were straightway purified by that faith! If I were to talk of Jesus Christ and His matchless death, this morning, and some of you hearing the story were to trust Him, you would be purified just as these Caesarean Believers were. Their faith came by hearing, just as yours would, and they heard the very same Gospel of the Grace of God which I would preach to you. By such faith hearts are purified!

Their faith purified them at once. They were not purified by month after month of contemplation. Faith purified their hearts *immediately*, for, to the astonishment of the circumcised Believers who were looking on, the Holy Spirit fell upon them then and there—the evidence from Heaven that their faith had made them meet for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! What matchless energy is this which purifies hearts stained with original sin and defiled by actual transgressions—and cleanses them at once! The sacred power which requires not even a single day for its marvelous operations, but achieves its purpose in a *moment*, is worthy of our highest admiration! How speedy is the work! The hearing ear, the believing heart, the purified heart—these three follow each other in rapid succession, without long pauses of dread conviction or dreary doubt.

Delays may occur in some cases, but they are not necessary to the work, neither are they of the Lord. Here the operations of mercy followed upon the heels of one another—hearing, believing, purification—the gift of the Spirit, the public avowal of the same by Baptism into the sacred name came in rapid succession—and here you see the wondrous power of faith by which the soul is purified at once. The agent of the purification was FAITH alone! And it is clear from the narrative that water Baptism did not aid it at all.

It is supposed by those who deal with suppositions only, for they certainly can have no facts to support their theory, that there is something purging in Baptism. Do they not say that by it they are made members of Christ, children of God and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven? Now, no baby has ever yet given any evidence that such a thing took place! How could it? The little creature is unconscious, at the time, and as he grows up he does not show any superiority to others who have not undergone the aqueous regeneration! We find our unbaptized sons and daughters converted by Grace in quite as large a proportion as those little “members of Christ” and “inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven.” These “children of God by sprinkling” show that they need converting, for they grow up to be heirs of wrath, even as others. The regeneration seems to be only skin deep if we may judge by the character of 99 out of every hundred of those who are thus regenerated.

But in this case there was no mistaking the meaning of Baptism, for Cornelius and his household were not baptized till after they had received the Holy Spirit—and the *Holy Spirit* was the sign that their hearts were already purified. Now, my Brothers and Sisters, the Lord will not permit us

to mix up His own ordinances with the work of His blessed Spirit in purifying the heart by faith, alone! God forbid we ever should fall into such an error! No—soul-purification is of *faith*, it is not of Baptism. It is not by any outward rite even of God's own ordaining, nor by the will of man, nor by blood, nor by birth, but by the work of the Holy Spirit through the agency of faith and that alone.

If it should, however, occur to some Brother that perhaps the case of Cornelius may have been somewhat special because he had been a devout man and an alms-giver even before he knew the Gospel, I reply that Peter, in his narrative and argument, said not a word upon that point! He held forth the centurion's case simply as that of an uncircumcised person who had believed and had been purified in heart. It seems to me clear enough that if Cornelius, instead of having been a devout man, had been called by God out of the utmost profligacy, he would have been purified in heart in precisely the same manner. If not, Peter was unfair in quoting as a typical instance what would have been a palpable exception to the rule—but he speaks of the centurion and his family as being specimens of what God was doing for Gentile Believers.

So Peter saw nothing at all exceptional about them. He saw, indeed, nothing but that they were Believers and were purified in heart by their faith. The fact is that the instrument by which hearts are truly purified is faith which comes by the hearing of the Gospel—and this is all. And so I say to you upon this point, even to you who know not the Lord as yet—do not be looking for pure hearts within yourselves before you come to Christ by faith. Do not look for the fruits before you have the roots! Look by faith to the great Purifier, however impure you feel your heart to be.

There is a blessing for the pure in heart, but you cannot claim it at present and, therefore, be it yours to believe as sinners in whom is no good thing whatever. Though you mourn the deep depravity of your nature, do not vainly endeavor to alter it before you believe, but, sinner as you are, condemned by the verdict of your conscience, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that you may be completely renewed! I beseech you seek purity of heart by faith, alone, for you will be disappointed if you search for it in any other way. Do not think that anything else can touch the matter, for it cannot! No washing and cleansing can make the Ethiopian white—only the Redeemer's Divine power can do it!

Read your Bibles, by all means, and pray, by all means, and hear sermons, by all means, but *none* of these things are of any use to change the radical impurity of your inward nature. FAITH must behold the bleeding Lamb and know the virtue of the water and the blood which flowed from His pierced side—and until then the soul must remain in the impurity of the Fall. All the efforts of unbelieving nature do but plunge us deeper in the mire and increase our defilement! Faith is that branch of hyssop which, being dipped in the blood of Jesus, makes the heart clean from sin—and nothing else will do this.

Look, then, poor Soul, away from yourself that you may have yourself renewed. Look to your black, disordered and loathsome self and mourn, but look not there for cure—that were to seek for riches amid bankruptcy

and death amid life! That were to search for Hell in Heaven and for God among demons! Look to JESUS, whom God has set forth to save His people from their sins—and as you look to Him, FAITH will purify Your soul!

**II.** How is faith strong enough to do this? What is THE SECRET OF ITS POWER? Believing other things does not purify the soul—why does believing the Gospel? Trusting is a very simple act—how does it come to pass that trusting *Christ* becomes the means of cleansing the heart? I answer, because God works by it. Let us read our text with the preceding verse. “God, who knows the hearts, bore them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as He did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.”

Who was it that was purifying their hearts? The answer is clear. It was the Omniscient God. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, you must not look, alone, to the *instrument* which the Lord uses, but you must have regard to His own power which He puts forth in connection therewith. Faith alone would be nothing—but when *God* works by faith, wonders are accomplished! You remember the old story of the sword of Scanderbeg with which he used to cleave men in two from the crown of the head downwards? As one looked at it he declared that he saw nothing about the sword to make it so fatal a weapon. But another replied, “You should have seen the arm which was used to wield it.”

Faith looked at, of itself, appears to be contemptible, but oh, the arm that wields it! Who shall resist that everlasting arm? Jacob may be but a worm, but God can thresh the mountains with him! Faith may be but a poor broom, but when Jesus comes to purge the temple of the heart, He sweeps out all the accumulated filth by this feeble means! This greater than Hercules cares little for the weakness of the instrument, but behold, He cleanses the Augean stable of our nature with no other agency than childlike faith! God works through faith, and so faith does marvels!

Ah, Beloved, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ your inbred sins have another champion to meet them beside yourself. God Himself is with you for your Captain and He will use your faith to be the ram’s horn to lay low the walls of Jericho, or to be as the pitchers and the trumpets, by whose means the Midianite myriads were overthrown! Your iniquities shall bow before His Grace! Only trust and your poor child-like trust shall be in God’s hands the sacred scourge of small cords which shall free your soul from all the thieves who now make it their den! Besides, the text suggests that God is at work in the heart by His Holy Spirit.

Now, where the Holy Spirit comes, He burns as a heavenly fire and consumes sin. He comes, also, as a flowing stream and cleanses away evil. He comes as a rushing mighty wind to chase away all that is foul and polluted which has gathered in the stagnant air of the soul. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of holiness and as He *always* dwells with faith, being its Author, its Strengtheners and Guardian, you may be sure that where faith comes, the heart will speedily be purified. The fact is, Brothers and Sisters, faith sees sin, loathes it and flings itself into the eternal arms to be delivered from it. Faith feels sin, like a huge mountain, pressing on its bosom and crushing down its heart. And Faith cries, “Eternal God, You have prom-

ised to deliver Your people from their sins. Lo, I invoke Your power and challenge Your promise! I cast myself upon Your might to lift this load from off my bosom and to let me breathe freely as being delivered from its terrible weight.”

All is well when such an appeal is believably made! When you bring God into your quarrel it is ended. When you lay hold on the Divine strength, Goliath falls, though your weapon is but a sling and a stone. Here is the power of faith, that she wears the promise of her God as her belt of strength! She has laid hold upon the Omnipotence of Him that makes Heaven and earth to stand! Well may she perform miracles, for God is at her beck and call. See, then, where the power of faith lies whereby she works the purification of the soul—it is GOD that works by her! “But,” you ask, “how does God purify the heart? He cannot do it by *physical* force.”

No. Who thought He could? He does it by His wisdom which was never baffled yet, bringing before the human mind arguments which suit the case, revealing His Truths which convince the understanding and plying the conscience with facts which gain its verdict. If human wisdom wins *men's* minds, what shall Infallible Wisdom do? Together with Omnipotent Wisdom there is the most important element of Irresistible Love. Do you think there is no power anywhere but that which can be measured by pounds and gauged as we compute the force of steam in the locomotive engine? Ah, Brothers and Sisters, in the impulse of persuasion, in the force of conviction, in the plea of love, there are powers which never violate the human will, but yet rule it with sacred supremacy!

What is stronger than the power of love—love which makes the most obdurate at length to yield? Love which compels the most malicious to love, in spite of themselves? Love which surprises men into repentance and gratitude before they are aware of it? God loves men until they must love Him! God loves them with such Omnipotence that at last they hurl their weapons of rebellion down and submit with eagerness! Nothing conquers like love! Now it is because Faith trusts in this Wisdom and this Love—and these come to aid her in her war with sin—that the raging lusts and wayward passions of the heart are subdued and Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

So, then, I say, as we leave this point, Brothers and Sisters, remember humbly and hopefully that the battle is not yours after all! The Lord has undertaken the conflict and *He* will gain the victory! The conquest of sin is to be achieved by the Almighty—you are to wrestle and contend—but God *in you* is the winner of the contest! Therefore, since God is with you, nothing is impossible! There is no constitutional fault which you cannot remedy! There is no strong passion which you cannot check! There is no inward desire, however fierce, which you cannot, at last, destroy! Have courage! High degrees of sanctity are possible to you, now that God is with you. Despair of nothing! Doubt not, for in all things you shall be more than conquerors through Him that loves you! Only let your faith continually fling herself upon the Omnipotence of God and you shall see that He will purify your hearts.

**III.** Thirdly, let us consider that THE SEAT OF FAITH'S ACTION is primarily the heart—"purifying their hearts." I will not speak upon this topic more than to outline what I would have said had I been able to utter my words with greater rapidity. Infirmities of voice are a sad hindrance to ministers—pray that they may be removed, for in my case, at least, the brain is slow when the speech is hampered.

Faith changes the current of our love and alters the motive which sways us—this is what is meant by purifying the heart. It makes us love that which is good and right. It moves us with motives free from self and sin—this is a great work, indeed! Therefore, the change which faith produces is very radical and deep. It is a small matter to wash the outside of the cup and of the platter—the *inside* of the cup must be first and chiefly attended to. If the heart is changed, the conversion is thorough and complete—it is not a mere superficial affair, but a through and through renewal. "Rend your hearts and not your garments," was God's command to His people—and faith acts in this spirit—it does not begin with the garments nor frame regulations for the external actions. It begins with the inner man.

Faith lays the axe at the root. It heals the stream at the fountainhead and what is done is, therefore, done thoroughly, effectually and honestly. The heart being purified, the purification becomes operative throughout the whole life. A diseased heart means a sickly man all over—you cannot get your heart wrong but what every organ is, in its measure, wrong—the whole life is disarranged. Neither can you have the heart right without its affecting the entire nature and affecting, for the better, all that is within you and all that comes forth of you—of thought, word and deed! There is nothing like beginning at the heart out of which are the issues of life. All else is poor patchwork. But to have the heart made new is to be renewed, indeed!

And, therefore, such a change is permanent. Acknowledge appetites which still remain and the dog returns to his vomit. Purify externals, leave the nature untouched, and the sow that was washed goes back to her wallowing in the mire. Transform the dog to a sheep, change the swine to a child and you shall not see the old habits return—but without this, all human goodness is as a fading flower. Such a purification is acceptable with God, who searches the heart. Man judges according to the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. And so, faith, in purifying the heart, produces a purification which is well-pleasing before God.

The sum of this is, Brothers and Sisters, do not begin seeking after the purification of your hearts and *then* seek after faith in Christ as a second thing. No! Let all things be done in order. Emotions are good if they are good, but they are not the source of purity nor antecedent to faith. Faith is the parent of right emotions. Never confuse the mother with the children. If you would have men purified, aim, by the blessing of God, to produce faith in them. The preaching which only stirs the passions is of small value. We have heard a good deal about crowds weeping, but we had rather see *one individual believing*. We count it far better to lead a man to believe with his heart than to cry with his eyes and, therefore, I aim rather

at preaching Christ Crucified, so as to beget *faith*, than to paint pathetic pictures of deathbeds and dying mothers, which things work on the emotions but have small tendency to lead to faith.

If, first of all, we believe that Jesus is the Christ and come to rest in Him, the emotions will be brought right enough in due time—the heart will be changed where once faith assumes the sway. But if you have a faith which never touches your heart—a faith which never causes you to rejoice or mourn, a faith which neither makes you hate sin nor love the Lord Jesus, I charge you, shake off that faith as Paul shook the viper from his hand—for it is a deadly faith and if, instead thereof, you should feel an aching heart and a deep sense of alienation from God, the change will appear terrible to you, but it will be conducive to your highest good.

Only the living faith which works upon the heart and influences the desires and the affections can be the faith of God's elect. A moonlight faith, which has light but no warmth, is a thing of the night and is not the faith of the children of the day. Faith which lives in the cold attic of the brain and never descends into the parlor and banqueting room of the heart, will starve with cold—and it is not the life which the Holy Spirit works in man. Judge what I say, but if you forget all, still remember that faith stands *first* and *then* the heart's purification follows as a consequence. Never put the cart before the horse, nor the effect before the cause! Do not expect the fruit of holiness without the root of faith, nor try to increase purity, which is a *result*, without first strengthening the faith which is its original.

**IV.** Lastly, let us consider THE MODE OF FAITH'S OPERATION—how does Faith go to work to purify the heart? Observe, dear Friends, first, that Faith believes in sin as sin and sees the horror of it as an offense against a holy and gracious God in whom she devoutly believes. Faith believes in Hell and sees the “smoke of its torments going up forever and ever.” Faith believes in the worm that dies not and the fire that never can be quenched.” Faith, “the evidence of things not seen,” places before the soul, in dread array, the pomp of that tremendous day when Christ, with clouds, shall come, so that the soul sees sin to be an exceedingly dreadful and damnable thing and turns to God for deliverance from it—this is one element in the purification of the soul.

Next, Faith delights to set Christ before the heart and to make it gaze upon His bleeding wounds and pierced side and marred face. Faith makes Him no dream, but a reality! She causes the soul's ears to hear His groans and listen to His “Lama Sabachthani.” The soul perceives that when sin was laid on Christ, it bruised Him sorely and crushed Him down and, therefore, the heart hates the sin which slew its best Friend—here is another element which works towards its purification. Faith delights much in the Person of Christ and, therefore, she sets before the soul His incomparable loveliness, as the Well-Beloved of saints.

To Faith, Christ is not an historic Person who flitted over the page of history even as a passer-by moves before a camera when an artist is taking a street photograph and leaves a dim trace of his having passed across the scene while the picture was being fashioned. Faith has learned to see Christ stand out as the most real Man that ever lived, the fact of the ages,

the focus of the Truth of God! Faith touches, handles, embraces and feeds upon Christ. She has been so familiar with Him as to have been kissed with the kisses of His lips and she has been filled with His love which is better than wine and, therefore, she feels His constraining power and follows Him.

Faith is Christ's familiar Friend. Faith, as John, lies even in His bosom and there enjoys His love and pours forth her own. Faith, by revealing the love and loveliness of Christ to the soul, kindles in the heart a vehement flame of love to Him and this fire of love becomes a powerful element of purification—for you cannot love Christ and love sin! You cannot feel gratitude for deliverance from evil and then go and plunge into it again. Further, faith has a wonderful art of realizing her gracious privileges.

Faith says to the man, "Do you not know that you are God's elect? The eternal Father wrote Your name in His Book of Life before He lit up the lamps of Heaven! How ought you to live? You are redeemed, the blood mark is on you! You are not your own, but bought with a price—what a holy life yours ought to be! You are precious to the heart of God! You are His Hephzibah, He delights in you. You are His child, no more a servant, but a son! You are Christ's bride, yes, you are a part of His mystical body, you are one with Him—how ought you to behave yourself?"

Brothers, Sisters, did you ever realize any one of these blessings without feeling that such privileges purge the soul? Did they not, each one of them, seem to say to you, "What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, since you are partakers of mercies like these?" Faith has another wondrous power of acting upon the telescopic principle by bringing near to us the things to come. Has she not even opened to us the gates of pearl and set the golden streets a-glittering before our eyes? How near to faith's far-seeing eyes, oh you blessed Jerusalem, your celestial splendors have appeared!

At such seasons, so far from thinking that we would indulge in sin because we felt our Heaven secure, we have groaned after *more* purity and begun to take our shoes off, for we have felt that even the suburb of Heaven, where we, then, stood, was holy ground! Transported by Faith's vision, we have commenced to put on the snow-white robes of the immaculate. Having this hope in us, we have purified ourselves, "even as He is pure." O you who are Brothers and Sisters to perfect spirits—co-heirs with the glorified of the Crown of Life that fades not away, with angels for your servitors and Christ Himself for your elder Brother—what should be the manner of our walk and conversation? We feel that we shall never be perfectly content till we are perfectly holy, unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight. What could more effectually purify the heart than the vision of Heaven which Faith presents to us?

Suffer me, now, to crowd a number of matters together, to show you that faith does not merely give us motives, but that it really finds us power. I will tell you how faith does this, for I have tried it in fighting against sin. Power is gained by faith through pleading the promises of God. Did you ever feel that you could not master a sin and have you then gone and knelt down and cried, "Lord, You have said, 'sin shall not have

dominion over you, for you are not under the Law, but under Grace,' Lord save me from the tyranny of sin which now seeks to exercise upon me"? Did you ever plead that other promise, "I will turn My hand upon you, and surely purge away your dross, and take away all your sin"?

Did you ever cry, "Lord, I will not let You go till you have taken away my bonds and delivered me from the iniquities which prevail against me"? Then I am sure you have obtained the help of God! Thus does Faith, by pleading God's own Word, gain power to master sin. Try her sacred art! Believe without a doubt the faithful Promiser and hold Him to His Word, a Word from which He never did draw back and never will, for He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. Faith daringly lays hold upon the power of God, Himself! On the strength of the promise she grasps the Divine hand! She has the sacred impudence, the consecrated impertinence to thrust herself near the Throne and lay hold upon God, for she has heard Him say, "Let him lay hold upon My strength."

And oh, Beloved, how she then smites the Philistines! How she lays iniquity low when once God, the Irresistible Slayer of sin, has come to her help! She constrains Him to come by laying hold upon Him and then she routs all her adversaries. Faith brings us real power to conquer sin by applying the blood of Christ. She does not merely *talk* of the Atonement, but she delights in it as her own and makes a medicine of it for the curing of sinful habits. The blood of Jesus is the life of faith and the death of sin! All the saints overcome through the blood of the Lamb! We sprinkle it before us and kings of armies flee!

The atonement by blood. The *literal* substitution of our Lord. The smarting suretyship. The triumphant righteousness and the representative glorification of the Lord Jesus are all great purifiers of the soul—sharp swords with which to smite sin! Rest happily in Him who died for you and rose again, and you will be strong for virtue—sin shall lose all power over you. The blood of Jesus is the chief and, indeed, the *only* Fountain for cleansing! It is the supreme source of holiness, the preparation for Heaven! Faith gets us power, for she plunges us in the atoning blood which is our life. Faith, herself, also, gives us power against sin by mixing herself with all Gospel ordinances. We read of some, "that the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

Faith is a *necessary* ingredient to be mixed with means and ordinances to give them savor and efficacy. With hearing sermons, attending communion, private prayer, Bible study—mix faith! "Without prescribing how much," mix faith, and the more the better! Faith will enable you to draw the nourishment and essence out of Gospel ordinances and so it will make you vigorous in agonizing against sin! Last of all, faith awakens the new man to intense resistance of sin. Faith, like a trumpet, wakes up the unsinning new nature to battle and leads it into the thick of the fight. Did I startle you when I said the, "unsinnewing new nature"? I said it advisedly, for it cannot sin because it is born of God! There is within the regenerate

man a principle of Divine birth, a Seed which is incorruptible which will remain and abide in the renewed soul forever and ever.

This seed, or principle faith, excites into growth and energy. Faith arouses love, stirs up courage, girds patience with her belt and perseverance with her shoes. She excites zeal and stirs up jealousy, bestirs desires after holiness and quickens the diligence of devotion. And so she keeps the powers of evil in check and purifies the heart. This is a brief sketch of how faith purifies, from day to day, the soul of man. I have done when I have said—see, then, to the simplicity and energy of your faith. Beloved, “as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk in Him.” As you believe in Him unto justification, believe in Him to sanctification. If anybody tells you that you are to get justification in one way and sanctification in another way believe him not!

Jesus Christ is made of God unto us sanctification as well as redemption. Pharisees virtually teach us that we are to be sanctified by the Law, though justified by faith, but we know better! These are twin Covenant blessings and are not to be had apart. Believe in Christ to *conquer* sin as well as to *pardon* sin. Believe that the only power which can subdue a base passion in you is the power which washed you from your iniquity of old. Trust Christ with the power of sin as well as the guilt of sin. You need not go through a round of performances in order to be purified in heart. You need not look for a higher life than Jesus gave you when you looked and lived—there is no higher life, for He gave you His own! What more do you need than the Holy Spirit which quickens you? What is higher than that?

What more can you have than what faith has brought you and will bring you? Jesus has given you Himself! Did you believe in half a Christ at the beginning? Did you receive from Him a lower and inferior life? Oh, shame on you to think so! You trusted your soul wholly with Him, did you not? And did He not give His whole self to you? Do you mean to say that you trusted Him to save you from Hell and not from sin? Did you trust Him to blot out the past and were you fool enough to trust to *yourself* for keeping in the future? If so, you did not believe in Him at all—your faith was faulty at the very core—for Christ must be everything or nothing!

And, if up to now you have been so foolish as to have half a Savior—and if even now you are looking for something which is not contained in Him—be foolish no longer! Go back to the very beginning and say, “Blessed Savior, just as I am I come to You. Behold, I take You to be All in All to me, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.” Doing this you shall find all in Jesus and, by faith, your heart shall be purified. I had intended to appeal to sinners, but my voice refuses to be longer tried and so I leave it with the prayerful desire that the whole subject may appeal to seekers and encourage them. God save you. Amen.

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# GRACE—THE ONE WAY OF SALVATION NO. 765

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

*“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ  
we shall be saved, even as they.”  
Acts 15:11.*

You who are conversant with Scripture will recollect that these are the words of the Apostle Peter. Paul and Barnabas had been preaching the Gospel among the Gentiles with great success, but “certain of the sect of the Pharisees which *believed* could not get rid of their old Jewish bigotry and vehemently urged that the converted Gentiles ought to be circumcised, or else they could not be saved. They made a great clamor over this and there was no small dissension and disputation. The children of the bondwoman mustered all their forces, while the champions of glorious liberty arrayed themselves for the battle.

Paul and Barnabas, those valiant soldiers of the Cross, stood out stoutly against the ritualistic Brothers and told them that the rite of circumcision did not belong to the Gentiles at all, and ought not to be forced upon them. They would not yield their free principles at the dictation of the Judaizers, but scorned to bow their necks to the yoke of bondage. It was agreed to bring the matter up for decision at Jerusalem before the Apostles and Elders. And when all the Brothers had assembled, there seems to have been a considerable dispute.

Finally, Peter, speaking with his usual boldness and clearness, declared that it would be wrong to put a heavy yoke upon the necks of the Gentiles which neither that generation of Jews nor their fathers had been able to bear. And then he concluded his address by saying, in effect, “Although these people are not circumcised, and ought not to be, yet we believe that there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile, and by the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.” Here Peter was not to be blamed, but to be greatly commended, for he spoke under the influence of the Spirit of God.

I. We shall use the text as concisely as we can for three important purposes. In the first place we shall look upon it AS AN APOSTOLIC CONFESSION OF FAITH. You notice it begins with, “We believe.” We will call it, then, the “Apostle’s Creed” and we may rest assured that it has quite as clear a right to that title as that highly esteemed composition which is commonly called the “Nicene, or Apostle’s Creed.”

Peter is speaking for the rest, and he says, “We believe.” Well, Peter, what do you believe? We are all attentive. Peter’s answer is, “We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.” There is a great deal of talk in our day—foolish, vainglorious, idi-

otic, senseless talk, as we think, about Apostolic succession. Some persons think they have the direct line from the Apostles running right at their feet, and others believe that those who make the greatest boast about it have the least claim to it.

There are clergymen who imagine that because they happen to be in a Church which is in open alliance with the State, they must necessarily be ministers of the Church of which Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Now we think that their union with the State, is, in itself, a conclusive reply to all such claims to Apostolic succession! And moreover, we remark many fatal points of difference between the Apostles and their professed successors! Whenever did Peter or Paul become State-paid ministers? In what State Church did they enroll themselves?

What tithes did they receive? What rates did they levy? What laws did they make upon the Jews and the Gentiles? Were they rectors or vicars? Prebendary or deans? Canons or curates? Did they buy their livings in the market? Did they sit in the Roman House of Lords dressed in lawn sleeves? Were they styled Right Reverend Fathers in God? Were they appointed by the Prime Minister of the day? Did they put on gowns and read prayers out of a book? Did they christen children and call them regenerate, and bury wicked reprobates in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection?

As opposite as light is from darkness were those Apostles from the men who pretend to be their Divinely-appointed successors! When will men cease to thrust their arrogant pretences into our faces? Only when common sense, to say nothing of the religion of our country, shall have rebuked their presumption! One thing is clear from this "Apostle's Creed" which we have before us—it is clear that the Apostles did not believe in ritualism! Peter—why, they make him out to be the head of the Church! Do they not say that he was the first pope, and so on? I am sure if Peter were here he would grow very angry with them for slandering him so scandalously, for in his Epistle he expressly warned others against being lords over God's heritage—and you may be sure he did not fall into that sin himself!

When he is asked for his confession of faith, he stands up and declares that he believes in salvation by Divine Grace alone. "We believe." O bold Apostle, *what* do you believe? Now we still hear it—Peter will say, "We believe in circumcision. We believe in regeneration by baptism! We believe in the sacramental efficacy of the Lord's Supper! We believe in pompous ceremonies! We believe in priests, and altars, and robes, and rubrics!"

No! He does not utter a syllable concerning anything of the kind! He says, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we who have been circumcised shall be saved just like those who have *not* been circumcised. We believe that we shall be saved, even as they." He makes very small account, it seems, of *ceremonies* in the matter of *salvation*. He takes care that no idea of *Sacramentarianism* shall mar his explicit confession of faith. He glories in no *rite*, and rests in no *ordinance*. All his testimony is concerning the *Grace* of the Lord Jesus Christ! He says *nothing*

whatever about ordinances, ceremonies, Apostolic gifts, or prelate unction—his theme is GRACE, and GRACE alone!

And those, my Brothers, are the true successors of the Apostles who teach you that you are to be saved through the unmerited favor and free mercy of God, agreeing with Peter in their testimony, “We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved.” These are the men who preach to you the Gospel of salvation through the blood and righteousness of Jesus! But those pretended ministers who boast of their *priesthood* preach another gospel, “which is not another, but there are some that trouble you.”

Upon their heads shall be the blood of deluded souls! They profess to regenerate others but they will perish themselves! They talk of sacramental grace, and shall receive eternal destruction! Woe unto them, for they are deceivers and liars! May the Lord deliver this land from their superstitions!

Another thing is very clear here. The Apostle did not believe in self-righteousness. The creed of the world is, “Do your best and it will be all right with you.” To question this is *treason* against the *pride* of human nature which evermore clings to salvation by its own merits. Every man is born a Pharisee. Self-confidence is bred in the bones—and will come out in the flesh. “What?” says a man, “Do you not believe that if a man does his best, he will fare well in the next world? Why, you know, we must all live as well as we can, every man according to his own light. And if every man follows out his own conscience as near as may be, surely it will be well with us?”

That is not what Peter said. Peter did not say, “We believe that through doing our best we shall be saved like other people.” He did not even say, “We believe that if we act according to our light God will accept that little light for what it was.” No, the Apostle strikes out quite another track and solemnly affirms, “We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved.” NOT through our good works! NOT through anything that we *do*! NOT by the merit of anything which we *feel* or *perform*, or *promise* to perform, but by GRACE—that is to say—by the free favor of God—

**“Perish each thought of human pride,  
Let God alone be magnified.”**

We believe that if we are ever saved at all, we must be saved *gratis*—saved as the gratuitous act of a bountiful God—saved by a gift, not by wages—saved by God’s love, not by our own doings or merits. This is the Apostle’s creed—salvation is all of Divine Grace from first to last and the channel of that Grace is the Lord Jesus Christ who loved, and lived, and died, and rose again for our salvation! Those who preach mere morality, or set up any way except that of trusting in the Grace of God through Christ Jesus preach another gospel, and they shall be accursed, even though they preach it with an angel’s eloquence!

In the day when the Lord shall come to discern between the righteous and the wicked, their work, as wood, hay, and stubble shall be burnt. And those who preach salvation by Grace through Jesus Christ shall find that

their work, like gold, and silver, and precious stones shall survive the fire and great shall be their reward!

I think it is very clear, again, from the text, that the Apostles did not believe in salvation by the natural force of free will. I fail to detect a trace of the glorification of free will here. Peter puts it, “We believe that we shall be saved.” Through what? Through our own unbiased will? Through the volitions of our own well-balanced nature? Not at all, Sir—but, “we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved.”

He takes the crown from off the head of man in all respects and gives all glory to the Grace of God! He extols God, the gracious Sovereign, who will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy and who will have compassion upon whom He will have compassion. I wish I had a voice of thunder to proclaim in every street of London this glorious doctrine, “By GRACE are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the GIFT of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” This is the old Reformation doctrine. This is the doctrine which will shake the very gates of Hell if it is but faithfully preached!

O for an army of witnesses to publish abroad the Gospel of Grace in its Sovereignty, Omnipotence, and fullness. If you are ever to get comfort, believe me, dear Hearer, you must receive the Doctrine of Salvation by free grace into your soul as the delight and solace of your heart, for it is the living Truth of the living God. Not by ritualism, not by good works, not by our own unaided free will are we saved, but by the Grace of God alone!—

**“Not for the works which we have done,  
Or shall hereafter do,  
Has God decreed on sinful worms  
Salvation to bestow.  
The glory, Lord, from first to last,  
Is due to You alone:  
Aught to ourselves we dare not take,  
Or rob You of Your crown.”**

Were I now to take this Apostle’s creed to pieces, and look closely at the details of it, it would be easy to show that this creed contains within it many important Truths of God. It implies, most evidently, the doctrine of human ruin. “We believe that we shall be *saved*.” That statement assuredly implies that we *need* to be saved. The Apostle Peter, as well as his brother Apostle, Paul, was sound in the faith concerning the total depravity of human nature. He viewed man as a lost creature, needing to be saved by Divine Grace.

He believed in those three great “Rs” which Rowland Hill used to talk about—Ruin, Redemption, and Regeneration. He saw most clearly man’s ruin, or he would not have been so explicit upon man’s salvation. If Peter were here to preach tonight, he would *not* tell us that man, though he is a *little* fallen, is still a noble creature—who needs only a little assistance and he will be quite able to right himself. Oh, the fearful flattery which has been heard from some pulpits! Anointing corruption with the unction of hypocrisy! Besmearing the abomination of our depravity with sickening eulogies!

Peter would give no countenance to such false prophets! No, he would faithfully testify that man is *dead* in sin, and life's a *gift*—that man is lost—utterly fallen and undone. He speaks in his Epistles of the former lusts of our ignorance, of our vain conversation received by tradition of our fathers, and of the corruption which is in the world through lust. In the verse before us he tells us that the best of men, men such as himself and the other Apostles, had need to be saved, and, consequently, they must have been originally among the lost—heirs of wrath even as others.

I am sure that he was a firm Believer in what are called “the Doctrines of Grace,” as he was certainly in his own person an illustrious trophy and everlasting monument of Divine Grace. What a ring there is in that word GRACE! Why, it does one good to speak it and to hear it! It is, indeed, “a charming sound, harmonious to the ear.” When one feels the power of it, it is enough to make the soul leap out of the body for joy—

**“Grace! How good, how cheap, how free,  
Grace, how easy to be found!  
Only let your misery  
In the Savior’s blood be drowned!”**

How it suits a sinner! How it cheers a poor forlorn wanderer from God! Grace! Peter was not in a fog about this—his witness is clear as crystal—decisive as the sentence of a judge. He believed that salvation was of God’s free favor, and God’s almighty power. And he speaks out like a man, “We believe that we are saved by grace.” Our Apostle was also most decided and explicit concerning the Atonement. Cannot you see the Atonement in the text, sparkling like a jewel in a well-made ring? We are saved “through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

What does the Apostle mean but the Grace which came streaming from those five wounds when the Savior hung on the Cross? What does he mean but the Grace which is revealed to us in the bleeding Sufferer who took our sins and carried our sorrows that we might be delivered from wrath through Him? O that everyone were as clear about the Atonement as Peter is! Peter had seen his Master—no, more—his Master had looked at him and broken his heart, and afterwards bound it up, and given him much Grace! And now Peter is not content with saying, “We believe that we shall be saved through grace,” but he is careful to word it, “We believe that we shall be saved *through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Dear Hearers, never have any questions upon the vital point of redemption by blood. This is a fundamental Truth of God! He who is in darkness upon this subject has no light in him. What the sun is to the heavens, the doctrine of a vicarious satisfaction is to theology! Atonement is the brain and spinal cord of Christianity! Take away the cleansing blood and what is left to the guilty? Deny the substitutionary work of Jesus and you have denied all that is precious in the New Testament. Never, never let us endure one wavering, doubtful thought upon this all-important Truth of God!

It seems to me, too, that without straining the text I might easily prove that Peter believed in the doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints. They were not, in a certain sense, it seems, perfectly saved when he spoke. And he says, “We believe we *shall* be saved.” Well, but Peter, may

you not fall away and perish? “No,” he says, “we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved.” How positively he speaks of it! I do wish you, dear Friends, to get a firm and intelligent hold of the doctrine of the safety of the Believer which is as clear as noonday in the Scriptures.

Upon the whole you have learned it to purpose, and can defend it well, but all of you should be able to give a *reason* for the hope that is in you. I have known one of our people met by those who do not believe this doctrine, and they have said to him, “You will fall away! Look at your own weakness and tendency to sin.” “No,” said the man, “I know I should if I were left to myself, but then Christ has promised that He will never leave me nor forsake me.”

Then it is sometimes said, “but you may be a Believer in Christ today, and yet perish tomorrow.” But our friends generally reply, “Do not tell us that falsehood! God’s saints shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of Jesus’ hand! As for your doctrine of the final falling of the Lord’s blood-bought ones, if that is the gospel, go and keep it to yourselves. As for us, we would not go two inches to listen to it—there is nothing in it to lay hold of—it is a bone without marrow. There is no strength, no comfort for the soul in it.”

If I know when I trust Christ that He will save me at the last, then I have something to rest upon, something worth living for! But if it is all a mere “if,” or “but,” or “maybe,” or “perhaps”—a little of myself and a little of Christ—I am in a poor case, indeed. A Gospel which proclaims an uncertain salvation is a miserable imposition. Away with such a Gospel! Away with such a Gospel! It is a dishonor to Christ! It is a discredit to God’s people! It neither came from the Scriptures of Truth, nor does it bring glory to God.

Thus, have I tried to open up the Apostle’s creed, “We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”

**II.** And now, having used the text as the Apostle’s confession of faith, I shall take it as THE CONVERTED MORAL MAN’S STATEMENT. Let me show you what I mean. Observe and admire the way in which Peter puts the case. A company of Jews has assembled to discuss a certain matter and some of them look very wise. They bring up certain suggestions that are rather significant.

They say, “Well, *perhaps* these Gentile dogs may be saved. Yes, Jesus Christ told us to go and preach the Gospel to every creature, therefore, no doubt He must have included these Gentile dogs. We do not like them, though, and must keep them as much under our rules and regulations as we can. We must compel them to be *circumcised*. We must have them brought under the full rigor of the Law. We cannot excuse them from wearing the yoke of bondage.”

Presently, the Apostle Peter gets up to speak and you expect to hear him say—do you not?—to these gentlemen, “Why, these ‘Gentile dogs,’ as you call them, can be saved, even as you!” No. He adopts quite a different tone. He turns the tables and he says to them, “We believe that *you* may

be saved, even as *they*.” It were just as if I should have a company of persons here, now, who had been very bad and wicked. Who had plunged into the deepest sin. But God’s Grace has met with them and made them new creatures in Christ Jesus.

There is a Church meeting and when these persons are brought before the Church, suppose there were some of the members who should say, “Yes, we believe that a drunkard may be saved, and a person who has been a harlot may, perhaps, be saved, too.” But imagine, now, that I were to stand up and reply, “Now, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I believe that *you* may be saved even as these.” What a rebuke it would be! This is precisely what Peter meant. “Oh,” he said, “do not raise the question about whether *they* can be saved—the question is whether *you*, who have raised such a question, will be saved!” “We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.” So he seems, in this dispute, to take the objectors aback and to put the Gentile Believers in order, to cast out the bad, proud, wicked, devilish spirit of self-righteousness.

Now, Brethren, some of us were favored by Providence with the great privilege of having Christian parents and consequently we never did know a great deal of the open sin into which others have fallen. Some of us never were inside a theater in our lives, never saw a play, and do not know what it is like. There are some here who, perhaps, never did frequent the tavern, do not know a lascivious song and never uttered an oath. This is cause for great thankfulness, very great thankfulness, indeed! But, O you excellent moralists, mind you do not say in your heart, “We are quite sure to be saved,” for, let me tell you, you have not before God any advantage over the outward transgressor so as to entitle you to be saved in a less humbling manner!

If you are ever saved you will have to be saved in the same way as those who have been permitted to plunge into the most outrageous sin! Your being restrained from overt offenses is a favor for you to be *grateful*, but not a virtue for you to trust in. Ascribe it to God’s Providential goodness, but do not wrap it about you as though it were to be your wedding garment, for if you do, your self-righteousness will be more dangerous to you than some men’s open sins are to them. Do you not know how the Savior put it, “Verily I say unto you that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you!” You moral people must be saved by the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—saved even as they, the outcasts, the wanderers.

You will not, you *cannot* be saved in any other way, and will not be saved at all if you do not submit to this way. You will not be permitted to enter Heaven, good as you think yourselves to be, unless you come down to the terms and conditions which Sovereign Grace has laid down, namely, that you should trust Christ and be saved by Divine Grace, “even as they.” To prove to you, dear Friends, that this *must* be the case, I will suppose that you have picked out 20 people who have been good, in a moral sense, from their youth up.

Now, these people must be saved just the same as those other 20 over yonder, who have been as bad as bad can be from their earliest childhood, and I will tell you why—because these amiable persons fell in *Adam* just as surely as the outcasts did! They are as fully partakers of the curse of the Fall as the profane and drunk. And they were born in sin and shaped in iniquity just as the dissolute and the dishonest were. There is no difference in the blood of humanity—it flows from one polluted source and is tainted in all its channels. The depravity of human nature does not belong merely to those who are born in dirty back courts and alleys, but it is as certainly manifest in those of you who were born in the best parts of the city.

You dwellers in Belgravia are as altogether born in sin as the denizens of Bethnal Green. The West End is as sensual as the east. Hyde Park has no natural superiority of nature over Seven Dials. The corruption of those born in the castle at Windsor is as deep as the depravity of workhouse children. You, Ladies and Gentlemen, are born with hearts as bad and as black as the poorest of the poor! You sons of Christian parents, do not imagine, because you spring of a godly ancestry, that therefore your nature is not polluted like the nature of others! In this respect, we are all alike! We are born in sin, and alike are we dead by nature in trespasses and sins, heirs of wrath, even as others.

Remember, too, that although you may not have sinned openly, as others have done, yet in your hearts you have—and it is by your *hearts* that you will be judged. For how often a man may commit adultery in his soul and incur the guilt of theft while his hands lay idly by his side! Do you not know that a *look* may have in it the essence of an unclean act, and that a *thought* may commit murder as well as a hand? God takes note of heart sin as well as hand sin.

If you have been outwardly moral, I am thankful for it, and I ask you to be thankful for it, too. But do not trust in it for *justification*, seeing that you must be saved, even as the worst of criminals are saved, because in heart, if not in life, you have been as bad as they. Moreover the method of pardon is the same in all cases. If you moralists are to be washed, where must you find the purifying bath? I never heard of but one Fountain—that—

**“Fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins.”**

That fountain is for the dying thief as much as for you, and for you as much as for him. There is a robe of righteousness that is to cover the best living among professors—that same robe of righteousness covered Saul of Tarsus, the bloody persecutor. If you, of unspotted outward character, are ever to have a robe of righteousness you must wear the same one as he wore. There cannot be another nor a better. O you who are conscious of outward innocence, do, do, humble yourselves at the foot of the Cross and come to Jesus just as empty-handed, just as broken-hearted as if you had been outwardly among the vilest of the vile! And through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ you shall be saved, even as they! O may the Holy Spirit bring you to this!

I do not know whether anybody here has ever fallen into such an unwise thought as I have known some entertain. I met with a case of this sort only the other day. A very excellent and amiable young woman, when converted to God, said to me, "You know, Sir, I used almost to wish that I was one of those very bad sinners whom you so often speak to, and invited to come to Jesus, because I thought then I should feel my *need* more. That was my difficulty, I could not feel my need." But see, dear Friends, we believe that through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we who have not plunged into black sin shall be saved even as they who have done so!

Do not make a difficulty about this. Others make a difficulty on the opposite side. They say, "Oh, I could trust Christ if I had been kept from sin." The fact is that you unbelieving souls will not trust Christ whichever way you have lived, for from some quarter or other you will find cause for your doubts. But when the Lord the Spirit *gives* you faith, you big sinners will trust Christ quite as readily as those who have not been great offenders openly. And you who have been preserved from open sin will trust Him as joyfully as the great transgressors!

O come, come, come, you sick souls! Come to my Master! Do not say, "We would come if we were *worse*." Do not say, "We would come if we were *better*." But come as you are! Come just as you are! Oh, if you are a sinner, Christ invites you! If you are but lost, remember Christ came to save the lost! Do not be picking out your case and making it to be different from others, but come, and welcome! Weary and heavy laden Sinner, come and welcome! Come, even now!—

***"Just as you are, without one trace  
Of love, or joy, or inward Grace,  
Or meetness for the heavenly place,  
O guilty Sinner, come!  
Come, here bring your boding fears,  
Your aching heart, your bursting tears.  
'Tis Mercy's voice salutes your ears,  
O trembling Sinner, come.  
The Spirit and the  
Bride say, 'Come.'  
Rejoicing saints re-echo, 'Come.'  
Who faints, who thirsts, who will, may come—  
Your Savior bids you come."***

**III.** The text would not be fairly treated if I did not use it as THE CONFESSION OF THE GREAT OUTWARD SINNER WHEN CONVERTED. I will now speak to those here present who, before conversion, indulged in gross sins. Such are here. Glory be to God such are here! They have been washed! They have been cleansed! My dear Brothers and Sisters, I can rejoice over you! More precious are you, by far, in my eyes than all the precious gems which kings delight to wear, for you are my eternal joy and crown of rejoicing! You have experienced a *Divine* change! You are not what you once were! You are new creatures in Christ Jesus!

Now, I will speak for you. "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." What do we mean? Why, we believe that we shall be saved even as the best are saved! I will split that

thought up, as it were, into individual instances. Yonder sits a very poor Believer. We are very glad to see him at the Tabernacle. I know he had a thought that his clothes were hardly good enough to come in, but I hope none of you will ever stay away because of your *clothes*. Come, come anyhow!

We are always glad to see you! At least, I am, if others are not. But my poor Friend is very badly off, indeed. He would not like anybody, perhaps, to see the room where he lives. Yes, but my dear Brother, do you expect to have a poor man's *salvation*? Do you expect that when you get to Heaven, you will be placed in a corner as a pauper pensioner? Do you think that Jesus Christ will only give you the crumbs which fall from off His table? "Oh, no!" I think I hear you say, "Oh, no! We shall leave our poverty when we get to Glory."

Some of our friends are rich. They have an abundance of this world's goods and we rejoice to think they have, and hope that they will have Grace to make a proper use of this mercy. But we poor people believe that we shall be saved, even as they! We do not believe that our poverty will make any difference to our share in Divine Grace, but that we shall be as much loved of God as they are, as much blessed in our poverty as they are in their riches, and as much enabled by Divine Grace to glorify God in our sphere as they are in theirs.

We do not envy them, but on the contrary, ask Grace from God that we may feel that if we are poor in pocket, yet we are rich in faith, and shall be saved even as they. Others of you are not so much poor in money as you are poor in useful talent. You come up to Chapel and fill your seat, and that is about all you can do. You drop your weekly offering into the box and when that is done, you have done all, or nearly all in your power. You cannot preach. You could not conduct a Prayer Meeting. You have hardly courage enough to give away a tract.

Well, my dear Friend, you are one of the timid ones, one of the little Benjamins of whom there are many. Now, do you expect that the Lord Jesus Christ will give you a second-hand robe to wear at His wedding feast? And when you sit at the banquet, do you think He will serve you from cold and inferior dishes? "Oh, no!" you say. "Oh, no! Some of our Brethren have great talents, and we are glad that they have. We rejoice in their talents, but we believe that we shall be saved even as they. We do not think that there will be any difference made in the Divine distribution of loving kindness because of our degree of ability."

There are very proper distinctions here on earth between rich and poor, and between those who are learned and those who are unlearned. But we believe that there is no distinction in the matter of salvation—we shall be saved even as they. Many of you would preach 10 times better than I do if you could only get your tongues unloosed to say what you feel. Oh, what red-hot sermons you would preach, and how earnest you would be in their delivery! Now, that sermon which you did *not* preach, and *could not* preach shall not be set down to your account, while perhaps that discourse of mine will be a failure because I may not have preached it as I should have done—with pure motives and zealous spirit.

God knows what you would do if you could, and he judges not so much according to what you *do*, as according to your *will* to do it. He takes in this case the will for the deed, and you shall be saved, even as they who with the tongue of fire proclaim the Truths of God. Most likely there is some doubting Brother here. Whenever he opens "Our Own Hymn Book," he very seldom looks to "The Golden Book of Communion," but he generally turns to hymn No. 590, or thereabouts, and begins to sing "Contrite Cries."

Well, my dear Friend, you are a weakling. You are Mr. Much-Afraid, or Mr. Little-Faith. But how is your *heart*? What are your *prospects*? Do you believe that you will be put off with a second-rate salvation? That you will be admitted by the back door into Heaven instead of through the gate of pearl? "Oh no!" you say. "I am the weakest lamb in Jesus' fold, but I believe that I shall be saved even as they. That is, even as they who are the strongest in Grace, most useful in labor, and most mighty in faith."

In a few hours, dear Friends, I shall be crossing the sea, and I will suppose that there shall be a good stiff wind and that the vessel may be driven out of her course and be in danger. As I walk the deck I see a poor girl on board. She is very weak and ill, quite a contrast to that fine strong burly passenger who is standing beside her, apparently enjoying the salt spray and the rough wind.

Now suppose a storm should come on, which of these two is the more safe? Well, I cannot see any difference, because if the ship goes to the bottom they will both go. And if the ship gets to the other side of the channel, they will both land in security. The safety is equal when the thing upon which it depends is the same. So, if the weakest Christian is in the boat of salvation—that is, if he trusts Christ—he is as safe as the strongest Christian, because, if Christ failed the weak one, He would fail the strong one, too. Why, if the least Christian who believes in Jesus does not get to Heaven, then Peter himself will not get to Heaven! I am sure of it, that if the smallest star which Christ ever kindled does not blaze in eternity, neither will the brightest star.

If you who have given yourselves to Jesus should any of you be cast away, this would prove that Jesus is not able to save—and then *all* of us must be cast away, too. Oh, yes! "We believe that we shall be saved, even as they." I am nearly done, but I will suppose for a moment that there has been a work of Grace in a prison—Cold Bath Fields, if you like. There are half-a-dozen villains there, *thorough* villains. But the Grace of God has made new men of them. I think I see them. And if they understood the text, as they looked across the room, and saw half a dozen Apostles—Peter, James, John, Matthew, Paul, Bartholomew, and so on—they might say, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they, even as those Apostles are."

Can you catch the idea, and make it your own? When artists have drawn pictures of the Apostles, they have often put a halo round their heads, very much like a brass pan, or something of that kind—as if to signify that they were some particular and special saints. But there was no such halo there—the painter is far from the fact! We say it, and say it

seriously and thoughtfully, that 12 souls picked from the scum of creation who look to Christ shall be saved, even as the 12 Apostles are saved! Halo or no halo—they shall join in the same hallelujah to God and the Lamb!

I will select three holy women—they shall be the three Marys that we read about in the Evangelists—the three Marys whom Jesus loved, and who loved Jesus. These holy women, we believe, will be saved. But I will suppose that I go to one of our Refuges and there are three girls there who were once of evil fame. The Grace of God has met with them and *they* are now three weeping Magdalenes, penitent for sin. These three might say, humbly, but positively, “We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we three reclaimed harlots shall be saved, even as they—the three holy matrons who lived near Christ and were His delight.” “Ah, well!” says one, “this is Divine Grace, indeed! This is plain speech and wonderful doctrine, that God should make no distinction between one sinner and another when we come to Him through Christ.”

Dear Hearer, if you have understood this very simple statement, go to Jesus at once with your soul, and may God enable you to obtain complete salvation at this hour! I pray you to come in faith to the Cross—I pray my Master’s Grace to compel you to enter into a state of full dependence upon Jesus, and so into a state of salvation. If you are now led to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter how black the past may have been, “the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanses us from all sin.”—

***Here’s pardon for transgressions past,  
It matters not how black their cast.  
And oh, my Soul, with wonder view,  
For sins to come, here’s pardon, too.”***

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# THE CRY OF THE HEATHEN

## NO. 189

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 25, 1858,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS**

***“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us.”  
Acts 16:9.***

THIS was no doubt a special vision sent of God for the direction of the Apostle. For we are told in the next verse that they assuredly gathered from this vision that the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel in Macedonia. And yet the vision may be very readily accounted for by natural causes. Men usually dream of that which is most upon their minds. Who would marvel that the miser should, in his restless sleep, be pictured to his own sight as counting over his gold? Who wonders that the mother's dream is often concerning her fair infant? Who marvels that the wife frequently dreams of shipwrecks, when, in the stormy night, she lies upon her bed, her last thoughts having been exercised concerning her husband at sea?

You wonder not that the soldier in the trenches dreams of battle. And hence we cannot marvel that the Apostle Paul, whose whole soul was full of his Master's cause, should have a vision in the night concerning a new field of labor which God had intended to open up to him. You will remember that the Apostle was on this occasion, in a peculiar condition. He at first endeavored to preach the Gospel in Phrygia and Galatia, but he was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the Word in Asia. And “after they had come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not.”

The Apostle was like Abraham of old. He went forth not knowing where he went. There was a certain path which he must take and when he strived to turn either to the right hand or to the left, the Spirit directly forbade him and he was compelled to go on till he came to the seaport of Troas. There, wearied with his journey, he cast himself upon his couch and in the midst of the night a vision appeared unto him. A man who by his brogue and his dress was discovered to be a Macedonian, said to him, “Come over and help us.”

God sometimes tells men in their sleep the secret they could not discover when they were awake. We have heard of the preacher, tired late on Saturday evening, who has been unable to think of a discourse—in the

middle of the night he has dreamed it through and on the morrow he ascended his pulpit and preached it. What wonder, then, that the Apostle Paul, specially directed by the Spirit of God, after all day long wearily exercising his mind as to the journey God intended him to take, should, after all, when in his sleep, have a vision from on High, teaching him where he should go?

And now, Beloved, having thus prefaced our discourse, we have another observation to make before we proceed to a full discussion of the text. What an instance of Divine sovereignty we have in our text! He who is wise can see sovereignty everywhere in the work of salvation, but how clearly is it present here. Bithynia must not hear the Gospel. The Apostle desires to go and preach it there. But as yet, it seems, God does not intend that Bithynia should be evangelized. Paul desires to tarry in Asia and there throughout its length and breadth preach the Gospel. But he is strictly forbidden and the command comes to him that he is to go across to Europe and there proclaim the Gospel.

Was not this sovereignty? Why was it that God shut the door in Bithynia and opened it in Philippi? Was it that Philippi was more worthy, or that Bithynia needed it less? Assuredly not. It was of God's mercy that He sent the Gospel at any time and when He sent to Philippi the most eminent of the Apostles to preach it, who shall blame Him? Has He not a right to do what He wills with His own? But we may rest quite assured that His sovereignty was not an arbitrary exercise of despotic will. It was a sovereignty dictated by the highest wisdom. For while God rules all things according to His own will, yet we are expressly told that He does it according to the *counsels* of His will—His will being no blind headstrong thing, willing for no reason whatever—but being always subject to His own sense of that which is the wisest and which will promote His glory and His creature's profit.

However, we must still observe, Divine sovereignty is that which casts a rich luster upon grace, when we recollect that it is sovereign and free. Oh you of the race of Britain! Bless the Lord that He has sent the Gospel unto you. For while doubtless there is wisdom in it, remember there is also sovereignty in it. "He has not dealt so with any nation. Praise you the Lord." Had He willed it, had He seen fit, the Gospel had this day been flourishing in the center of Africa and you might at this moment have been destitute of the Word of the Gospel, living barbarians like your fathers, staining your hands in blood. Unto the great, dread Sovereign, who rules as He wills on earth as in Heaven, be glory forever and ever.

And now we turn to our text. "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us." First, we shall observe, that *the best help that can be rendered to any people is the preaching of the Gospel.*

“Come over and help us,” that is, preach to us. Secondly, we shall notice that *although we have no visions or dreams in the night, yet the nations on the earth are calling to the Church of the living God and are saying to us, “Come over to us and help us.”* And then, thirdly, I shall conclude by solemnly asking the question, *what do you who love the Lord intend to say to those who are now asking at your hands the help of a preached Gospel?*

I. First, then, THE GREATEST HELP THAT CAN BE GIVEN TO ANY PEOPLE IS THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL. And when I say this, I am uttering a truth which I need not guard. The Gospel is a help, not in one way, but in every way. Those who have not the Gospel stand in the greatest need of help. But when the Gospel is carried, you carry everything within it. In the folds of the Gospel sleep the manifold wisdom of God and His manifold goodness also toward the sons of men. Behold, the nations of the earth this day are still the bond-slaves of tyrants—many lands are still subject to despotic dynasties who trample men beneath their feet, as if men were but earthen pitchers to be broken in pieces by the iron wills of kings.

How is liberty to be established in these lands? Shall the point of the bayonet bring liberty to these nations that still are slaves? Never, never. Iron makes our fetters, iron rivets them, but iron never can unloose them. We need something more potent than steel to carve out the liberty of mankind. Love, love of the Gospel must be the ground work of liberty and if *liberty, equality and fraternity*, the three great words that are the world’s heirloom, are ever to be fully known and realized, it must be by the preaching of the Word of Jesus. The preaching of the Gospel is the terror of despots. If you ask what makes this land free, every candid man must say it is the open Gospel and the unfettered preaching of the Word. Glasgow’s motto is, “Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the Word.”

It is the coat of arms of Liberty herself. Liberty flourishes by the preaching of the Word of God. Certain it is that wherever you find Protestantism, you find liberty and wherever you leave Protestantism behind you, you begin to feel the yoke and to hear the groans of the oppressed. It is true that Protestantism does not in every place produce perfect liberty because it is not sufficiently true to itself. There are still places where the slave feels the lash, while his master calls himself a Christian. But this is not the legitimate effect of our religion, but rather the effect of a delusion which Hell itself did first invent and which nothing but the deep depravity of men could ever permit to stand before the face of God’s sun.

Yes, you tyrants on your thrones, the little stone cut out of the mountain without hands shall yet break you in pieces! O great statue of tyranny with your head of gold and your feet of clay, you shall yet totter, for this shall break you in pieces—the breaker is come out before us and the King

at the head of us and who can withstand His might? What shall hold out against the mighty principle wherewith Christ makes men free?

Look Brethren, and see how the nations of the earth are lying under gloomy superstition. Perhaps there is one thing in the world worse than kingcraft and that is priest-craft. May God save us from two things—from tyrannical kings and from priests of all sorts. Priests of any sort are bad, but superstitious priests are the worst of all. Oh, how many nations of the earth have their intellect blighted, their hopes blasted, their progress shipped, their whole history eclipsed of its glory, their state robbed of its riches by the cursed dominancy of priests. Men are compelled to believe just what the priest chooses.

Because he wears a cassock, because he has been educated in the deep mysteries of craftiness, he is to be lord over men's consciences and consciences and hearts are to bow before him. Wherever he comes his word is to be Law, his will is to open and shut the gates of Heaven, for he pretends that the keys of Heaven and of Hades are hanging at his girdle. How shall we deliver men from these enthralling superstitions? No way but by the preaching of the Gospel. You cannot make men free, even by governments. You cannot give them a thorough freedom by giving them a republic itself. For that republic must fall so long as priest-craft is there, for liberty and priest-craft agree as well together as God and devil and no better. And until the one falls the other can never stand.

But the preaching of the Gospel teaches that Believers are *all* priests and kings. The Gospel lifts everyone of us into the high places of princes and monarchs and puts everyone of us on a level with pontiffs and priests—this is the Gospel which shall yet set men free and the preaching of this, and this only, is the world's great and grandest hope of its deliverance from the slavery of the body and the yet more accursed bondage of the soul.

But, Beloved, there are some nations of the earth that have never as yet tasted of the sweets of salvation. Large tracts of country have been discovered where the people are still debased and degraded. The kraal of the Hottentot has not yet blossomed into a mansion, the spear of the New Zealander has not yet been entirely changed for a pruning hook. There are many places where all the joys of life and the social comforts and enjoyments of our being are as yet totally unknown. Now the Gospel has blessings in both its hands. Wherever it goes it has the blessings of Heaven, rich and golden—it has the blessing of the earth, fair and silvery. They are both precious things and while we believe the Gospel is ordained most of all to bless man for the hereafter, yet the secularist himself, if he were wise, must take some interest in the progress of the Gospel—for it is a blessing to men even in this life.

The great civilizer is the Cross. Nothing else can make the barbarian into a civilized man but the Cross and the vision of Christ hanging on it. Blessed are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of peace, for where they bring the glad tidings of peace with God, they bring also good news of goodwill towards men—even goodwill towards men as creatures here, as well as good news to them as creatures that are to exist forever. My dear Brothers and Sisters, if you would bless the world, in the largest possible sense, temporarily, spiritually and eternally—if you would bless the bodies and the souls of men, if you would bless men in their children, in their houses. If you would bless them in their meats and drinks and in all the necessities of life—the one simple means of doing all this—is the proclamation of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! And that fully preached and received has been proved in instances which I need not now stop to recall to your memories—instances abundant and recent, to be after all, the power of God—not only to salvation but to civilization, too.

There is yet one more point which I must mention here in which the Gospel is the best help to man. We must remember today that there are districts of the earth where the ground is yet red with blood. There are sad portions of our globe that as yet must have the name of Aceldama, the field of gore. There are spots where the horse hoof is splashed with blood—where the very carcasses of men are the food of ravens and of jackals. The mounds of Balaclava are as yet scarcely green and the spots where rest the relics of our own murdered sisters and brothers are not covered with the memorial stone.

War has ravaged whole districts. Even in these late times the dogs of war are not yet muzzled. Oh, what shall we do to put an end to war? Mars, where is the chain that shall bind you like Prometheus to the rock? How shall we imprison you forever, you cruel Moloch? How shall we forever chain you? Behold here is the great chain, that which one day is to bind the great serpent. It has the blood-red links of love. The Gospel of Jesus Christ the Crucified One, shall yet hush the clarion of war and break the battle-bow in sunder.

Happy are we, thrice happy, that we have a Gospel which shall make men—

***“Hang the useless helmet high,  
And study war no more.”***

Let us spread it, then, to earth’s utmost bounds. For, to repeat the text I quoted just now, it has blessings in both its hands. Wherever it goes temporarily as well as eternally it blesses the human race. And when it shall have spread to its utmost limits, when all the habitable earth shall be covered with it, then the mist that swathes our planet shall be rolled away and bright, like a new-born morning star, this earth shall shine out with

her sister stars in all her glory and the angels shall once more sing and God Himself shall repeat His verdict—"all things are very good."

But still, Beloved, the greatest help that the Gospel brings is help to the soul. Ah, Christian men, you know what this means—your brothers and sisters are this day wandering blindfold—they know not where. You know, for the Bible tells you that they are wending their weary way down to the gulf of black despair! Oh, does not your heart desire that the blind eye should be opened, that the misguided should be directed on the path to Heaven? Would not your pity desire to snatch the fire brand from the flame? Do you not anxiously seek to know how you can lead the vicious to virtue and the virtuous to the righteousness that is in Jesus Christ? Have you no desire to see God's elect gathered in, to see them washed and sanctified and perfected?

Remember this is to be and since it is to be it is certain that you must send the Gospel far and wide, for by no other means can God's elect be gathered home. How can they believe without a preacher? How can they preach except they be sent? The Gospel must go throughout all lands that the elect may be gathered home and the Messiah's kingdom come. Oh, you who love the souls of men, is it to you an awful thought that Hell's caverns are filling? Is it a dreary thing to you to see the broad road so crowded with its many travelers? You are longing and wishing that the narrow way might have more pilgrims. I beseech you, then, look to it that by every means and by all means you aid the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus. For it is the help for which the earth calls and the help which you must render to it. Come over and help us by preaching Christ's holy Gospel. Thus have I done with the first head, may the Lord help us in the second.

**II.** The second point—although not in visions of the night, yet EVERY DAY AND EVERY HOUR THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH ARE SAYING, "COME OVER AND HELP US." Do you not know that the loudest eloquence is silence? To move the heart of the right-minded, you need not the declamation of the orator. The sight of silent, dumb misery is the highest eloquence to a tender heart. It is true, I must confess it, the nations of the earth do not vocally ask for our help. No, worse than that, if you send them the help of the Gospel they will many of them reject it. Our missionaries have been slain—the altars of false gods have been stained with their blood.

But still I solemnly repeat it—the nations of the earth are silently crying, "Come over and help us." If I see a person in the street sick, faint and dying, although he spoke not to me, though he asked me not to befriend him, I should think the weakness of his silence more potent than all the power of words. Yes, and if I saw him like a maniac, rejecting my help and pushing me from him, if I were convinced that he was really a maniac—for

that very reason he needs my help—I would thrust my alms upon him. I would willingly give him my help and assistance and so must you. The nations of the earth are dead in sin—how can they cry to you?

But it is yours to see their misery. And let the poor, poor dumb wounds of this bleeding earth speak to you. It is true, earth is a maniac and it puts away the only cure. But what do we care? It is ours to thrust our kindness upon unwilling men because we believe that their unwillingness arises from the madness of their disease. Let us take the poor man that has fallen among thieves. Let us pour in the oil and the wine and if he does not receive it gratefully, because he is faint—if he puts his hand upon the wound and rends away the liniment and unbinds the plaster—nevertheless let us bind him up again and set him upon our own beast and carry him to the inn. Let us pay for the lodging even though as yet he cannot speak to thank us. And the day shall come when the wound is healed and the burning fever is removed, when his brain is cool and his reason restored, that he shall fall at our feet and kiss the hand that once he spurned. Unborn generations shall bless the men that sent the Gospel, which at first their fathers did reject.

And now, Brothers and Sisters, let me plead the cause of the dumb. No man of Macedonia is here today to say, “Come over and help us,” but let me be the heathen’s spokesman and very earnestly ask you to come and help him. Methinks I will stand here as a heathen this morning and I say to you as if I had not heard the Gospel—“You Christians of Britain! You highly favored ones who know the name of Jesus and prove the power of the Spirit, preach the Gospel to us, for we are men like yourselves. What? Though our skin is of a color less fair than your own—yet He fashions our hearts alike.

“Oh don’t tell us that because we feed on the locust and eat the serpent, that therefore we are not of your kith and kind! ‘Not that which goes into a man defiles a man.’ It is true, our kings and princes are only fit to rank with your beggars. But oh, God has made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth. And from our huts and cabins we come forth today and we say to you, ‘We are men—we are your brothers—younger brothers, it is true—we have not had a double portion of the inheritance. Brothers, too, whose fathers spent their part in riotous living, but why should the children’s teeth be set on edge because the fathers have eaten sour grapes? Why must the son of man forever bear the curse of Canaan?

“O preach the Gospel to us! We are men. Mother Eve is our mother, as well as yours. Adam, too, is the father from whose loins we sprang. And because we are men, the common sympathy of humanity bids you listen to us when we say, ‘Come over and help us.’ Besides, we have another argument. We are told that ‘unto you is the Word of this salvation sent,’ not

for yourselves, but for us, Brothers, who have not heard the Gospel and who know it not. And you have the treasure in your own land. And we believe you have the treasure given to you that you may lavish handfuls of it out to us. We know that old Judea had the Covenant and the oracles and the Gospel to keep for coming generations. And we believe that you men of Britain have the Gospel, not for yourselves, but for us.

“We have heard what your Master said, ‘You are the lights of the world’—not lights of Britain, not lights for yourselves, the lights of the *world*. Oh, bear your burning torches into the glades of our dark forests! Come and shed your light through the dark mists of our idolatrous temples. Let the bats of our superstition and the owls of our ignorance fly away before the sunlight of your Gospel. It is not for yourselves you have received it, but for us. Oh, give it to us! Preach the Gospel to us, for it is designed for us. But we have another argument, Brethren—look at our miseries!”

As the spokesman for my poor Brethren today, I stand before you and I remind you of the tortures to which the poor Hindu devotee puts himself. I remind you of the cruelties enacted in the Chinese empire—the horrors of a government that is based upon idolatry. I tell you of the distress, the destitution, the poverty, the nakedness, the misery of the Bechuanas and the Bushmen and I speak for these and I say, “Christians, you have the means of alleviating their woes by sending them the Gospel—will you not do it?” Look at the dwellers in the land of the jungle and the lion. There they are. The serpent has grasped them in his folds and like the boa-constrictor of their own forests, he is crushing their nations until the ribs of the strong man snap and the hearts of the women melt like wax.

And you have the sword in your hands that can cut the serpent’s head! Your Master bruised that head beneath His heel and you must do the same. Oh, come, come, you missionaries of the Cross, you ministers of Jesus, come and deliver us from this deadly hydra! Save us from our fearful doom! Our miseries invoke your aid. It is true, we cannot speak to you in gentle language, but there was a time when poets walked among us and some of the light that shone in Paradise yet gilded our darkness. And we treasured up a few of those faint rays and we are hoping that the Sun of Righteousness will yet dawn upon us. Oh, come, roll away those mists! Come, chase our night and let us see that sacred, high, eternal noon, which is the daughter of the Gospel following the Sun of Righteousness!

And now, Christian men, let me speak to you as one of yourselves. Brethren, you and I are soldiers, soldiers of the Cross and at this hour worlds are rushing to the shock. The fight is thickening and we are warriors! Shame upon the craven who stays from the battle. The trump is sounding today. Mohammed has waked from his sleep. The Moslem, with bloody hands, has sought to slay our race. The Hindu, too, the meek-eyed

Hindu, his eyes have glared like the eyes of his tiger and his lips have smacked with gore. The battle is raging.

Not these alone. Popery has aroused itself, with mighty effort it is endeavoring to win back this gem of the sea, this first isle of the ocean. Infidelity, too, is on the stir—her faithful followers are flying here and there. Everything is awake, except the Church of God. Oh, wake up, Brethren! Wake up, now that the fight is at its fullest fury. Now is the time for our most desperate valor, our most earnest zeal. Remember every time you bow your knees and say, “Our Father,” you tell a lie at the end of that prayer, if you are not seeking to make His kingdom come and His will be done in earth, as it is Heaven. You are praying for what you do not try to get. You are insulting God by saying, “Your kingdom come,” with as foul a mockery as if I should say, “Be warmed and be filled,” to some poor dying beggar and then refuse to give to his needs that he might remove his distresses.

Remember, too, that you cannot be Christians at all—not in the right sense of the word—unless you, everyone of you, would compass sea and land to make one proselyte. You must have in you a desirous spirit to will others to Christ, or else the genuine blood of Christianity is not in your veins. Of all things in the world Christianity is the most prolific, if it is true. Mohammedans of old had mighty power to spread itself, but not such power as Christianity had. The religion of Jesus began like a mustard seed, with those few men in an upper room. But before a half century had rolled away, the Gospel was preached to every nation under Heaven and if we had Christianity in our hearts of the right sort—hot, burning stuff—not the lukewarm shams of this degenerate age, our religion before another half a century will have won the day.

If the Spirit of God should give us true diligence, in the course of another half century there would not be one district that would not have been trod by the foot of the minister, nor one town or city which would not have been evangelized. I know I am not speaking without book now but I am absolutely certain that what I am saying is a sober matter of fact. If you will just calculate the proportion between the four hundred and the progress made in one half a century and then begin with the three or four millions—I should hope there are as many as that—of true Christians in the world, I say, it is a little thing to believe that if they were true to their profession, they might, under Divine blessing, carry the Gospel into every known part of the habitable world before half a century has rolled away.

However, we need not be afraid we shall do it. There is no fear that we shall run into any fanaticism. That is the last sin this age will commit. We shall go on and be as orthodox and cold as we always were. No enthusiasm will ever fall upon us. We shall not see any very great and strange developments of an enormous fanaticism at the present day. Do not be

alarmed, Brothers and Sisters. All I preach that looks like fanaticism will not hurt this age. You may do what you will. Preach ever so wisely, you will never make the deaf adder hear. The Church of this day is a great deal too deaf to do anything extravagant. We do a little and think it a wonderful deal. We each give four pence to send Testaments to China. We will talk of it for the next fifty years!

We sent out one or two missionaries to India (and are they not one or two, compared with their needs?) it is a great thing. It is a fine thing for the whole Baptist denomination to raise twenty thousand pounds a year when there are some men in the denomination who make as much money as that in the time. It is a marvelous thing that out of the whole lot of us we should not be able to get more than that. But you know I am an imprudent young man—I always shall be I dare say—to dare to hint that some people have a great deal too much money to go to Heaven with. Of course it will be very wicked if I dare to say this morning that to die rich is a very frightful thing—that there are some people who have got too much riches to allow us to have any sure and certain hope that they have the love of God at all. For if they had more of the love of God, they would not grip their money so tightly.

They would say, “While men are damning, what is my money? While men are dying, what is my gold? There it goes! As much as I need, I have. God allows it me. As much as I shall require in my old age, as much as my family can demand of me, that will I have, but as for more, a blast and a curse would be on it if I had it. My gold and my silver would be cankered, for I should be guilty of the blood of men’s souls and then condemnation would be at my door because I had the money to send the minister to preach to them and I would not give it.”

Now, I say again, there is no fear of anyone becoming improvidently liberal. You need not be frightened that anyone here will give a thousand pounds this morning. We provide ample accommodation for those who feel inclined to do so. If anyone should be overtaken with such an enormous fit of generosity, we will register and remember it. But I fear there are no people like Barnabas now. Barnabas brought all he had and put it into the treasury. “My dear Friend, do not do that, do not be so rash.” Ah, he will not do that! There is no necessity for you to advise him. But I do say again—if Christianity were truly in our hearts. If we were what we professed to be, the men of generosity whom we meet with now and hold up as very paragons and patterns would cease to be wonders, for they would be as plentiful as leaves upon the trees.

We demand of no man that he should destitute himself. But we do demand of every man who makes a profession that he is a Christian, that he should give his fair proportion and not be content with giving as much to the cause of God as his own servant. We must have it that the man who is

rich must give richly. We know the widow's mite is precious, but the widow's mite has been an enormously great loss to us. O, that widow's mite has lost Jesus Christ many a thousand pounds. It is a very good thing in itself. But people with thousands a year talk of giving a widow's mite. What a wicked application of what never can apply to them. No, in our proportion we must serve our God.

**III.** Now, I come in conclusion to ask you very pointedly and plainly, WHAT DO YOU MEAN TO DO IN ANSWER TO THE HEATHEN'S CRY, "COME OVER AND HELP US?" Have I in all this congregation one man who loves sound doctrine, who has ability to preach and who has a mind to go and preach the Gospel in other lands? Because if I have and if I have ten others who have a mind to give him ten pounds a year, I have an opening for sending him out at once. In Port Natal there are twenty Baptists and those twenty Baptists are desirous of having a minister who should not only preach to them, but to the wild tribes around. They will raise him one hundred pounds, if we can manage to get the rest and send them out a missionary.

Who can tell? He might be another Livingston, perhaps a Moffat! Oh, that I had the honor of sending such an one from such a congregation as this! Have we no young men here this morning who are ready to volunteer to go and preach the Gospel in heathen lands? I confess, when I think of myself, I know I cannot go away. My calling is here. And yet I sometimes think what a lazy, feather-bed life it is for one to lead, to be preaching here when there are all these continents without the Gospel.

Some people think it wonderfully hard to preach two or three sermons a week but I think preaching thirteen or fourteen is a fearfully little thing. And I think sometimes, "Oh, if I were somewhere else, where there are some toils, some hardships to undergo! There is nothing to be done here. We cannot suffer, we cannot work, we cannot win crowns of martyrdom, we cannot win great battles here, as we could wish." Yes, young man, I say again, if you are ambitious—if you are ambitious to serve Christ—the height of your ambition should lead you to say, "I desire to preach the Gospel among the heathen."

I hope there may be some here—some *one* at least—whose heart God has touched. What? Can it be possible that I should this morning address some eight thousand people and yet out of the whole eight thousand there is not one who can say, "Here am I, send me"? Is it not strange? Very probably there is not. But yet I would desire that somewhere there is one who will write on the tablet of his heart, "I will go home to pray, I will go home to study and if God has given me power to preach, if there is any door open in His Providence, here am I. I will be a preacher of the Gospel in foreign lands."

And now, what are you resolved to do who cannot preach? Why, there are some of you, if you were to get up and preach, you had a great deal better sit down. It would not do for you to go and preach in foreign lands, because nobody would listen to you. I have often marveled that some people should think themselves called to preach when they have no ability. As I tell them, “if God calls anybody to fly, He will give them wings and if He calls them to preach, He will give them ability to preach.” But if a man has not the ability to preach, I am sure he has not the call.

Well, what will *you* do? “I will pray earnestly in support of missions. I will cry to God that great results may follow.” Do so. And you shall have our best thanks for your prayers. But in doing that, you have not done very much, for remember that is what the Roman priest did for the beggar. The priest said he would not give him a sovereign, he would not give him a half-crown, nor would he give him a penny. “Holy father,” said the beggar, “will you give me your prayers?” “Yes,” said the priest, “kneel down.” “No, not so,” said the beggar, “for if your prayers had been worth a penny, you would not have given them to me.”

And when you say you will pray, but will not help the cause with something more substantial—though we love your prayers, we might say, “You would not give them if they were worth a penny.” If you have nothing else to give to Christ, you need not be ashamed of saying, “Jesus, I give you my prayers.” But if you are blessed in your substance, you will be lying before Him, if you ask Him to bless His cause and do not give of your means in its support.

Now, let each, as he is able, help this great cause. And above all let us all in our spheres be preachers of the Gospel—

***“Seeking to tell to others round,  
What a dear Savior we have found.”***

Let me say, before the collection is made, just this word. There are some of you here that are as much heathen as if you were in Africa. To you I proclaim the Gospel and I have done—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, he that believes not shall be damned. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

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# LESSONS FROM LYDIA'S CONVERSION NO. 544

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 13, 1863,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a riverside, where  
prayer was customarily made;  
and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.  
And a certain woman named  
Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira,  
who worshipped God,  
heard us: whose heart the Lord opened,  
that she attended unto the  
things which were spoken of Paul.”  
Acts 16:13, 14.*

PHILIPPI is famous in classic history as the spot where the world's future trembled in the balance when Octavius met Brutus and Cassius in terrible conflict. The two republican generals here ended their stormy career and universal empire crouched at the feet of Caesar. As long as time endures, or human slaughter is thought worthy of a record, Philippi will be remembered as one of the greatest names in martial history. But when time shall have passed away and the records of human guilt shall have been cast into oblivion, Philippi will still have a name as the place where the first herald of the Cross cried, “Europe for Jesus.”

There was struck the first blow at the demon of evil and the first victory won in that quarter of the world. More fraught with blessings to the human race was that conquest of a woman's heart than all the laurels which Octaves had reaped upon the bloody field. Angels looked on while Paul threw down the gauntlet of defiance to all the powers of darkness and invaded our fair continent in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. We may well look back with admiration to the gallant advance of the little band, the Apostle and his few companions, who were the pioneers of the Lord's elect army in the western world. Philippi is enrolled forever in the record of the battles of peace.

The introduction of Christianity into Europe is a very humble affair. There is nothing very stately in the architecture of the house where Jesus is first preached. In fact, we have no evidence that there was any building at all—probably it was an open-air service by the riverside. Happy omen of the results of open-air preaching in after times! There were not enough Jews in the military city of Philippi to admit of the erection of a synagogue and therefore a few women met in a quiet spot by the river's bank. A stranger might walk through Philippi a hundred times and never know of the existence of the Jews' meeting place—it was a nook so retired and frequented by so few.

Heathendom might seem to the ordinary observer to be universal in its reign. For who would care to notice the feeble company who met in re-

tirement to offer prayers unto the Most High God of Israel? We will go to the meeting place this morning, and in spirit mingle with the few women and listen to that strange man who in burning accents is addressing them. And let us mark the result produced in the heart of yonder seller of purple, who has come with her wares from the city of Thyatira.

First, we shall consider *Lydia's conversion in itself*. Secondly, in *contrast with another which is recorded in the chapter*. Thirdly, in *comparison with that other*. And lastly, *as a type and model of multitudes of conversions in our own day*.

**I.** First, in LYDIA'S CONVERSION there are many points of interest. Observe that it was brought about by Providential circumstances. She was a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira. That city was famous for its dyeing trade which had flourished there ever since the days of Homer. The mode of producing a peculiarly delicate and valuable purple seems to have been known to the women of Thyatira. It may be that Lydia had come to Philippi upon a journey, or that while her manufactures were carried on at Thyatira, she resided during a part of the year at Philippi to dispose of her goods.

The communication between the two places was very easy and she may have frequently made the journey. At any rate, Providence brings her there when the hour of her conversion is come. You will remember that Thyatira was situated in that part of the country into which Paul was forbidden by the Spirit to go and preach. Therefore, had Lydia been at home, she could not have heard the Truth of God. And as "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," she must have remained unconverted. But Providence brings her to Philippi at the right time. Here is the first link of the chain.

But how is Paul to be brought there? He must, first of all, be kept out of Bithynia. And he must be silenced in his journey through Mysia. He must be brought to Troas, close by the margin of the sea. He must look across the blue sea and muse upon Europe's needs. He must fall asleep and in the visions of the night he must be prompted to cross to Macedonia. He shall ask for a ship—that ship shall be bound for Samothrace and for no other place. He must land at Neapolis and by the same instinct, he must make his way to Philippi. He cannot go in any other direction. He must be brought

there at the very time when Lydia is present. He must discover the little oratory by the river's brink, for God ordains that Lydia shall be saved.

Now, how many different threads were all interwoven here to make up the fabric of her providential conversion? In this case God rules and overrules all things to bring that woman and that Apostle to the same spot. And, Beloved, everything in God's Providence is working together for the salvation of His elect. If there is an elect soul whom God predestinates to be converted by my word, He may have fetched him home from Australia today by some troublesome accident, as it seems to him. Or He may have set sail for America and the ship may have been drifted back. But this I know—God will shake Heaven and earth sooner than suffer one elect soul to miss the predestined moment.

When the eternal counsel runs—"On such a day that man shall be arrested by Sovereign Grace and shall be made willing in the day of God's power"—happen what may, and occur whatever may, God's purpose shall stand! He will do all His pleasure. We do not well if we forget the expectant Providences which work before our conversion to bring us unto that spot where God was pleased to manifest Himself unto us.

Observe next, that in Lydia's case there was not only preventing Providence, but there was also Divine Grace in a certain manner preparing the soul. The woman did not know the Savior. She did not understand the things which make for her peace, yet she knew many truths which were excellent steppingstones to a knowledge of Jesus. If not a Jewess by birth, she was a proselyte of the gate, and therefore well acquainted with the oracles of God. She was one who worshipped God—no, she was one of the most devout of God's worshippers among the Jews. Though she was far away from the synagogue—some forget the Sunday when they travel in foreign lands—yet when the day came round, she was found with that little handful at the riverside oratory.

I doubt not that she had read Isaiah the Prophet and that she could carry in her heart and remember such words as these, "He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief . . . He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." As in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, the Scriptures she had read, though they were not understood for want of some man to guide her, had prepared her mind—the ground had been plowed already for the good seed. It was not a hard rock as in the jailer's case.

She worshipped God. She worshipped Him in sincerity. She worshipped Him looking for the coming of the Messiah, Israel's Consolation. And so her mind was prepared for the reception of the Gospel. Doubtless, dear Friends, in many of us there was a preparation for Christ before Christ came to us in quickening Grace. I know that in some of our cases the pious example of a godly father, and the loving instruction of a tender mother had softened us somewhat so that though still we were unsaved and still out of Christ, yet we were like the man who laid at the pool of Bethesda. We were close by the edge of the healing stream and there was not in our case that sudden, that astounding change which we have seen in others.

Still, dear Friends, we ought to ascribe all this preparatory work to Sovereign Grace, for Grace—free favor—does much in which no Grace of effectual salvation is perceptible. I mean that before Divine Grace renews the heart, there is Grace preparing us for Grace—Grace may be setting the mind in activity, clearing us from prejudice, ridding us of a thousand infidel and skeptical thoughts. And so it is raising a platform from which Divine Grace conducts us into the region of the new life. Such was the case of Lydia. Such is the case of many. Providence and Grace co-work before the effectual time is come.

Note concerning her conversion, in the third place, that *it took place in the use of the means*. On Sunday she went to her gathering of her people.

Although God works great wonders and calls men when they are not hearing the Word, yet usually we must expect that being in the way, God will meet with them. It is somewhat extraordinary that the first convert in Europe was converted at a very small Prayer Meeting.

There were only a few women there. We have no reason to think that there were any more males than just Paul and his friend, Luke. And these, you see, had called in, as we say, accidentally, and had been moved to give an address at the Prayer Meeting. And that address it was which was the means in God's hand of opening her heart. Beloved Friends, let us never neglect the means of Divine Grace. Wherever we are, *let us not forget the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is*. I say again, God may bless us when we are not in His House, but we have the best reason to hope that He will when we are in communion with His saints.

Oh, what a joy it is to see so many constantly thronging our House of Prayer because we have good hope that the God of Salvation will meet with them. No, it is not mere *hope*, but a confident *expectation*, for I suppose there never is a sermon preached in this House which is not the means of the conversion of some. We have, ourselves, abundant testimony that so often as Christ is lifted up here, the wounded in the camp forbear to die. May it ever be the case and may you ever have, even if as yet you are unconverted, a love to the courts of the Lord's House and to the place where His people meet together. Love the Prayer Meeting—do not say of it—"Only a Prayer Meeting"!

God loves to put honor upon prayer, upon the assembly of His people directly for His worship. And you may hope, dear Friends, that even if the sermon shall not have been useful, and if the common Sunday service may not have been blessed, yet, perhaps, on the Monday evening—perhaps, too, in that little cottage, when there are only a few women present—you may meet with God, who did not appear to you in the greater assembly. Be diligent in the use of the means. Be constantly in God's House, as often as the doors are open, and your engagement will prevail, for Lydia's conversion takes place in the use of the *means*.

Note again, for we will only hint at these things rather than dwell upon them, that *it was assuredly a work of Divine Grace*, for we are expressly told, "whose heart the Lord opened." She did not open her own heart. Her prayers did not do it. Paul did not do it. The *Lord Himself* must open the heart to receive the things which make for our peace. To operate savingly upon human hearts belongs to God, alone. We can get at human brains, but God alone can arouse human affections. We may reach them, we grant you, in the natural and common way. But to reach them as that the enemy of God shall become His friend, and that the stony heart shall be turned into flesh, is the work of Divine Grace and nothing short of Divine power can accomplish it.

We pray you, Brothers and Sisters, never forget this. We think it meet, according to Scriptural warrant and example, to speak to you and exhort you to arise from the dead, that Christ may give you life. But we remind you and trust you never may forget it—that all the work must always be of the Holy Spirit and of Him alone. I am told, in preaching the Gospel, to

command you to, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." But well I am aware and may you be aware of it, too, that faith is the *gift* of God. Though the Scripture bids us say, "Wash you, make you clean. Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes; cease to do evil." Though it cries, "Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts. And let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him."

Though our Savior, Himself, puts it, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate. Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that which endures unto eternal life," yet we know that salvation is neither by your striving, nor by your laboring, nor by your reforming and amending, but that all these are the fruit of an inward and mysterious work which the Holy Spirit alone can perform. Give unto God the glory if you have been converted, praise Him alone—"Not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord." He alone can cut the bands which fasten the heart. He alone can put the key into the hole of the door and open it and get admittance for Himself.

He is the heart's Master as He is the heart's Maker, and conversion in every case is the Lord's work, alone. Yet—because one Truth of God must always march arm in arm with another, and no man gets at correct ideas by merely grasping one Truth—he has two eyes and two hands, so let him be content to use them *both*. Although the Lord opened the heart, Paul's words were the instrument of her conversion. The heart may be opened and willing to receive, but then if the Truth of God enters not, what would be the use of an open door? But God always takes care to open the heart at a time when the messenger of mercy shall be going by, that the heart may give him admittance.

There shall be the plowed field, but there shall be no cry, "Where is the sower?" for when the plow has done its work, here comes the sower and begins to scatter the seed. Paul speaks the Word as surely as God opens the heart. Do not decry the ministry. It is a temptation of modern times to be always talking as though the ministry were a magnifying of *man*, as though to listen to the preacher were a glorification of the creature at the expense of the Maker. Now I believe there is nothing in the world which shows our humility of spirit and tends more to glorify God than a cheerful willingness to receive at His hands the golden treasure of His Grace out of an earthen vessel.

The weakness of the preacher becomes a foil to set forth His Glory, and by no means derogates from the honor due to the Lord Himself. God has worked, and always will work, by means—by chosen men upon whom He puts the anointing of His Spirit. And when the men are lacking to serve the Lord, then is the Church always in a weak state. While she has her Pauls to preach, she shall not be without her God to open hearts to receive the Word.

Now only one more thought upon her conversion—*it was distinctly perceptible by the signs which followed*. She was baptized. As soon as she had believed in Jesus, she put on, together with her household, the profession of her faith in Christ Jesus. Happy Lydia, to have a household

which believed in Jesus! Happy Lydia, to see them all baptized with her! Now there is a danger in certain sections of the Church to make too much of Baptism by linking it with regeneration, as baptismal regeneration. But there is an equally great danger among us who are called Baptists of making too little of Baptism. We cannot make too much of it, because our belief that none ought to be baptized but those who are regenerate already, will always be a healthy check for our making too much of it.

But we may make too *little* of it. We ought to insist very strongly upon the duty of all Believers who have found the Savior to obey the second Gospel command. "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved." We do not doubt but that all who believe shall be saved, but still for our part, when we see Baptism put in so close connection with believing, we would not be disobedient to our Master's command. We think it to be a sweet sign of an humble and broken heart when the child of God is willing to obey a command which is not essential to his salvation—which is not forced upon him by a selfish fear of damnation. We say it is a great sign of Divine Grace, when, as a simple act of obedience and of communion with his Master in his burial to the world and resurrection to a new life, the young convert yields himself to be baptized.

Lydia was baptized, but her good works did not end at the water. She then would have the Apostles come to her house. She will bear the shame of being thought to be a follower of the crucified Jew, a friend of the despised Jewish Apostle, the renegade, the turncoat—she will have him in her house. And though he says, "No," out of his bashfulness to receive anything, yet she constrains him, for love is in her heart and she has a generous spirit. And while she has a crust, it shall be broken with the man who brought her to Christ. She will give not only the cup of cold water in the Prophet's name, but her house shall shelter him.

Brethren, I do not think much of a conversion where it does not touch a man's substance—and those people who pretend to be Christ's people and yet live only for themselves and do nothing for Him or for His Church give sorry evidence of having been born again. A love to the people of God has always been a distinguishing mark of the true convert. Look, then, at Lydia, and remember that she is but a specimen of many. Let her case rest before you and let the prayer go up, "Lord, bring in Lydias this morning, according to Your mighty Grace."

**II.** We now look at the case again BY WAY OF CONTRAST. There is another story in the chapter. Read it carefully, for there is a remarkable contrast between the two. In the case of the jailer, we see *nothing like a previous preparation for the reception of the Word*. He seems to be coarse, rough, brutal. It may be he did no more than his orders required of him when he treated Paul so harshly, for it is written, "Having received such a charge he thrust them into the inner prison." But the probabilities are that he did this with a very hearty goodwill. And, looking with a thorough contempt upon the two enthusiasts who had plunged themselves into this trouble, he was not at all likely to adjust the stocks in any comfortable manner, or see to their ease in any way.

He was probably a rough, veteran soldier, who had been elevated to the jailer's office. He had gone to sleep. No preparation, surely, in sleep for the reception of the Word! The earthquake comes. The man springs out of his bed in terror! He grasps his sword and would have killed himself—he is in the very act of committing suicide, when a voice is heard—"Do yourself no harm, we are all here." Now we cannot discover the slightest atom of preparation for his conversion. He is as far off from hope as a man can be, and is just upon the edge of perdition—near to running before the bar of his Maker with hands red with his own blood.

Beloved, there are conversions such as these. They may not be very plentiful, but there are such and there have been such in this House of Prayer. Men have come under the sound of the Word with an intention of despising and laughing at it. They have come with their hearts full of venom and enmity. They have despised the preacher and despised the Truth of God. They have come fresh from the foulest haunts of sin and they were proposing, yet further, to plunge into the depths of iniquity. They were enemies to God by wicked works. They made their hearts hard as a stone, and yet, all of a sudden, the ponderous hammer of the Word has come upon them, and the flint was made to fly into a thousand shivers! And, by God's Grace, the proud sinner became humble as a little child.

Paul's case is somewhat similar to that of the jailer. You will remember it, and there are cases of persons here today who can, as they read the jailer's story say, "Such was I once—as great a stranger from God as he and as little likely to be called by Divine Grace as he was—and yet Grace came and made me a new creature in Christ Jesus." Here was no preparation, while in Lydia's case there was much which went to prepare the way for the Grace of God.

Another contrast is perceptible in the fact that *she was in the way* where the Grace of God was likely to meet with her. She was in God's House, at least in the spot which had been dedicated to His worship. She was engaged in prayer, and though not a formal prayer, but as far as her light went, it was acceptable to God and was, at any rate, sincere, coming from her heart. But not so the jailer. He is not in a place where the Gospel is at all likely to come. His office keeps him in the midst of felons, of murderers, and criminals of all sorts. If Divine Grace shall come to the jail, it will come to a graceless place, indeed. His occupation was not that which would foster any religious ideas. Superstitions, doubtless, were present, and there was no point upon which a Roman was more superstitious than concerning an earthquake.

It was one of the things which made the stout hearts of Roman soldiers tremble in a moment. It was the earthquake which made the guards at the tomb of our Savior become like dead men, swooning from fright. And this earthquake had much the same effect upon the jailer. He was not seeking after God. He had not a thought about God—his thoughts were hellish and his course was towards the pit. But in a moment, at God's voice, the current of his thoughts changes its direction and flows where it had never gone before! So have I known men who have been going on with all their

might towards the realms of darkness with their free and stout will, determining to inherit eternal damnation. But the hour has struck, Sovereign Mercy has come forth—and they, wonders to all—but greatest wonders to themselves, have suddenly become heirs of God and children of the Most High! May such wonders still be worked.

Yet further, *we do not find in Lydia's case that there was anything like an earthquake.* There were no great shakings and alarms. It was a “still, small voice.” The jailer sprang in and came trembling. We doubt not that Lydia felt her need of a Savior and that her cry was, “What must I do to be saved?” But still we find very little about her trembling, or being overwhelmed with the terrors of conscience. She was gently led by the finger of the eternal Father. The light dawned upon her as the morning's dawn, a gradual enlightening of the darkness. Grace came upon her as the shower which first begins as a mist, then thickens into a heavy dew, and then becomes a gentle sprinkling and afterward empties the clouds upon the soil.

To the jailer it was like an April storm beginning with big drops and dashing into a torrent in a few moments—to the jailer it was as though the sun should rise in an instant and turn the thickest night into full blaze of noon. Not so, in Lydia's case. Now do note, dear Friends, these differences, because they may help to solve many of your difficulties. Do not expect all to be converted in the same way. Do not suppose you are all to pass through the same terrors, nor all to be led by the same gentle methods. Our God is the God of variety in creation and in Providence. There are no two things exactly alike, and in the works of Divine Grace we are not to have Christians run into a mold, or dropped down like shot, all fashioned in the same shape.

There must be in every conversion a something distinct and separate from every other—and every man must expect to perceive in the glass of his experience some things about the features of his conversion different from those of any other. Why, do you not see that the means which converted Lydia would not have been of any use to the jailer? The jailer would not go to the place by the riverside. He would have laughed at the idea of sitting down with a parcel of women! You would not find him listening to Paul. He would smile at the very thought—“I go and listen to a renegade Jew, whom his own nation has cast off? Nothing of the kind.”

On the other hand, an earthquake would not have been appropriate to Lydia's character. Good, gentle soul, it might have frightened her out of her wits and instead of making her cry, “What must I do to be saved?” it is very likely she would have been in a swoon, if not altogether dead. The same quantity of alarm which will bring a stronger man down into something like reason, will just drive a woman out of her reason altogether. Gentle Lydia and the rough jailer are two very different people. They were of different sexes to begin with, and the woman is more easily moved by that which gently appeals to the affections than is the man. She, again, had been a moral and excellent woman. He has, probably, been tutored in sin. There must be different methods with different temperaments.

Does the farmer use the same machines in threshing different kinds of grain? Are all seeds sown after the same fashion? Do we not feel with regard to our children that we can speak a sharp word to one and he will scarcely feel it, but that the same expression will break another boy's heart? One child needs the rod and there are others upon whom a touch of the rod might work mischief. Certainly, then, it must be so in the constitution of the soul. And therefore God deals with each of us in different ways and we are not to question the sincerity of our conversion because it is not precisely like our favorite model. We are rather to see whether its fruits are the same, whether it comes of God, whether it leads to Christ, and if it does all this it matters not in what mold it is formed.

**III.** So much for that point. But here, as I generally like, if I can, to place two Truths side by side, we have our third point, namely, THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THE TWO, because they are essentially alike, though circumstantially different.

In both cases, dear Friends, *Providence co-worked with Divine Grace*. Providence brings Lydia to Philippi—Providence shakes the prison. God makes the realm of nature subservient to His will in both cases. There is a demand for purple at Philippi. I do not know how it came about. I cannot tell whether there were new fashions among the ladies at Philippi at that time, or what it was—but for some reason or other Lydia gets to Philippi because there is a great market for her purple. Well now, that is Providence which brings her there. The same Providence by another revolution of its wheel has appointed that particular jailer to keep the prison. Why was he jailer to that particular prison? Why is Paul brought to Philippi at all?

And how is it that through the accidental circumstance of the demoniac woman having been healed, Paul is beaten with rods and thrust into prison? Then comes the earthquake! Link within link and wheel within wheel, Providence works its way. So is it in every case—whether it is conversion by thunder and lightning, or by the “still, small voice.” There was in both cases a *distinct work of God*. We see it in Lydia's case, and have dwelt upon it. Even more distinctly we perceive it in the jailer's case, for what but Irresistible Grace could have made him cry, “What must I do to be saved?”

In both instances, too, the Word of God is essential, for we read concerning the jailer, as we did before, concerning Lydia, “They spoke unto him the Word of the Lord and to all who were in his house.” The earthquake cannot dispense with the minister. And though the mighty power of God can take the natural bonds from every prisoner, yet he does not choose to take away the spiritual bonds from any one soul without the proclamation of the Word. It pleases God, “by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

And again, in both cases, *the same signs followed*. The jailer is baptized with all his house, and we are told that they all believed. He washes Paul and Luke's stripes. Just as Lydia had entertained them, so he begins to wash their poor backs which were all black and blue and probably bleeding with the hard blows of the lictor's elm rods. He sets meat before them

and entertains them with the best he has and glad enough is he, in the morning, when he finds they are not to be kept in durance any longer, but may go their way. Here is the same result, the same love to the Brothers and Sisters, the same obedience to the Divine command, "Arise and be baptized."

There is an unmistakable likeness among all the people of God. All the children have the father's features, yet they are not any one of them precisely like his fellow. They are all brought by Divine Grace and Grace does its work in the same way. Yet, as to the minutiae of the details of their conversion, they are as wide as the poles asunder.

**IV.** We take Lydia's conversion to be A MODEL OF MULTITUDES OF CONVERSIONS WHICH ARE GOING ON IN OUR MIDST AT THE PRESENT TIME, AND IN OTHER CHURCHES, WHERE GOD IS MAKING BARE HIS ARM. The expression used is, "The Lord *opened Lydia's heart*, to attend to the things that were spoken."

Now what is meant by this? I think we have a summary of the work of the Holy Spirit here. There are several things meant. No doubt *the Lord removed prejudice*. This prejudice is an evil which we have to fight against in very many. In Lydia's case it would be Jewish prejudice—perhaps the report had reached her, as it had most of the Jews, concerning Jesus of Nazareth. She knew that her race had hounded Him to the death, that her nation had even said, "His blood be on us and on our children." Paul the Apostle was the subject of much of this prejudice among the Jews. You will recall that when writing his Epistle to the Hebrews he does not begin with his name, as he does in all the other Epistles, because he felt that the very name, "Paul," from the fact of his having been an eminent Pharisee and having become a Christian, was distasteful to the Hebrew people.

But God removed all this prejudice from Lydia's mind—she sat down to listen to Paul with a determination to give him a fair hearing and to weigh the matter and see whether these things were so or not—somewhat like the Bereans of old who also had their hearts in a measure opened, for they searched the Scriptures to see whether things were so. The devil often covers men from head to foot in a coat of mail so that when they come where the arrows of God are flying, there is very little hope of their being wounded because there is scarce a joint of the harness which the devil has not protected by an iron rivet of prejudice.

You know how he tries in these days to do it. Some silly tales are set afloat about the minister—some inventions of addled brains—or else some old stories which were true of eccentric men whom the worms have eaten one hundred years before—all these are appended to the preacher that so he may be made to appear in a ridiculous light, in order, as the devil thinks, that there may be a prejudice against the Word which comes from his lips. Or else it is the denomination or the sect, as it is called, to which the preacher belongs. "Of course, I can get no good from him," says one, "I am a Churchman." Or, says another, "I could not expect that I should be blessed under him—I am an Arminian."

So these things raise prejudices and many make up their minds beforehand that they will not like the preaching—and they come into the

place, as it were, with their ears stuffed full of wool—and you cannot get a word in. They have their hearts already so occupied with certain set notions, that though an angel from Heaven should minister the Truth, it would need to have the earthquake of the jailer before the Truth could enter in. In Lydia's case there was nothing of the sort. She was willing to hear and to give a candid attention to the preacher. Much is gained when this is done.

In the next place, when her heart was opened her desires were awakened. She felt now a wish to understand this matter and if there was anything in what the Apostle was saying about eternal salvation—about complete pardon by the blood of Him who was the “Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world.” She said to herself, “I should like to know about it. I hope it may be true. I wish I may get an interest in these things.” So she listens, anxiously desiring to be impressed by the Word. She has a hunger and a thirst—and these people have this blessing—“They shall be filled.” When we get our people, by God's Grace, as far as hungering and thirsting, then we are very thankful to say this is the opening of the heart. As the oyster when the tide comes up opens its shell, so when the tide of Grace is coming, God often makes men open their hearts, so that now they may get the spiritual supply.

Well, there was a desire awakened, but this was not all. There came another kind of opening—*her understanding was now enlightened*. “Yes,” as the Apostle went from one point to the other point—“yes, I see that God did promise a Prophet like unto Moses. This man Jesus is like Moses, for He is a Prophet mighty in word and deed, which none of our Prophets were, except Moses. Yes,” she said, “yes, Isaiah does speak of Him as being ‘despised and rejected of men.’ That is right and David does say, ‘They pierced My hands and My feet, they parted My garments among them. For My vesture did they cast lots.’ Yes,” she said, “I see it—in the Person of the Man Christ Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I perceive the Messiah who is spoken of in the Law and in the Prophets.”

And then he went on to say that faith in this Christ Jesus, who was fastened to the tree, would take away all sin, because this same Christ Jesus had carried upon His blessed shoulders the transgression of all Believers. “Yes,” she said, “I see that this is a reasonable doctrine, that of Substitution. I can see how God is just, for He does punish sin in Christ. And I can see how He is gracious, too, for He is able now to freely give out of the fullness of His heart, such Divine Grace as poor sinners require.” So her understanding was opened. She clearly viewed the Gospel. She could see in its height and depth and length, just that which her soul wanted.

Then came something else. Now *her affections were excited*. She felt growing within her a love to Him who, though He was equal with God, yet took upon Himself the form of a servant. As she heard Paul describe His sufferings, as she pictured to herself the scene around the Cross, she thought she could hear the death-shriek and mark the flowing blood and she seemed to think, “Yes, I love that Man. I love that God. My heart goes after Him. O that He were mine! Yes,” she said, I love that preaching. Sweet to my ears are those doctrines of mercy.” She began, already, to re-

joyce and, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound," for if they do not yet walk in the light of God's countenance, yet they shall, for so the promise runs.

All this, I think, is included in the term, "Her heart was opened." Her affections were now kindling towards Divine things. And then came faith. She *believed the whole of the record*. She took it to be absolutely true, as Paul had stated, that there had been a Messiah. That He, according to Scripture, was the Son of God and was also the Son of Man. That He had suffered, the Just for the unjust, and that she, believing in Him, had her sins forgiven. Faith came now through hearing. She took God at His Word. She simply and humbly put her soul at the feet of that Cross where the blood was dropping, believing that as it fell from Heaven, it pleaded for *her*. And as it dropped on her it gave her peace with God through Jesus Christ.

Faith being given, *all the Graces followed*. Now she hated her sins, she repented. Now she loved righteousness, she sought after holiness. Now she had a bright hope of the many mansions in the Father's house! Now she began to run with holy and happy feeling in the ways of obedience to Christ's commands and she became, not merely a Believer in the elements of Christianity, but she went on towards perfection, adding to her faith courage, and to her courage, experience, and to her experience, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, love. Onward she went in the way of her God. All this the Master did by opening her heart to attend to the things that were spoken of by Paul.

And now, Beloved, the practical lesson is that we must pray for those who are round about us, and the many hopeful ones, that God would make them like Lydia. Let us put up this petition for our sons and daughters, that the God who has put them in the way of the means and, to a degree, has prepared their minds for the reception of the Truth of God, would be pleased to work effectually and savingly and bring them to accept the Savior.

As for those in whom God is thus working, O that the Word I speak this morning might lead them to lay hold on Jesus! Remember, there is nothing for *you* to do—you have but to trust Jesus and you are saved. And to do this, as your warrant, there are no good works required, nor good feelings, nor deep experiences, either. You have, just as you are, to believe that Christ can save you and trust yourself to Him as the Savior and He will save you! He will save you NOW with a great, present and complete salvation. The Lord help you to trust in Him and He shall have the praise. Amen.

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# LYDIA, THE FIRST EUROPEAN CONVERT NO. 2222

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,  
SEPTEMBER 20, 1891,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple, from the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.”*

**Acts 16:14.**

We may laudably exercise curiosity with regard to the first proclamation of the Gospel in our own quarter of the globe. We are happy that history so accurately tells us, by the pen of Luke, when first the Gospel was preached in Europe and by whom, and who was the first convert brought by that preaching to the Savior's feet. I half envy Lydia that she should be the leader of the European band! But I feel right glad that a woman led the van and that her household followed so closely in the rear.

God has made great use of women and greatly honored them in the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Holy women ministered to our Lord when He was upon the earth and since that time much sacred work has been done by their patient hands. Man and woman fell together—together they must rise! After the Resurrection, it was a *woman* who was first commissioned to carry the glad tidings of the risen Christ. And in Europe, where woman was, in future days, to be set free from many of the trammels of the East, it seems fitting that a woman should be the first Believer. Not only, however, was Lydia a sort of first-fruit for Europe, but she probably also became a witness in her own city of Thyatira, in Asia. We do not know how the Gospel was introduced into that city, but we are informed of the existence of a Church there by the message of the ascended Christ through His servant, John, to “the angel of the Church in Thyatira.” Very likely Lydia became the herald of the Gospel in her native place. Let the women who know the Truth of God proclaim it, for why should their influence be lost? “The Lord gives the word; the women that publish the tidings are a great host.” Woman can be as powerful for evil as for good—we see it in this very Church of Thyatira, where the woman Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess, sought to seduce many from the Truth. Seeing, then, that the devil employs women in his service, let those women whom God has called, by His Grace, be doubly earnest in seeking to prevent or undo the mischief that others of their sex are working. If not called to public service, all have the home-sphere wherein they can shed forth the aroma of a godly life and testimony.

If the Gospel does not influence our homes, it is little likely to make headway among the community. God has made family piety to be, as it

were, a sort of trademark on religion in Europe, for the very first convert brings with her all her family! Her household believed and were baptized with her. You shall notice in Europe, though I do not mean to say that it is not the same anywhere else, that true godliness has always flourished in proportion as family religion has been observed. They hang a bell in a steeple and they tell us that it is our duty to go every morning and every evening into the steeple house, there to join in prayer. But we reply that our own house is better for many reasons—at any rate, it will not engender superstition for us to pray *there*. Gather your children together and offer prayer and supplication to God in your own home!

“But there is no priest.” Then there ought to be! Every man should be a priest in his own household and, in the absence of a godly father, the mother should lead the devotions! Every house should be the House of God and there should be a Church in every house. And when this is the case, it will be the greatest barrier against priestcraft and the idolatry of holy places. Family prayer and the pulpit are the bulwarks of Protestantism! Depend upon it, when family piety goes down, the life of godliness will become very low. In Europe, at any rate, seeing that the Christian faith began with a converted household, we ought to seek after the conversion of all our families and to maintain within our houses the good and holy practice of family worship.

Lydia, then, is the first European convert, and we will review her history as far as we have it in Holy Writ. Towards her conversion, four things co-operated, upon which we will speak briefly. First, *the working of Providence*. Secondly, *the working of Lydia, herself*. Thirdly, *the working of Paul*. And fourthly, *the working of the Holy Spirit*.

I. First, notice THE WORKING OF PROVIDENCE. When I was in Amsterdam, I visited the works of a diamond-cutter where I saw many large wheels and much powerful machinery at work. And I must confess that it seemed very odd that all that great array of apparatus should be brought to bear upon a tiny bit of crystal which looked like a fragment of glass. Was that diamond worth so much that a whole factory should be set to work to cut its facets and cause it to sparkle? So the diamond-cutter believed. Within that small space lay a gem which was thought worthy of all this care and labor. That diamond may be, at this time, glistening upon the finger or brow of royalty! Now, when I look abroad upon Providence, it seems preposterous to believe that kingdoms, dynasties and great events should all be co-operating and working together for the accomplishment of the Divine purpose in the salvation of God’s people. But they *are* so working! It might have seemed preposterous, but it was not so, that these great wheels should all be working for the cutting of a single diamond. And it is not preposterous, however it may seem, to say that all the events of Providence are being ordered by God to effect the salvation of His own people, the perfecting of the precious jewels which are to adorn the crown of Christ forever and ever!

In the case before us, the working of God’s Providence is seen, first of all, *in bringing Paul to Philippi*. Lydia is there. I do not know how long she had been there, nor exactly what brought her there, but there she is, selling her purple, her Turkey red cloth. Paul must go there, too, but he does

not want to—he has not, indeed, had any desire to go there. He still has a kind of prejudice hanging about him, so that, though he is willing to preach to the Gentiles, he scarcely likes to go out of Asia among those Gentiles or the Gentiles over in Europe. He wants to preach the word in Asia. Very singularly, the Spirit suffers him not, and he seems to have a cold hand laid on him to stop him when his heart is warmest. He is gagged. He cannot speak. “Then I will go into Bithynia,” he says, but when he starts on the journey, he is distinctly told that there is no work for him to do there. He must not speak for his Master in that region, at least not yet—“the Spirit suffered him not.” He feels himself to be a silenced man. What is he to do? He gets down to Troas on the verge of the sea and there comes to him the vision of a man of Macedonia who begged him, saying, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us.” He infers that he must go across to Macedonia. A ship is ready for him—he has a free course, a favorable passage—and he soon arrives at Philippi. God brings Paul to the spot where Lydia was, in this strange and singular manner!

But the working of Providence was quite as much manifested *in bringing Lydia there*, for Lydia was not originally at Philippi. She was a seller of purple, of Thyatira. Thyatira was a city famous for its dyers. They made a peculiar purple which was much prized by the Romans. Lydia appears to have carried on this business. She was either a widow, or perhaps had had no husband, though she may have gathered a household of servants about her. She comes over to Philippi across the sea. I think I see them bringing the great rolls of red cloth up the hill, that she may sell at Philippi the cloth which she has made and dyed at Thyatira. Why does she come just at this season? Why does she come just when Paul is coming? Why does she come to Philippi? Why not to Neapolis? Why not press on to Athens? Why not sell her cloth over at Corinth? Whatever reason she might have given for her choice, there was one cause of which she was ignorant, which shaped her action and brought her to Philippi at that time!

God had a surprise in store for her. She and Paul have to meet. It does not matter what their will is—their wills shall be so moved and actuated by the Providence of God that they shall cross each other’s path—and Paul shall preach the Gospel to Lydia. I know it never entered into Lydia’s heart, when she left Thyatira with her purple bales, that she was going to find Jesus Christ over at Philippi. Neither did Paul guess, when he saw, in a vision, a man of Macedonia and heard him say, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us,” that the first person he would have to help would not be a man of Macedonia at all, but a woman of Thyatira and that the congregation he should preach to would be just a handful of women gathered by the side of the little stream that runs through Philippi! Neither Paul nor Lydia knew what God was about to do, but God knew! He understands the end from the beginning and times His acts of Providence to meet our deepest needs in the wisest way—

***“His wisdom is sublime,  
His heart profoundly kind.  
God never is before His time,  
And never is behind.”***

What an odd thing it seemed that this woman should be a woman of Thyatira in Asia—and Paul must not go and preach in Asia and yet, when he comes to Macedonia, the first person who hears him is a woman of Asia! Why, you and I would have said, “If the woman belongs to Thyatira, let her stay at home and let Paul go there, that is the shortest cut.” Not so. The woman of Thyatira must go to Philippi and Paul must go to Philippi, too. This is God’s plan and if we knew all the circumstances as God knows them, we would doubtless admire the wisdom of it. Perhaps the very peculiarity of the circumstances made Paul more alert to seize the opportunity at Philippi than he would have been had he gone on to Thyatira. Perhaps the isolation of the strange city made Lydia yearn more after spiritual things. God can answer a dozen ends by one act!

One of our evangelists tells of a man who was converted in a small Irish town and it was afterwards discovered that he and the preacher who led him to Christ, resided but a few hundred yards from each other in London! They had never met in this great city, where neighbors are strangers to each other, nor was it likely that they ever would have been brought into contact with one another here, for the man, who was a commercial traveler, was too careless to ever attend a place of worship in London. But to sell his goods, he went to Ireland, where, also, went the evangelist to preach the Gospel! And being somewhat at a loss to know what to do with his time, he no sooner saw the name of a preacher from London announced than he determined to attend the service—and there he met with Christ! We can see how natural this was in the case of which we know all the particulars—and it was doubtless as well arranged in the case of Lydia and Paul.

Now, I should not wonder tonight if there are a number of Providences that have worked together to bring some of my hearers into their places at this time. What brought *you* to London, Friend? It was not your intention to be in this city. Coming to London, what brought you to this part of it? What led you to be at this service? And why was it that you did not come on one of the Sundays when the preacher would have been here if he could, but could not be here by reason of his weakness? It may be that only from these lips can the Word of God come to you—and only tonight—and you must come to this place! Perhaps there is someone who preaches the Gospel much better in the town where you live. Or, perhaps, you have had opportunities of hearing the same preachers near your own door, and you did not avail yourself of them. And yet God has brought you here. I wish we watched Providences more. “Who is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.” If the Lord should meet with you and convert you tonight, I will guarantee you that you will be a believer in Providence, and say, “Yes, God guided my steps. He directed my path and He brought me to the spot where Jesus met with me and opened my heart that I might receive the Gospel of His Grace.”

Be of good courage, you ministers of the Gospel! Providence is always working with you while you are working for God. I have often admired the language of Mohammed, when, in the battle of Ohod, he said to his followers, pointing to their foes, “Charge them! I can hear the wings of the

angels as they hasten to our help.” That was a delusion on his part, for he and his men were badly beaten, but it is no delusion in the case of the servants of Christ! We *can* hear the wings of the angels! We may hear the grinding of the great wheels of Providence as they revolve for the help of the preacher of the Gospel. Everything is with us when we are with God. Who can be against us? The stars in their courses fight for the servants of God! And all things, great and small, shall bow before the feet of Him who trod the waves of the Sea of Galilee and still is Master of all things and rules all things to the accomplishment of His Divine purposes!

So much, then, for the working of Providence.

**II.** The next thing is, THE WORKING OF LYDIA. God’s intention is that Lydia shall be saved. Yet, you know, no woman was ever saved against her will. God makes us willing in the day of His power and it is the way of His Grace not to violate the will, but sweetly to overcome it. Never will there be *anybody* dragged to Heaven by the ears—depend upon that! We shall go there with all our hearts and all our desires. What, then, was Lydia doing?

Having, by God’s Grace, been made willing, the first thing was that *she kept the Sabbath*. She was a proselyte and she kept the seventh day. She was away from Thyatira and nobody would know what she would do, yet she observed the Lord’s-Day carefully. She was abroad when she was at Philippi, but she had not left God behind her. I have known some English people, when they once reached the Continent, go rattling along, Sundays and weekdays, as if God did not live on the Continent and, as if at home they only observed the Sabbath because they happened to be in England, which is very probably the case with a good many. When they get away, they say, “When you are at Rome, you must do as Rome does.” And so they take their pleasure on God’s day. It was not so with Lydia. There was no selling of purple that day—she regarded the Sabbath. Oh, I would to God that everyone would regard the Sabbath! May God grant that it may never be taken away from us! There is a plot now to make some of you work all the seven days of the week—and you will not get any more pay for seven days than you get for six. Stand out against it and preserve your right to rest upon the Lord’s Day! The observance of one day in seven as a day of rest materially helps towards the conversion of men because then they are inclined to *think*. They have the opportunity to hear and, if they choose to avail themselves of it, the probabilities are that God will bless the hearing and they will be saved!

Now, notice next that not only did Lydia observe the Sabbath, but *she went up to the place of worship*. It was not a very fine place. I do not suppose there was any building. It may have been a little temporary oratory put up by the river side, but very probably it was just on the bank of the river that they met together. It does not appear that there were any men, but only a few women. They only held a Prayer Meeting—“where prayer was known to be made.” But Lydia did not stay away from the gathering. She might easily have excused herself after her long journey and the wearying work of setting up a new establishment, but her heart was in this matter and so she found it no drudgery to meet where prayer was offered. She did not say “I can read a sermon at home,” or, “I can read in the Book

of the Law indoors.” She wished to be where God’s people were, however few, or however poor they might be. She did not go to the gorgeous heathen temple at Philippi, but she sought out the few faithful ones that met to worship the true God.

Now, dear Friends, do the same! You that are not converted, still attend the means of Grace and do not go to a place simply because it is a fine building, or because there is a crowd, but go where they are truly worshipping God in spirit and in truth. If they should happen to be very few and very poor, yet go with them, for in so doing you are in the way of blessing. I think you will yet have to say, “Being in the way, God met with me.” If it is what some call, “only a Prayer Meeting,” you will do well to go. Some of the best blessings that men have ever gained have been received at Prayer Meetings. If we would meet with God, let us seek Him diligently, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.” Though you cannot save yourself, or open your own heart, you can at least do what Lydia did—observe the Sabbath and gather together with God’s people.

Lydia, being there with the assembly, when Paul began to speak, we find that *she attended to the things that were spoken*, which is another thing that we can do. It is very ill when people come up to the House of God and do not attend. I have never had to complain of people not attending in this house since the day I first preached in it, but I have been in places of worship where there seemed to be anything but attention. How can it be expected that there will be a blessing when the pew becomes a place to sleep, or when the mind is thinking about the farm, or in the kitchen, or in the shop, forgetting altogether the Gospel which is being preached to the outward ear? If you want a blessing, attend with all your might to the Word of God that is preached—and of that we will speak more, by-and-by.

So far we have spoken upon the working of Providence and the working of Lydia.

**III.** Now, next, THE WORKING OF PAUL, for this, too, was necessary. In order to the conversion of men, it is necessary that the person who aims at their conversion should work as if it all depended upon him, though he knows that he cannot accomplish the work! We are to seek to win souls with as much earnestness, prudence and zeal, as if everything depended upon ourselves—and then we are to leave all with God, knowing that none but the Lord can save a single soul.

Now, notice, Paul, wishing for converts, is *judicious in the choice of the place* where he will go to look after them. He goes to the spot where there should be a synagogue. He thinks that where people have a desire to pray, there he will find the kind of people who will be ready to hear the Word. So he selects devout people, devout worshippers of the one God, that he may go and speak to them about Christ. It is sometimes our plain duty to publish the Word from the housetop to the careless crowd, but I think you will generally find that more success comes when those on whose hearts the Spirit of God has already begun to work, are sought out and instructed. When Christ sent out His disciples on their first journey, He told them, when they entered a town, to, “Enquire who in it is worthy; and

there abide till you go thence,” evidently showing that even among those who do not know the Truth of God, there are some whose hearts are prepared to receive it, who are of a devout spirit and in that sense are worthy.

These are the people who should first be sought after. In the same limited sense was Cornelius, to whom Peter was sent, worthy to hear the glad tidings of great joy. His reverent spirit was well pleasing to God, for we read, “Your prayer is heard and your alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.” We must not, of course, think that these things give any *claim* to salvation, but rather that they are the expression of hearts prepared to receive the message of salvation, seeking the Lord, “if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him.” One of our greatest difficulties in these days is that so many have lost all reverence for authority of any kind, even God’s—having risen against human despotism, they also foolishly try to break God’s bands asunder! We are cast back on the infinite power of God when we come to deal with such people, but when we meet with others who are willing to listen and pray, we know that God has already begun to work. Now, dear Worker, choose the person who is evidently pointed out to you by God’s gracious Providence. Choose judiciously and try to speak with those with whom you may hopefully speak—and trust that God will bless the Word.

When Paul goes down to the river, you notice that he is very *judicious as to his manner* of introducing his subject. He did not preach at all. He found only a few women—and to stand up and preach to them, as he did to the crowds at Corinth, or at Athens—might have seemed absurd. But we read this—“We sat down and spoke unto the women which resorted there.” He took his seat on the river’s bank where they were all sitting still at prayer. And he began just to have a talk. A sermon would have been out of place, but a talk was the right sort of thing. So he talked the Gospel into them. Now, be careful of the way in which you go to work with people, for much of the result must depend upon that. Some people can be preached right away *from* Christ, for the moment you begin to preach they say, “Oh, thank you, I do not need any of your sermon!” Perhaps you could slip a word in edgewise. Just drop a seed in a crack, or leave a word with them, just one word. Say at once, “If you do not need any preaching, I do not need to preach to you. I am not so fond of preaching as all that, but I read a very curious story in the newspapers the other day!” And then tell the story and wrap the Gospel up in it. If they do not want pills, do not give them pills. Give them a bit of sugar! They will take the sugar and when they get it, there will be a pill inside. I mention this because we may miss opportunities of doing good through not being wide awake. “Be you wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” Paul, therefore, just sat down and had a friendly talk with the women who were there.

But whether Paul preached, or whether Paul talked, it was all the same—he was *judicious as to the matter* of his discourse. He had but one subject and that was Christ—the Christ who had met him on the way to Damascus and changed his heart—the Christ who was still able to save! His Subject was the Christ who bled upon the Cross to bring men to God and cleanse them in His blood. The Christ in Heaven, interceding for sinners. The Christ waiting to be gracious. Paul would not end his talk with-

out saying, "Trust Him. Trust Him. He that believes in Him has everlasting life." So, whether he preached or whether he talked, it was the same story of Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. That is how Paul worked. He might have acted very differently. If his heart had not been all aflame for Jesus, he would very likely not have spoken at all, or if he had, it would have been a commonplace remark about the weather.

He might have been eager to learn the method by which the beautiful purple dye was obtained and not have remembered that Gospel message, written long ago by Isaiah, which would come with special force to the hearts of his hearers—"Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." He might have been so interested in his enquiries about Thyatira as to forget to speak of the way to the City of Light. A dozen subjects might have claimed his attention if his heart had not been set upon one Subject! He could have spoken of his journeys and even of his plans without actually preaching Christ to them. He might have spoken about the Gospel, as I fear we often do, and not have spoken the Gospel, itself.

Some sermons which I have heard, though faultlessly orthodox, have contained nothing that could convert anybody—for there has been nothing to touch the conscience or heart. Others, though very clever and profound, have had no possible bearing on the needs of the hearers and so it was little wonder that they were without result. But I am sure Paul's talk would aim straight at the center of the target—it was evidently addressed to the heart, for we are told that Lydia heard it with the heart. After all, it is not our most orderly discourses, nor our most apt illustrations which bring people to Christ—but some little sentence which is slipped in unawares, or some burning word which comes straight out of our own heart's experience. There would be sure to be many such that day in that earnest simple talk by the side of the river. Let us multiply such conversations if we would win more Lydias for the our Master's Church!

**IV.** But, now, fourthly—and here is the main point—let us notice THE WORKING OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD. Providence brings Paul and Lydia together. Lydia comes there because she observes the Sabbath and loves the place of worship. Paul comes there because he loves to win souls and, like his Master, is on the watch for stray sheep. But it would have been a poor meeting for them if the Spirit of God had not *also* been there! So we next read of Lydia, "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." It is not amazing that the Lord can open a human heart, for He who made the lock knows well what key will fit it!

What means He made use of in the case of Lydia, I do not know, but I will tell you what might have happened. Perhaps she had lost her husband—many a woman's heart has been opened by that great gash. The joy of her soul has been taken away and she has turned to God. Perhaps her husband was spared her, but she had lost a child. Oh, how many a babe has been sent here on purpose to entice its mother to the skies! A lamb taken away that the sheep might follow the Shepherd! Perhaps she had had bad trade—the price of purple may have fallen. She may have been half afraid she would fail in business. I have known such trouble open

some people's hearts. Perhaps she had had prosperity. Possibly the purple had gone *up* in price. I have known some so impressed with God's temporal blessings that they have been ready to think of Him and turn to Him. I do not know. I cannot guess and I have no right to guess what it was.

But I know that God has very wonderful plows with which He breaks up the hard soil of human hearts. When I have been through the Britannia Iron Works, at Bedford, I have wondered at the strange clod-crushers, clod-breakers and plows made there by the Messrs. Howard—and God has some marvelous machines in His Providence for turning up the soil of our hearts. I cannot tell what He has done to you, dear Friend, but I trust that whatever has happened has been opening the soil so that the Good Seed may drop in. It was the Spirit of God who did it, whatever the instrument may have been, and Lydia's heart was "opened." Opened to what? To attend. "She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."

So, first, her heart was opened *to listen very intently*. She wanted to catch every word. She did as some of you do, put her hand to her ear, for fear she should not hear all that was spoken. There are many ways of listening. Some people listen with both their ears, allowing it to go in one ear and out the other, like that wit, who, when he was being seriously spoken to, yet seemed very inattentive. At last wearied, the friend who was discoursing, said, "I am afraid it is not doing you much good." "No," came the reply, "but I think it will do this gentleman some good," pointing to one who sat beside him, "for as it has gone in at this side, it has gone out at the other." Oh, how I wish that you had only one ear, so that the Truth of God you hear could never get out after it had once got in! Well did the Lord speak through Isaiah the Prophet unto the people, "Hearken *diligently* unto me and eat that which is good." Many people can listen for an hour or two to a scientific lecture, or a political speech, without feeling in the least weary. They can even go to the theater and sit there a whole evening without dreaming of being tired! Yet they complain if the sermon is a minute beyond the appointed time! They seem to endure the preaching as a sort of penance, scarcely hearing the words, or, at least, never imagining that the message can have any application to their own case.

Lydia's heart was so opened "that she attended," that is, she listened to the Word of Salvation until she began *to desire it*. It is always a pleasure to entertain guests who relish the food placed before them and it is a great joy to preach to those who are eagerly hungering after the Truth of God. But how heart-breaking a task it is to keep continually praising the pearl of great price to those who know not its value, nor desire its beauty! Daniel was a man, "greatly beloved"—the Hebrew word means, "a man of desires." He was not one of your conceited, self-satisfied individuals. He longed and yearned for better things than he had yet attained and, therefore, was, "greatly beloved." God loves people to thirst after Him and to desire to know His love and power. Let us explain the Gospel as we may, if there is no desire in the heart, our most plain messages are lost! A man said, about something he wished to make clear, "Why, it is as plain as A B C!" "Yes," said a third party, "but the man you are talking to is D E F." So, some of our hearers seem to turn away from the Word of God. But when a

person says, "I need to find salvation. I need to get Christ this very day and I am going to listen with the determination that I will find out the way of salvation," surely, if the things spoken are the same things that Paul spoke of, few in that condition will go out of the house without finding salvation! Lydia's heart was opened to attend to the Gospel, that is, to *desire it*.

But, next, her heart was opened *to understand it*. It is amazing how little, even well-educated people sometimes understand of the Gospel when it is preached in the simplest manner. One is constantly being astounded by the misapprehensions that persons have as to the way of salvation. But Lydia had grasped the Truth. "Thanks be to God," she said, "I see it! Jesus Christ suffered in our place and we, by an act of faith, accept Him as our Substitute, and we are saved thereby. I have it! I never saw it before. I read about a Paschal lamb and the sprinkling of the blood, and the passing over of the houses where the blood was sprinkled. I could not quite make it out. Now I see! If the blood is sprinkled upon me, God will pass over me, according to His Word, 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you.'" She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul, so as to understand them.

But more than that. Her heart was so opened that she attended to the Gospel so as *to accept it*. "Ah," she said, "now I understand it, I will have it. Christ for me! Christ for me! That blessed Substitute for sinners! Is that all I have to do, simply to trust Him? Then I will trust Him. Sink or swim, I will cast myself upon Him right now." She did so then and there! There was no hesitating. She believed what Paul said—that Jesus was the Son of God, the appointed Propitiation for sin and that whoever believed in Him should, then and there, be justified—and she did believe in Him—and she was justified, as you will be, my Friend, if you will believe in Him at this moment! You, too, shall have immediate salvation, my dear Sister sitting yonder, if you will come, like this Lydia of old, and just take Christ to be yours and trust Him now! She attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul, so that she accepted Christ.

Having done that, she went further—her heart was so won, that she was, by the Spirit, led *to obey the Word and confess her faith*. Paul told her that the Gospel was this—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." He said to her, "My commission is, 'Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.'" Perhaps she said, "But why must I be baptized?" He said, "As a testimony of your *obedience* to Christ, whom you take to be your Master and your Lord. And as a type of your being one with Him in His burial, you are to be buried in water as He was buried in the tomb of Joseph. And you are to be raised up out of the water even as He rose again from the dead. This act is to be a token and type to you of your oneness with Him in His death and burial and resurrection."

What did Lydia say? Did she say, "Well, I think I must wait a little while—the water is cold"? Did she say, "I think I must ask about it. I must consider it"? No, not at all. Paul tells her that this is Christ's ordinance and she at once replies, "Here I am, Paul, let me be baptized and my servants, too, and all who belong to my household, for they, also, believe in

Jesus Christ! Let us have the Baptism at once.” Then and there, “she was baptized, and her household.” She did at once obey the heavenly message and she became a baptized Believer. She was not ashamed to confess Christ! She had not known Him long, but what she did know of Him was so blessed and joyous to her soul that she would have sung, if she had known the hymn—

***“Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,  
I’ll follow where He goes!  
‘Hinder me not,’ shall be my cry,  
Though earth and Hell oppose.”***

You can imagine her saying, “Did He go down into the Jordan and say, ‘Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness’? Then I will go where He leads the way and be obedient to Him and say to all the world, ‘I, too, am a follower of the Crucified Christ.’”

Now, lastly, after Lydia was baptized, *she became an enthusiastic Christian*. She said to Paul, “You must come home with me. I know you have not anywhere to go. Come along. And there is your friend, Silas. I have plenty of room for him and Timothy, too, and also Luke. We can make room for the four of you among the purple bales, or somewhere, but, at any rate, I have house-room for you four and I have heart-room for 40,000 of you! I wish I could take in the whole Church of God.” Dear good woman that she was, she felt that she could not do too much for the men who had been made a blessing to her, for she regarded what she did to them as done to their Lord and Master! They might have said, “No, really, we cannot trouble you. You have the household. You have all this business to look after.” “Yes,” she would answer, “I know that. It is very kind of you to excuse yourselves, but you must come.”

“No,” Paul might urge, “my dear good woman, I am going to find some tent-makers and make tents with them. We will find a lodging where we find work.” “Ah!” she would say, “but I mean to have you. You must come to my home.” “She constrained us.” She would probably put it thus, “Now, I shall not think that you fully believe in me if you do not come home with me. Come, you baptized me, and by that very act you professed that you considered that I was a true Believer. If you really believe it, come and stay in my house as long as you like and I will make you as comfortable as ever I can.”

So, at last, Paul yields to her constraint and goes to her home. How glad they would all be, and what praise to Christ would rise from that household! I hope that the generous spirit which glowed in the heart of the first convert in Europe will always continue among the converts of Europe till the last day! I trust that when they are called not merely to entertain God’s ministers, but to help all God’s people of every sort, they may be ready and willing to do it for Christ’s sake, for love shall fill them with a holy hospitality and an earnest desire to bless the children of God. Love one another, Brothers and Sisters, and do good to one another, as you have opportunity—for so will you be worthy followers of Lydia, the first European convert, whose heart the Lord opened!

The Lord open your hearts, for His name’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 16.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—531, 560, 589.**

**MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:**

The following letter, written by MR. SPURGEON, was read at the Tabernacle last Lord’s-Day, September 13, 1891. There has been no material alteration in the dear sufferer’s condition since he wrote this note—

Westwood, Beulah Hill,  
Upper Norwood,  
September 13, 1891.

“DEAR FRIENDS—I cannot write much; but I cannot withhold my heart and my pen from saying, ‘O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together!’ This week has, by its fine weather, set me free from a three months’ captivity. Those Believers of all denominations who so lovingly prayed for me will now help me to praise the Lord. Verily, the living God hears prayer!

“I fear my doctors would have a mournful tale to tell of my disease and from inward consciousness I must agree with them, but I *feel* better, and I get into the open air and, therefore, I hope my face is turned toward recovery. Reading, writing, thinking, etc., are not yet easy to me. I am forced to vegetate. I fear it will be long before I can be at my beloved work.

“I send my hearty love to you all, and my humble gratitude to that great army of praying people who have been heard of the Lord in their cries for the prolongation of my life. May we believe more, pray more and, therefore, receive more!

“Yours, in bonds of true affection,  
**C. H. SPURGEON.”**

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

# CONVERSION AND CHARACTER

## NO. 3372

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1913.

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

*“Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors opened, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do yourself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas. And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house. And they spoke unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”*  
*Acts 16:24-34.*

THE work of God at Philippi went on very quietly and successfully in the hands of Paul and Silas. It was the commencement of the Gospel in Europe and very auspicious were its circumstances. The good work was intimately connected with Prayer Meetings, which for this reason should always wear a charm for Europeans.

Godly women met together for devotion. Paul spoke to them and households were converted and baptized. The work went on delightfully, but the devil, as usual, must put in his foot! To any who judged according to the sight of the eyes, it must have seemed a most unfortunate circumstance that a poor woman having a spirit of divination came in Paul’s way. It was a sad ruffling of the gentle stream of prosperity when, on account of his casting the demon out of her, the Apostle and his companion were dragged by the mob before the magistrates, shamefully beaten and thrown into prison. Now the preacher’s mouth would be stopped, as far as the people of Philippi outside the jail gates were concerned. No more of those delightful Prayer Meetings and Bible readings and opening

up of the Scriptures. Surely there was cause for the deepest regret. It might have appeared so, but like a great many other incidents connected with Christian work, the matter could not be judged by the outward appearance, for the Lord had a secret and blessed design which was being answered by the apparent disaster! Servants of Jesus Christ, never be discouraged when you are opposed, but when things run counter to your wishes, expect that the Lord has provided some better thing for you! He is driving you away from shallow waters and bringing you into deeper seas where your nets shall bring you larger draughts. Paul and Silas must go to prison because a chosen person was to be converted in the prison who could not otherwise be reached!

No, it was not only one person who was to be saved, but Eternal Love had fixed its eyes upon a whole house! The members of this elect family could by no other means be brought to Christ but through Paul and Silas being cast into prison! And, therefore, into prison they must go—to do more by night in their chains than they could have done by day if they had been free—and to bring to Christ some that would be more illustrious trophies of the Grace of God than any they could have gathered had they been preaching in the streets of Philippi! God knows where it is best for His servants to be and how it is best for them to be! If He foresees that they will do more good with their backs scarred than they would have done if they had escaped the flagellation, then their bodies must bear the marks of the Lord Jesus and they must rejoice to have it so! Brothers and Sisters, we do not like the sick bed—we would not choose aching limbs—especially those of us who are of an active disposition and would be perpetually telling out the love of Christ! And yet in our temporary imprisonment we have seen the Lord's wisdom and have had to look back with thankfulness upon it. Oh, children of God, your Father knows best! Leave everything in His hands and be at peace, for all is well. May the Holy Spirit work quietness of heart in you.

Our subject is the jailer of Philippi and, first, we shall say a little as to *what kind of man he was before conversion*. Secondly, we shall consider *what was the occasion of his conversion*. And then, thirdly, we will notice *what sort of convert he made* when the Grace of God brought him to Jesus' feet.

First, then—

**I. WHAT SORT OF MAN WAS THIS JAILER BEFORE HIS CONVERSION?** He is a remarkable instance of the power of Divine Grace, but he ought not to be spoken of as a notably great transgressor, for of this there is no trace, whatever! He was, like ourselves, full of sin and iniquity, but we find no record of anything especially bad about him. I see no reason why Mr. Wesley should so severely stigmatize him as he does in his lines—

***“What but the power which wakes the dead***

**Could reach a stubborn jailer's heart,  
In cruelty and rapine bred,  
Who took the ancient murderer's part?  
Could make a hardened ruffian feel,  
And shake him over the mouth of Hell?"**

On the contrary, we shall be able to show that the jailer's salvation is an instance of the Grace of God saving one of an admirable moral character, one in whom there were most commendable points—a man of such regularity and decision that he was not so much saved from vice as from self-righteousness! I take it, from the little we know of him, that he was a fine specimen of stern Roman discipline—a *man full of respect for those in authority and prompt in obedience to orders*. He was a jailer and he had to act, not on his own responsibility, but on the command of others, and this he scrupulously did. When we read, “having received *such a charge*,” we infer that he carefully followed the tenor of his orders and attentively observed the weight which the magistrates threw into them. He, therefore, thrust the Apostle and his friend into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks. You can see that he was thorough-going in obedience to authority, for afterwards, although he might have liked to retain the Apostle and Silas in his house, yet, when the magistrates sent him word, he spoke to his beloved guests as an official was bound to do, waiving, in some respects, the friend, and tersely saying, “The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now, therefore, depart and go in peace.” It strikes me that he was an old soldier—a legionary who had fought and done rough work in his younger days and then settled down, appointed on account of his good behavior to the important post of governor of the jail of Philippi. With his family about him, he occupied himself in attending to his duties as a jailer and carried them out with the strictest regularity. For this he is to be commended—for it is expected of men that they be found faithful.

I say, then, that I regard him as an instance of a man whose mind was molded according to the Roman type, a person subservient to discipline and strict in obedience to rule. I grant that there was a little harshness about his fulfilling the orders concerning Paul and Silas, for he seems to have “*thrust*” them into the dungeon with some violence. But we cannot object to their being placed in the inner prison, or to their feet being made fast in the stocks, because his orders were that he should keep them safely—and he was only doing his best to secure this. He was not responsible for the order of the magistrates and when the prisoners were brought to him fresh from the lictor's rods with a strict charge, what was he to do but to obey it to the letter? He did so and does not deserve to be called a ruffian for it. His ruling idea was that he was a servant of the government and bound to carry out his instructions—and was he not

right? Such men are very necessary in government employ—I cannot tell how public business could be done without them.

Notice that before he went to bed he saw that the prison doors were all fastened and the lights put out. Even Roman jailers were open to bribes and though lights had to be extinguished at a certain hour of the night, it was still possible to burn your lamp if you placed a little oil upon the jailer's palm. But there was no lamp in the jail of Philippi, for when the keeper, himself, needed a light, he had to call for it. All lamps were out at the proper time and all chains were on every person—for the narrative says that, by the earthquake, "Every man's chains were loosed," which they could not be if they were already unbound. The inmates were all secured in their cells and the whole building was in due order. This shows that the keeper of the prison attended to his business thoroughly, nothing turning him aside from the most correct observance of his instructions.

Well, all being shut up, he has gone to bed and is fast asleep, as he should be, in the middle of the night, so as to be fit for *his morning's work*. But what happens?—

***"Paul and Silas, in their prison,  
Sang of Christ, the Lord arisen!  
And an earthquake's arm of might  
Broke their dungeon gates at night."***

See how every timber in the house quivers and he awakes out of his sleep! What is his first thought? To my mind, it is fine to observe that he has no terror for himself or family, but at once rushes from his room to look to the prison below. Seeing the prison doors open, he was alarmed. He does not seem to have been in any alarm about his wife and his family, though the earthquake must have shaken the rooms in which they were, but his one concern was his prison and its contents. Under the seal and authority of the Roman Emperor, he was bound to keep the prisoners safe—and when he wakes, his first thought concerns his duty. I wish that all Christians were as faithful in their offices as this man! When as yet he was unenlightened, he was *faithful to those who employed him*. It is a grand thing when a man, placed in an office of responsibility, has his work so much upon his mind that if he starts up in the middle of the night and finds the floor under him reeling with an earthquake, the main thing he thinks about is the duty which he has engaged to fulfill. It ought to be so with Christian servants, with Christian trustees, managers and confidential clerks—and indeed with all Christian men and women placed in offices of trust! Your chief concern should be to be found faithful—it was so with the jailer.

Now notice, as he finds the prison doors open, this stern Roman *fears that he shall be disgraced*, for he feels sure that the prisoners must have fled. Naturally they would escape when the doors were open and as he

could not confront the charge of unfaithfulness in his office, he drew his sword in haste and would have killed himself. For this proposed suicide he is to be most severely censured, but still note the stern Brutus-like fidelity of the man. He cannot endure the charge of having allowed his prisoners to escape, but would rather kill himself. Is it not singular that this Philippi was the place where Cassius committed suicide? Where Brutus also slew himself? Here this man would have added another name to these who laid violent hands upon themselves—and all because he feared that he would lose his character? He preferred death to dishonor. All these things show that he was a man sternly upright and determined to perform his duty. I am always doubly glad when such men are saved, because it does not often happen—such persons too often wrap themselves up in the sense of having walked uprightly towards their fellow men. And because after the lapse of many years, they stand high in public esteem and everybody says the country never had better servants, they are apt to forget their Master in Heaven and their obligations to their Lord—apt to have a blind eye towards their own shortcomings and to be little inclined to sit as little children at the feet of Jesus, unless some wondrous deed of Divine Grace is worked upon them! Hence we admire the Grace of God which brought such a man trembling to the Apostle's feet!

The jailer was *a person of few words*. He was not a great talker, but a prompt actor. We only know three things that he said. First, he called for a light. And next he cried, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" a terse, laconic question—respectful, earnest, to the point, having not a word too much or too little in it. His other speech to Paul was of the same order when he said, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now, therefore, depart and go in peace." You would not expect a jailer to use very flowery language—he was accustomed to measure his syllables when he spoke to his prisoners, never uttering a word beyond the statute in that case made and provided. Thus he had acquired a hard, businesslike style of speech. Men of such a type are often cold as so many statues. We find it hard to warm their hearts and, therefore, we bless the Grace of God which made this man's heart to burn within him and snapped the bonds of cold routine, so that, after his conversion, he feasted the ministers of Christ and rejoiced with all his house!

It may be well to make one more remark. It is evident that he was *a man of action, of precision and decision*. Once let him know what is to be done, and he does it! He acts as a man under authority having wardens under him. He says to this man, "Go," and he goes. And he acts mechanically as his superiors command him. He was a man who, I suppose, opened the prison doors always to a minute at the right time in the morning for those who went out to exercise, measured out the meals of

the prisoners to the ounce and shut up the cells and put out the lights exactly at the fixed hour at night. I see it in him. Precise obedience is his main point. When he was bid to believe, he believed. He was also immediately baptized. What he lacked in speech, he made up in deeds. He obeyed the Lord Jesus immediately, then and there. I love to see a man brought to Christ who has orderliness and decision about him. Some of us are rough beings, needing a deal of combing to bring us into shape. But certain others are shapely after their way from the first and all that they need is spiritual life. When the Divine Life comes, their habits are in beautiful consistency with the inward law of obedience and holy order. Still, it is not often that persons of this class are saved, for these very orderly people frequently think that they have no sin and so the warnings addressed to sinners do not come home to them. For instance, a man says, "Never since I took my position as manager of my master's business have I wasted an hour of his time, or a shilling of his substance." This is well, but the devil is ready with the suggestion, "You are a good and faithful servant. What need have you to humble yourself before Christ and seek His mercy and Grace?" It is a most blessed thing when this tendency is overcome. I see the Divine splendor of Grace as much in the conversion of the faultless moralist as in the repentance of Manasseh, or of that woman who was a sinner, of whom we spoke a little while ago. It is as hard to deliver a man from self-righteousness as from unrighteousness, as difficult to deliver one man from the frostbite of his own orderliness as to save another from the heat of his unbridled passions. Converts like the jailer are very precious and very sweetly display the love and power of God! Now, secondly—

## II. WHAT OCCASIONED THE JAILER'S CONVERSION?

The narrative is short and we cannot, therefore, get much out of it. I think, however, that we are warranted in believing that this man had received some measure of instruction before the earnest midnight cry of, "What must I do to be saved?" Perhaps the often repeated testimony of the Pythoness had been reported to him, for it must have been a matter of general notoriety throughout the town of Philippi that this woman, who was supposed to be inspired, had testified that Paul and Silas were "servants of the Most High God." It is also very possible that when he was fitting on the irons to these holy men and roughly thrusting them into the inner prison, their quiet manner, like sheep at the slaughter, and perhaps their godly words, also, may have carried information to his mind. What he saw and heard did not savingly impress him, for he showed the Apostles no sort of courtesy, but, as I have already said, was somewhat harsh with them. "He thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks," so that at that time he had no belief in their mission and but small respect for their character. He felt, it is clear, no compunction, for he went up to his chamber and fell asleep—nothing

of any importance was on his mind, notwithstanding what the Apostles may have said to him. A young Divine in a flowery sermon described the jailer as converted through hearing Paul and Silas sing at midnight. A very beautiful picture he made of it, but it had the drawback of being untrue, for the jailer did not hear them sing. "The prisoners heard them," for they were all down in the vaults under the jailer's house, but it is clear that the keeper of the prison did not hear them, for he was asleep until the earthquake startled him.

I have also heard it said that he was converted through fear of death—a most ridiculous remark, for how could he be afraid to die who was going to kill himself? No, he was too brave a man to be moved by terror. He was afraid of nothing but of being suspected of neglect of duty. He was a soldier without fear and without reproach, dreading dishonor infinitely more than death! He was a stern disciplinarian and thought little of his own life or the lives of others. He would have ridden in the charge of Balaclava, with all the rest of them, bravely enough—

***"His not to reason why—  
His but to dare and die."***

You can see that it was not fear that brought him to the feet of the Apostle. I do not doubt that some are brought to Christ by fear of death, but one is a little suspicious of such conversions—for he who is frightened to the Savior by fear of death may possibly run away from Him when he perceives that his fear has no immediate cause.

Others, too, have thought that he was made to tremble because he was afraid of being brought before Caesar for permitting his prisoners to escape. That fear may have hurried him into the desperate intent of suicide, but it was not the cause of his conversion, for all distress upon that point was gone before he cried out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" In fact, he came to Paul and Silas because that fear had been banished by hearing the calm and brave voice of the Apostle as he said, "Do yourself no harm: we are all here." It was not even a fear of censure from the magistrates which compelled him to tremble, for that, also, had been removed by finding the prisoners still in their cells. And though the whole of these things together make up the circumstances of his conversion, they cannot be put down as the cause of it, since this last, especially, had ceased to operate upon him when he fell trembling at the Apostle's feet.

What was it, then, which led to the jailer's faith and Baptism? I answer, partly the miracle that the doors were opened and the prisoners' chains loosed by an earthquake. And coupled with that, the fact that none of them had escaped. What gladness filled his bosom! He would not be arraigned, after all, for being unfaithful to his trust. How strange that the prisoners were all there. What a conflict was there in his spirit! What anxiety and what sudden quelling of his alarm! There was no need to

commit suicide lest he should be blamed, for there was nothing for which to blame him. What a deliverance for him! An awful power was abroad and yet it had taken care of him. A mingled feeling of mystery and gladness created astonishment and gratitude in his bosom. He could not make it out, it was so singular—he had been brought to the verge of a precipice—and yet was safe. “Do yourself no harm: we are all here,” rang out like music in his ears! He felt a solemn awe of those two prisoners whose voices had reassured him. Their voices had been to him as the very voice of God sounding forth along those corridors out of the innermost cells. Their bold, truthful, confident, calm tones had astonished him! He had seen before something very singular about those two men, but now the very tone in which they conveyed to him the glad intelligence which banished his worst fear filled him with deep reverence towards them—and he feels that no doubt these men are the servants of the Most High God and, therefore, he calls for a light, breaks in upon their darkness and brings them out.

While this was transpiring, he was brought very near to the world to come by the fact of the sword having been so near his breast, by the earthquake that had started all the stones of the dungeon, by the singular power of God miraculously holding every freeman as fast as if he had been bound and by the presence of men whom he perceived to be linked with Deity. This nearness to things unseen caused him to look over his past life. He was calm, despite the confusion of the night, for he was not a man to be frightened. But conscience, which in him was quick and prompt, from the very habit of obedience, reviewed his past life, judged it and condemned it—and he felt that he was a lost man because of his multiplied shortcomings before the Living God, whose servants were there present. For this reason he cried out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” It was none other than the blessed and eternal Spirit, unfolding before him his life which he had thought to be so correct, making him to see the evil of it and striking him down with a sense of guilt and a dread of consequent punishment! So far we trace his convictions to an awakened conscience visited by the Spirit of God.

His full conversion grew out of the further instructions of the Apostles. That answer was very like his short question in fullness of meaning—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.” This was condensed Gospel for him. And then followed a blessed commentary upon it, when the Apostle spoke the Word of the Lord both to him and to all his house. All this lit up his mind, which was already willing to receive the Truth of God, a mind which, from the very habit of obedience, was quick and prompt to accept the sway of the Lord Jesus. He received the Word of God in the love of it most sweetly, God the Holy Spirit blessing it to him while he listened. There was plain teaching and a simple heart to receive it—and the two together made quick work of it

and made resplendent that strange midnight which was, henceforth in that house, regarded as the beginning of days!

Now, dear Friend, I want you to thank God for the circumstances which surround any man's conversion, for all things are well ordered. If the Lord has been pleased to call you by His Divine Grace, do not begin judging your conversion because the circumstances were not very remarkable! And do not suspect your friend's sincerity because there was no earthquake in connection with his new birth, for the Lord may not be in the earthquake, nor in the wind, nor in the fire, but in that "still small voice" which calls the heart to Jesus! The matter is not how you came to Christ, but are you there? It is not *what* brought you, so much as *Who* brought you. Did the Spirit of God lead you to repentance? Are you resting at the Cross? If so, then, whether, like Lydia your heart was gently opened, or, like this jailer, you were startled and awakened, and thus made to perceive grand Truths to which you had been a stranger before—it does not matter as long as Christ is believed in and your heart yields itself to His blessed sway! Our third point—and may the Spirit of God help us in it—is to notice—

### III. WHAT SORT OF CONVERT THIS MAN MADE.

First, you are quite sure he made a very *believing* convert. The Gospel command came to him—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house"—and he did believe, believed firmly, without raising questions or discussions, without delays, or hesitations! How many there are among those whose conversion we seek after who meet us always with a, "but." We put the Truth of God plainly and they reply, "Yes—but—" Then we go over it again and put it in another shape, and they still say, "But." We tell them that salvation is by believing in Jesus Christ and they answer "*but*." This man, however, had no, "buts." He was told to believe and he did believe—and who would not—who knows how true the Gospel is? Who will not believe what is true? Who will not rely upon that which is Divinely certified? Why should we reject what thousands have proved to be true by a gladsome experience? Ah, Unbelief, what an enemy you are to multitudes who hear the Gospel! But you were utterly cast out of the jailer—he heard the command to believe and, though he had received slender instruction, he nevertheless believed unto eternal life. He was a convert full of faith!

Next, what a *humble* Christian he was. He fell down at the feet of the servants of God, not feeling himself worthy to stand in their presence. And then, though their jailer, he took them up into his house and waited upon them with gladness. The man who is really born-again does not demand the best seat in the synagogue, nor disdain to perform the meanest service. It is poor evidence of a renewed heart when a man must always be the fore horse in the team, or else he will do nothing at all! He

who knows the Lord loves to sit at Christ's feet—the lower the place, the better for him. He is even glad to wash the saints' feet, yes, he thinks it an honor! If you Christian people must dispute about precedence, always fight for the lowest place! If you aspire to be last and least, you will not have many competitors—there will be no need to demand a poll, for the lowest seat is undisputed. Humility is the way to a peaceful life—and the jailer began to practice it in his behavior to his prisoners, who were now his pastors!

What a *ready* convert he was! In that one midnight he passed through several stages—hearing, believing, baptizing, service, rejoicing and fellowship—and all within an hour! No long waiting for him! I wish more converts were like he. What slow coaches we have to deal with. You travel by broad-wheeled wagon to Heaven, even you who rush along by express train in the world's business! Yes, you must attend to the world, and my Lord and Master may wait your convenience, as Felix puts it! But this should not be. As soon as you know what your Lord would have you to do, every moment of unnecessary delay is a sin! The jailer had been prompt in other duties and he was just as decided with regard to Divine things! He was such a convert as we like to have in our Churches to set an example of quick obedience to the Great Captain of our salvation. Soldierly habits sanctified by Grace are greatly needed in the Church of God—would God we saw more of them!

Then see what a *practical* convert he was! “He took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes, and set meat before them.” All that he could do, he did at once, and his wife and children were all busy to help him. It is not easy to fit up a feast in the middle of the night, but the good wife did her best—cold meats were brought forth from the stores and such good cheer as they had was set out so that the two good men, who, no doubt, needed refreshment, were sufficiently supplied. I think I see that midnight festival even now! How the young children caught up every word which was spoken by the holy men and how glad they were to see them at their table! They all believed and were all baptized, and therefore they were all eager to do something for the men of God. How pleased they were to fetch the good men up into the best parlor—how eager to put them into the easiest chairs and let them sit in comfort, or recline at their ease. They did not wait till morning, but showed kindness without delay! This is the sort of convert the Church needs—one who delights to serve the Lord and is no sooner converted than he sets to work in his own hearty way! May the Lord send us scores of such conversions!

Friend, have you ever done anything for the Lord or His cause? “No, Sir. Nobody has set me anything to do.” What? Live in these busy times and *need* somebody to find you Christian employment? Why, you are not worth setting to work! He who lives in a great city and cannot find some-

thing to do for God had better not get off his knees till he has asked his Lord to have mercy upon his lazy soul! Here are people dying all round us, and being lost forever through ignorance, drunkenness and sins of every kind—and yet a young man of 21 stands up and says that he cannot find anything to do! You are idle. You are very idle! Does not Solomon say, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might?” You need not open your eyes to find good work to do, only put out your hand and there it is! For the love of Jesus, begin to serve Him as this jailer and his wife and family did!

Notice, again, that they were very *joyful* converts. He “rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.” The Apostle was happy that night. His poor back was smarting, but his heart was leaping within him! And Silas, too, who had shared the scourging, he also shared the joy! How lovingly the jailer looked upon his two instructors, how tenderly he washed their stripes. As he had thrown them into the inner prison, so he brought them into his own house. What overflowing joy was in his heart! I think while he was waiting at the table, he would, every now and then, stop and wonder at what Divine Grace had done! Would he not ask the Apostle to teach him that Psalm which had been sung below stairs? I am sure he would have sung heartily had he known that hymn which you so much delight in, wherein each one declares—

**“I am so glad that Jesus loves me!”**

Joy ruled at that midnight feast, and well it might, for the prison had become a palace and the jailer an heir of Heaven!

This man was an *influential* convert, for, through this conversion, all his house was led to believe. And he was also a *sensible* convert, which is worth notice, for it is not every Christian that is wise and prudent. Some zealous people are in a hurry to give up their secular callings. Such would say, “I cannot be a jailer any longer. I must give it up.” A Roman jailer would have much to do which would grate upon Christian feelings, but there was nothing positively wrong in the office. Somebody must be jailer and who so fit for the post as a man who knows the Lord and will, therefore, manifest a gentle, humane spirit? Who so fit to have poor creatures entrusted to him as one who will not swear at them, or treat them roughly, but who will seek their good? Why, I think if a man wanted to be a missionary to those who needed him most, he might desire to be a jailer, for he would be sure to get at the very people who most require the Gospel! The Philippian convert was in his right place, and instead of saying, “Ah, I must give up my situation and live with Christian people,” he was wise enough to stay at the jail and abide in his calling.

Observe that when the magistrates tell him that Paul is to go, he does not violate their order out of zeal for the faith. He had no right to keep Paul as a guest in his house against the magistrates’ will, or he would

gladly have retained him. But being bound by his office and by the fact that his apartments were part of the jail, when Paul was told to go, he said to him, "Now, therefore, go in peace." The words look somewhat curt, but no doubt he uttered them in such a kind and courteous manner that the Apostle quite understood him. Then Paul went down to Lydia's house and I dare say the jailer came down to see him there, so that if they could not meet at the jail without breach of regulations, they could meet at Lydia's hospitable abode. He was quite right in maintaining the discipline of the jail and his sincere affection for the Apostle at the same time.

My own belief is that he and Lydia were ever afterwards two of the kindest friends that the Apostle ever had—and were chief among those who contributed of their substance to his necessities. Paul took no money from any but the Philippians. Though other Churches offered to contribute, Paul declined. But when the Philippians sent to him once and again, he accepted their gifts as a sacrifice of sweet smell. He said within himself, "All the family send this gift. All Lydia's household and all the jailer's household are Believers, so that no member of the family will grudge what is sent to me." One likes to see brought into the Christian Church those who will continue in their business and make money for Jesus Christ and lay themselves out to serve the Lord in a practical fashion. Many a man gets into a pulpit and spoils a congregation who, if he had stuck to his business and made money that he might help the poor, or aid the cause of missions, or support the Church of God, would have been more truly serving the great cause. He was a sensible convert, this jailer, and I rejoice in him!

And now, if I have been addressing anybody not a jailer, but a person in a position of trust, and if you have a feeling that you have done faithfully, I am glad of it. I am not going to dispute your claim to integrity towards man, nor to undervalue honesty and faithfulness, but oh, remember, you need to be saved! Notwithstanding your moral excellence, you will be lost unless you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Do see to this. May the Holy Spirit lead you at once to accept the Gospel of Grace, for you need it even as others. May you become a firm Believer in Jesus, and may the Church find in you a willing and earnest helper.

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

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

# **THE KING'S HIGHWAY OPENED AND CLEANED NO. 293**

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 8, 1860,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ  
and you shall be saved and your house.”  
Acts. 16:31.***

YOU will remember that when the children of Israel were settled in Canaan, God ordained that they should set apart certain cities to be called the Cities of Refuge, that to these the man-slayer might flee for security. If he killed another unawares and had no malice aforethought, he might flee at once to the City of Refuge. And if he could enter its gates before the avenger of blood should overtake him, he would be secure. We are told by the rabbis that once in the year, or oftener, the magistrates of the district were accustomed to survey the high roads which led to these cities. They carefully gathered up all the stones and took the greatest possible precautions that there should be no stumbling blocks in the way which might cause the poor fugitive to fall, or might by any means impede him in his hasty course.

We hear, moreover, and we believe the tradition to be grounded in fact, that all along the road there were hand-posts with the word “Refuge” written very legibly upon them, so that when the fugitive came to a crossroad, he might not need to question for a single moment which was the way of escape. But seeing the well-known word “Refuge,” he kept on his breathless and headlong course until he had entered the suburb of the City of Refuge and he was then at once completely safe. Now, my Brothers and Sisters, God has prepared for the sons of men a City of Refuge and the way to it is by FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS. It is needful, however, that very often the ministers of Christ should survey this road, lest there should be any stumbling blocks in the path of the poor sinner.

I propose this morning to go along it and by God's grace, to remove any impediment which Satan may have laid upon the path. And may God so help me that this survey may be of spiritual benefit to all your souls. May any of you who have been made to stumble in the path of faith may now pluck up courage and run joyfully forward—hoping yet to escape from the fierce avenger of your sins.

Well may the minister be careful to keep the road of faith clear for the seeking sinner, for surely the sinner has a heavy heart to carry and we ought to make the road as clear and as smooth as we can. We should make straight paths for the feet of these poor benighted souls. It should

be our endeavor to cast loads of promises into every slough that runs across the path, that so it may be a king's highway and may be safe and easy for traveling for those weary feet that have to carry such a heavy heart. Besides, we must remember that the sinner will make stumbling blocks enough for himself, even with our greatest and most scrupulous care to remove any others that may naturally lie in his way. For this is one of the sad follies of the poor desponding soul—that it spoils its own road.

You have sometimes seen, perhaps, the newly invented engine in the streets, the locomotive that lays down its own pathway and then picks it up again. Now the sinner is the very reverse of that. He spoils his own road before himself and then carries behind him all the mire and dirt of his own mishaps. Poor soul! He flings stones before himself, cuts out valleys and casts up mountains in his own pathway. Well may the ministers, then, be careful to keep this road clear. And, let me add there is another weighty reason. Behind him comes the furious avenger of blood. Oh, how swift is he!

There is Moses armed with all the wrath of God, and Death following hard after him—a mounted rider upon his pale horse. And after Death there comes Hell with all the powers and legions of Satan, all thirsty for blood and swift to slay. Make straight the road, oh ministers of Christ! Level the mountains, fill up the valleys. For this is a desperate flight, this flight of the sinner from his ferocious enemies towards the one City of Refuge—the atonement of Jesus Christ.

I have thus given the reasons why I am compelled in spirit to make this survey this morning. Come, O Spirit, the Comforter, and help us, that every stone may be cast out of the high road to Heaven.

The road to Heaven, my Brothers and Sisters, is BY FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS. It is not by well-doing that you can be saved, though it is by ill-doing that you will be damned if you put not your trust in Christ. Nothing that you can do can save you. Albeit that after you are saved it will be your delightful privilege to walk in the ways of God and to keep His commandments. Yet all your own attempts to keep the commandments *previous* to faith, will but sink you deeper into the mire and will by no means contribute to your salvation. The one road to Heaven is BY FAITH IN CHRIST. Or to make it plainer still as the countryman said, there are but two steps to Heaven—out of self into Christ and, then, out of Christ into Heaven.

Faith is simply explained as trusting in Christ. I find that Christ commands me to believe in Him, or to trust Him. I feel that there is no reason in myself why I should be allowed to trust Him. But He commands me to do so. Therefore altogether apart from my character or from any preparation that I feel in myself, I obey the command and sink or swim, I trust Christ. Now, that is faith—when with the eye shut as to all evidence of hope in ourselves, we take a leap in the dark right into the arms of an Omnipotent Redeemer.

Faith is sometimes spoken of in Scripture as being a leaning upon Christ. A casting of one's self upon Him, or, as the old Puritans used to put it, (using a somewhat hard word) it is recumbence on Christ—the leaning of the whole weight upon his Cross—ceasing to stand by the strength of one's own power and resting wholly upon the Rock of Ages. The leaving of the soul in the hands of Jesus is the very essence of faith. Faith is receiving Christ into our emptiness. There is Christ like the conduit in the marketplace. As the water flows from the pipes, so does grace continually flow from Him. By faith I bring my empty pitcher and hold it where the water flows and receive of its fullness, grace for grace.

It is not the beauty of my pitcher, it is not even its cleanness that quenches my thirst—it is simply holding that pitcher to the place where water flows. Even so, I am but the vessel and my faith is the hand which presents the empty vessel to the flowing stream. It is the grace and not the qualification of the receiver which saves the soul. And though I hold that pitcher with a trembling hand and much of that which I seek may be lost through my weakness, yet if the soul is but held to the fountain and so much as a single drop trickle into it, my soul is saved.

Faith is receiving Christ with the understanding and with the will, submitting everything to Him, taking Him to be my All in All and agreeing to be henceforth nothing at all. Faith is ceasing from the creature and coming to the Creator. It is looking out of self to Christ. It is turning the eye entirely from any good thing that is here within me and looking forever to those open veins—to that poor bleeding heart—to that thorn-crowned head of Him whom God has set forth “to be the propitiation for our sins and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world.”

Well, having thus described the way, I now come to my real business of removing these stones.

**1.** A very common impediment in the pathway of the soul that is desiring to be saved, is the recollection of its past life. “Oh,” says the sinner, “I dare not trust Christ, because my past sins have been of an unusually black dye. I have been no common sinner, but I have been one singled out from the herd, a very monster in sin. I have taken the highest degree in the devil's college and have become a master of Belial. I have learned to sit in the seat of the scornful and have taught others to rebel against God.” Ah, Soul, I know very well what this impediment is, for once it laid in my way and very sorely did it trouble me.

Before I thought upon my soul's salvation, I dreamed that my sins were very few. All my sins were dead, as I imagined, and buried in the graveyard of forgetfulness. But that trumpet of conviction which aroused my soul to think of eternal things, sounded all my sins, and oh, how they rose up in multitudes more countless than the sands of the sea! Now I saw that my very thoughts were enough to damn me, that my words would sink me lower than the lowest Hell. And as for my *acts* of sin, they now began to be a stench in my nostrils so that I could not bear them. I recollect the time when I thought I had rather have been a frog or a toad than have been made a man. Then I reckoned that the most defiled

creature, the most loathsome and contemptible was a better thing than myself, I had so grossly and grievously sinned against Almighty God.

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, it may be that this morning your old oaths are echoing back from the walls of your memory. You recollect how you have cursed God and you say, "Can I, dare I, trust Him whom I have cursed?" And your old lusts are now rising before you. Midnight sins stare you in the face and snatches of the lascivious song are being yelled in the ear of your poor convinced conscience. And all your sins, as they rise up, cry, "Depart, you accursed one! Depart! You have sinned yourself out of grace! You are a condemned one! Depart! There is no hope, there is no mercy for you!"

Now, permit me in the strength and name of God to remove this stumbling block out of your way. Sinner, I tell you that all your sins, be they ever so many cannot destroy you if you do believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. If now you cast yourself simply on the merits of Jesus, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool." Only believe. Dare to believe that Christ is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. Take Him at His word and trust Him. And you have a warrant for doing it—for remember it is written—"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleans us from all sin," You are *commanded* to believe, therefore, be you ever so black a sinner, the command is your warrant—oh, may God help you to obey the command!

Now, just as you are, cast yourself on Christ. It is not the *greatness* of the sinner that is the difficulty. It is the *hardness* of the sinner's *heart*. If now you are conscious of the most awful guilt, your guilt becomes as nothing in the eye of God when once He sees the blood of Christ sprinkled upon you. I tell you more, if your sins were ten thousand times as many as they are, yet the blood of Christ is able to atone for them all. Only dare to believe that. Now, by a venturesome faith, trust yourself in Christ. If you are the most sick of all the wretches that ever this Divine physician assayed to cure, so much the more glory to Him.

When a physician cures a man of some little finger ache or some little disease, what credit does he get? But when he heals a man who is all over diseased, who has become but a putrid mass, then there is glory to the physician. And so will there be to Christ when He saves you. But to put this block out of the way once for all—remember, Sinner, that all the while you do not believe in Christ you are adding to your sin this great sin of not believing, which is the greatest sin in the world. But if you obey God in this matter of putting your trust in Christ, God's own Word is guaranteed that your faith shall be rewarded and you shall find that your sins which are many are all forgiven you.

By the side of Saul of Tarsus and of her, out of whom was cast seven devils, shall you one day stand. With the thief shall you sing of love Divine and with Manasseh shall you rejoice in Him who can wash away the foulest crimes. Oh, I pray God there may be someone in this great crowd today, who may be saying in his heart, "Sir, you have described me. I do feel that I am the blackest sinner anywhere, but I will risk it, I will put my

trust in Christ and Christ alone.” Ah, Soul, God bless you. You are an accepted one. If you can do this, this morning, I will be God’s hostage that He will be true to you and true to His Son, for never sinner perished yet that dared to trust the precious blood of Christ!

2. Now let me endeavor to lift up and eject another stumbling block. Many an awakened sinner is troubled because of the hardness of his heart and the lack of what he thinks to be true penitence. “Oh,” says he, “I can believe that however great my sins are they can be forgiven, but I do not feel the evil of my sins as I ought”—

**“My heart how dreadful hard it is.  
How heavy here it lies!  
Heavy and cold within my breast,  
Just like a rock of ice.”**

“I cannot *feel*,” says one, “I cannot *weep*. I have heard of the repentance of others, but I seem to be just like a stone. My heart is petrified, it will not quake at all the thunders of the Law, it will not melt before all the wooing of Christ’s love.”

Ah, poor Heart, this is a common stumbling block in the way of those who are really seeking Christ. But let me ask you one question. Do you read anywhere in the Word of God that those who have hard hearts are not commanded to believe? Because if you can find such a passage as that, I will be sorry enough to see it, but then I may excuse you for saying, “I cannot trust Christ because my heart is hard.” Do you not know that the Scripture runs thus? “Whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” Now, if you believe, though your heart is never so hard, your believing saves you. And what is more, your believing shall yet soften your heart. If you can not feel your need of a Savior as you would, remember that when you have a Savior you will begin *then* to find out more and more how great was your need of Him.

Why, I believe that many persons find out their needs by receiving the supply. Have you ever walked along the street and looking in at a shop window have seen an article and have said, “Why, that is just what I want.” How do you know that? Why, you saw the thing and then you wanted it. And I believe there is many a sinner, who, when he is hearing about Christ Jesus is led to say, “That is just what I want.” Did not he know it before? No, poor Soul, not till he saw Christ. I find my sense of need of Christ is ten times more acute now than it was before I found Christ. I thought I wanted Him for a good many things then, but now I know I want Him for everything. I thought there were some things which I could not do without Him. But now I find that without Him I can do nothing.

But you say, “Sir, I must *repent* before I come to Christ.” Find such a passage in the Word if you can. Does not the Word say? “Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to *give repentance* to Israel and forgiveness of sins”? Does not one of our hymns translate that verse into rhyme and put it thus?—

**“True belief and true repentance.**

***Every grace that brings us near —  
Without money  
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”***

Oh, these graces are not of nature's spinning. We cannot make these in the loom of the creature. If you would know your need of Christ, take Him now by faith and sense and feeling shall follow in the rear. Trust Him now for *everything*. Dare to trust Him. Hard as your heart is, say, "Just as I am, without a plea, but that You command me and bid me come, I come to you"! Your heart shall be softened by the sight of Christ and love Divine shall so sweetly commend itself to you that the heart which terrors could not move shall be dissolved by love.

Do understand me, my dear Hearers. I wept to preach in the broadest manner I possibly can this morning the doctrine that we are justified by faith alone. Man is *commanded* to believe and that altogether apart from anything in man, man has a *right* to believe. Not from any preparation that he feels, not from anything good he discerns in himself, but he has a right to believe simply because he is commanded to believe. And relying upon the fact that he is commanded, God the Holy Spirit enables him to believe. That faith will surely save the soul and deliver him from the wrath to come. Let me take up, then, that stumbling stone about hardness of heart. Oh, soul, trust Christ and your heart shall be softened. And may God the Holy Spirit enable you to trust Him hard heart and all, and then your hard heart shall soon be turned into a heart of flesh and you shall love Him who has loved you.

**3.** Now, for a third stumbling block. "Oh," says some poor soul, "I do not know whether I believe or not, Sir. Sometimes I do believe. But oh, it is such little faith I have that I cannot think Christ can save me." Ah, there you are again, you see, looking to *yourself*. This has made many trip and fall. I pray God I may put this out of your way. Poor Sinner, remember it is not the *strength* of your faith that saves you, but the *reality* of your faith. What is more, it is not even the *reality* of your faith that saves you, it is the *Object* of your faith. If your faith is fixed on Christ, though it seems to be in itself a line no thicker than a spider's cobweb, it will hold your soul throughout time and eternity.

For remember it is not the thickness of this cable of faith, it is the strength of the anchor which imparts strength to the cable and so shall hold your ship in the midst of the most fearful storm. The faith that saves man is sometimes so small that the man himself cannot see it. A grain of mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds and yet if you have but that quantity of faith, you are a saved man. Remember what the poor woman did. She did not come and take hold of Christ's Person with her hand. She did not throw her arms about His knees. But she stretched out her finger—and then she did not touch Christ's feet or even His garments—she touched but the raveling, the fringe of His garment and she was made whole.

If your faith is but as little as that, seek to get more of it, but still remember that it will save you. Jesus Christ Himself compares Little-Faith

to a smoking flax. Does it burn? Is there any fire at all? No. There is nothing but a little smoke and that is most offensive. "Yes," says Jesus, "but I will not quench it." Again, He compares it to a bruised reed. Of what service is it? It is broken, you cannot bring music from it. It is but a reed when it is whole and now it is a bruised reed. Break it, snap it, throw, it away? "No," says He. "I will not break the bruised reed." Now, if that is the faith you have, the faith of the smoking flax, the faith of the bruised reed, you are saved. You will have many a trial and many a trouble in going to Heaven, with so little faith as that, for when there is little wind to a boat there must be much tugging at the oar. But still there will be wind enough to land you in Glory, if you do simply trust Christ, be that trust never so feeble.

Remember a little child belongs to the human race as much as the greatest giant. And so a babe in grace is as truly a child of God as is Mr. Great-Heart, who can fight all the giants on the road. And you may be as much an heir of Heaven in your minority, in the infancy of your grace, as you will be when you shall have expanded into the full grown Christian and shall become a perfect man in Christ Jesus. It is not, I tell you, the *strength* of your faith, but the *Object* of your faith. It is the *blood*, not the hyssop—not the hand that smites the lintel, but the blood that secures the Israelite in the day when God's vengeance passes by. Let that stumbling block be taken out of the way.

4. "But," says another, "I do think sometimes I have a little faith, but I have so many doubts and fears. I am tempted every day to believe that Jesus Christ did not die for me, or that my belief is not genuine, or that I never experienced the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit. Tell me Sir, can I be a true believer in Christ if I have doubts and fears?" My answer is simply this, there is no Scripture which says, "He that believes, shall be damned, if that faith is mixed with doubts." "He that believes shall be saved," be that faith ever so little and even though it is intermingled with multitudes of doubts and fears. You remember that memorable story of our Savior, when He was on board a ship with His disciples. The winds roared, the ship rocked to and fro, the mast was strained, the sails were rent and the poor disciples were full of fear—"Lord save us or we perish."

Here were doubts. What did Jesus say when He rebuked them? "Why are you fearful"—O you of *no* faith? No, "O you of *little* faith." So there may be little faith where there are great doubts. There is light at eventide in the air. Even though there is a great deal of darkness, yet there is light. And if your faith should never come to noonday, if it does but come to twilight, you are a saved man. No, more, if it does not come to twilight, if your faith is but starlight, no, candlelight, no, a spark—if it is but a glow-worm spark, you are saved! And all your doubts and all your fears and your distresses, terrible though they may be, can never trample you in the dust, can never destroy your soul.

Do you not know that the best of God's children are exercised with doubts and fears even to the last? Look at such a man as John Knox.

There was a man who could face the frowns of a world, who could speak like a king to kings and feared no man. Yet on his dying bed he was troubled about his interest in Christ, because he was tempted to self-righteousness. If such a man has doubts, do you expect to live without them? If God's brightest saints are exercised—if Paul himself keeps under his body lest he should be a castaway—why, how can you expect to live without clouds? Oh, my dear Brothers and Sisters, drop the idea that the prevalence of your doubts disproves the truth of the promise. Again, believe! Away with all your doubts. Sink or swim—cast yourself on Jesus. And you can not be lost, for His honor is engaged to save every soul that puts its trust in Him.

5. "Ah," says another, "but you have not yet hit upon my fear." I used when I first knew the Savior, to try myself in a certain manner. And often did I throw stumbling blocks in my path through it and therefore I can speak very affectionately to any of you who are doing the same. Sometimes I would go up into my chamber and by way of self-examination, I used to ask myself this question—Am I afraid to die? If I should drop down dead in my chamber, can I say that I should joyfully close my eyes? Well, it often happened that I could not honestly say so. I used to feel death would be a very solemn thing. Ah, then I said, "I have never believed in Christ, for if I had put my trust in the Lord Jesus, I should not be afraid to die, but I should be quite confident." I do not doubt that there are many here who are saying, "Sir, I cannot follow Christ, because I am afraid to die. I cannot believe that Jesus Christ will save me, because the sight of death makes me tremble."

Ah, poor Soul, there are many of God's blessed ones, who, through fear of death, have been much of their lifetime subject to bondage. I know precious children of God now—I believe that when they die, they will die triumphantly. But I know this, that the thought of death is never pleasing to them. And this is accounted for because God has stamped on nature that law, the love of life and self-preservation. And again, the man that has kindred and friends, it is natural enough that he should scarce like to leave behind those that are so dear. I know that when he gets more grace he will rejoice in the thought of death—but I do know that there are many quite safe, who could die triumphantly, who, now, in the prospect of death—feel afraid of it.

I remember my aged grandfather once preached a sermon which I have not forgotten. He was preaching from the text "The God of all grace," and he somewhat interested the assembly, after describing the different kinds of grace that God gave, by saying at the end of each period, "But there is one kind of grace that you do not want." After each sentence there came the like, "But there is one kind of grace you do not want." And, then, he wound up by saying, "You don't want *dying grace* in living moments, but you shall have dying grace when you want it."

Now, you are testing yourself by a condition in which you are not placed. If you are placed in the condition, you shall have grace enough if you put your trust in Christ. In a party of friends we were discussing the

question, whether if the days of martyrdom should come we were prepared to be burned. Well, now, I must frankly say, that speaking as I feel today, I am not prepared to be burned. But I do believe if there were a stake in Smithfield and I knew that I were to be burned there at one o'clock, that I should have grace enough to be burned at one o'clock. But I have not yet got to a quarter past twelve and the time is not come yet. Do not expect dying grace, until you want it and when the time comes, you may be sure you will have sufficient grace to bear it. Cast out that stumbling block then. Rest yourself on Christ and trust a living Christ to help you in your dying hour.

**6.** Another most grievous perplexity to many a seeking soul is this—"Oh, I would trust Christ, but I feel no joy. I hear the children of God singing sweetly about their privileges. I hear them saying that they have been to the top of Pisgah and have viewed the promised land—have taken a pleasant prospect of the world to come. But oh, my faith yields me no joy. I hope I do believe, but at the same time I have none of those raptures. My worldly troubles press heavily upon me and sometimes even my spiritual woes are greater than I can bear."

Ah, poor Soul, let me cast out that stone from your road. Remember, it is not written, "he that is joyful shall be saved," but "he that believes shall be saved." Your faith will make you joyful by-and-by, but it is as powerful to save you even when it does not make you rejoice. Why, look at many of God's people, how sad and sorrowful they have been. I know they ought not to be. This is their sin. But still, it is such a sin that it does not destroy the efficacy of faith. Notwithstanding all the sorrows of the saint, faith still keeps alive and God is still true to His promise. Remember, it is not what you feel that saves you—it is what you believe. It is not feeling but believing. "We walk by faith, not by sight."

When I feel my soul as cold as an iceberg, as hard as a rock and as sinful as Satan, yet even then faith ceases not to justify. Faith prevails as truly in the midst of sad feelings as of happy feelings, for then, standing alone, it proves the majesty of its might. Believe, on the son of God, believe in Him and look not for anything in yourself.

**7.** Then, again, there are many that are distressed because they have blasphemous thoughts. Here, too, I can heartily sympathize with many. I remember a certain narrow and crooked lane in a certain country town, along which I was walking one day while I was seeking the Savior. On a sudden the most fearful oaths that any of you can conceive rushed through my heart. I put my hand to my mouth to prevent the utterance. I had not, that I know of, ever heard those words. And I am certain that I had never used in my life from my youth up so much as one of them, for I had never been profane. But these things sorely beset me—for half an hour together the most fearful imprecations would dash through my brain. Oh, how I groaned and cried before God.

That temptation passed away. But before many days it was renewed again. And when I was in prayer, or when I was reading the Bible, these blasphemous thoughts would pour in upon me more than at any other

time. I consulted with an aged godly man about it. He said to me, "Oh, all this, many of the people of God have proved before you. But," said he, "do you hate these thoughts?" "I do," I truly said. "Then," said he, "they are not yours. Serve them as the old parishes used to do with vagrants—whip them and send them on to their own parish. So" said he, "do with them. Groan over them, repent of them and send them on to the devil, the father of them, to whom they belong—for they are not yours."

Do you not remember how John Bunyan hits off the picture? He says, when Christian was going through the valley of the shadow of death, "There stepped up one to him and whispered blasphemous thoughts into his ear, so that poor Christian thought they were his own thoughts. But they were not his thoughts at all, but the injections of a blasphemous spirit." So when you are about to lay hold on Christ, Satan will ply all his engines and try to destroy you. He cannot bear to lose one of his slaves—he will invent a fresh temptation for each Believer so that he may not put his trust in Christ."

Now, come, poor soul, notwithstanding all these blasphemous thoughts in your soul, dare to put your trust in Christ. Even should those thoughts have been more blasphemous than any you have ever heard, come trust in Christ, come cast yourself on him. I have heard that when an elephant is going over a bridge he will sound the timber with his foot to see if it will bear him over. Come you, who think yourself an elephantine sinner, here is bridge that is strong enough for you, even with all these thoughts of yours—"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven you." Throw that in Satan's face and trust yourself in Christ.

**8.** One other stumbling block and I will have done. Some there are that say, "Oh, Sir, I would trust in Christ to save me if I could see that my faith brought forth fruits. Oh, Sir, when I would do good, evil is present with me." Excuse my always bringing in my own feelings as an illustration, but I feel when I am preaching to tried sinners that the testimony of one's own experience is generally more powerful than any other illustration that can be found. It is not, believe me, any display of egotism, but the simple desire to come home to you that makes me state what I have felt myself. The first Sunday after I came to Christ I went to a Methodist Chapel.

The sermon was upon this text—"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" I had just got as far as that in the week. I knew that I had put my trust in Christ and I knew that, when I sat in that House of Prayer, my faith was simply and solely fixed on the atonement of the Redeemer. But I had a weight on my mind, because I could not be as holy as I wanted to be. I could not live without sin. When I rose in the morning I thought I would abstain from every hard word, from every evil thought and look. And I came up to that Chapel groaning, because "when I would do good, evil was present with me." The minister said that when Paul wrote the verse I have quoted, he was not a Christian. That this was his experience before he knew the Lord.

Ah, what error, for I know that Paul was a Christian and I know the more Christians look to themselves the more they will have to groan,

because they cannot be what they want to be. What? You will not believe in Christ until you are perfect? Then you will never believe in Him. You will not trust the precious Jesus till you have no sins to trust Him with? Then you will never trust Him at all. For rest assured you will never be perfect till you see the face of God in Heaven. I knew one man who thought himself a perfect man and that man was humpbacked. This was my rebuke to his pride, "Surely if the Lord gave you a perfect soul He would have given you a perfect body to carry it in."

Perfection will not be found this side of the grave. Your business is to trust in Christ. You must depend on nothing but the blood of Christ. Trust in Christ and you stand secure. "He that believes on the Son of God has everlasting life." It is our duty to fight against corruption. It is our privilege to conquer

it. It is our honor to feel that we are fighting against sin—it shall be our glory one day to tread it beneath our feet. But today expect not complete victory. Your very consciousness of sin proves that you are alive. The very fact that you are not what you want to be proves that there is some high and noble thoughts in you that could not come by nature. You were content with yourself some six weeks ago, were you not? And the fact that you are discontent now proves that God has put a new life into you, which makes you seek after a higher and better element in which to breathe.

When you become what you want to be on earth, then despair. When the Law justifies you, then you have fallen from grace. For Paul has said, "When we are justified by the Law we are fallen from grace." But while I feel that the Law condemns me it is my joy to know that believing in Christ, "There is no condemnation to him that is in Christ Jesus, who walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

And now though I have been trying to clear the way, I feel conscious that very likely I have been putting a stone or two in the road myself. May God forgive me—it is a sin of inadvertence. I would lay this road as straight and clear as ever was turnpike road between one city and another. Sinner, there is nothing which can rob you of your right to believe in Christ. You are freely invited to come to the marriage banquet. The table is spread and the invitation freely given. There are no porters at the door to keep you out. There are none to ask a ticket of admission of you—

***"Let not conscience make you linger  
Nor of fitness fondly dream.  
All the fitness He requires  
Is to feel your need of Him.  
This He gives you—  
'Tis His Spirit's rising beam."***

Come to Him just as you are. But, ah, I know that when we sit in our studies it seems a light thing to preach the Gospel and make people believe in Christ. But when we come to practice, it is the hardest thing in the world. If I were to tell you to do some great thing you would do it. But simply, when it is, "Believe, wash and be clean!" you will not do it. If I

said, "Give me ten thousand pounds," you would give it. You would crawl a thousand miles on your hands and knees, or drink the bitterest draught that was ever concocted. But this trusting in Christ is too hard for your proud spirit. Ah, Sinner, are you too proud to be saved? Come, Man, I beseech you by the love of Christ, by the love of your own soul, come with me and let us go together to the foot of the Cross.

Believe on Him who hangs groaning there. Oh, put your trust in Him who is risen from the dead and has led captivity captive. And if you trust Him, poor Sinner, you shall not be disappointed. It shall not be trust misplaced. Again I say it, I am content to be lost if you are lost trusting in Christ. I will make my bed in Hell with you should God reject you, if you put your simple trust in Christ. I dare to say that and to look that boldly in the face. For you would be the first sinner that was ever cast away trusting in Jesus.

"But, oh," says one, "I cannot think that such a wretch as I am can have a right to believe." Soul, I tell you it is not whether you are a wretch, or not a wretch. It is the *command* that is your warrant. You are commanded to believe. And when a command comes home with power, the power comes with the command. And he who is commanded, being made willing, casts himself on Christ and he believes and is saved.

I have labored this morning to try and make myself as clear as I can about this doctrine. I know if any man is saved it is the work of God the Holy Spirit from first to last. "If any man is regenerate, it is not of the will of the flesh, nor of blood, but of God." But I do not see how that great Truth of God interferes with this other, "Whosoever believes in Christ shall be saved." And I would again, even to the falling down on my knees, as though God did beseech you by me, pray you, "In Christ's stead be you reconciled to God." And this is the reconciliation, "That you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ whom he has sent"—that you trust Christ.

Do you understand me? That you cast yourself on Him? That you depend on nothing but what He has done? Saved you must be, lost you cannot be, if you fling yourself wholly upon Christ and cast the whole burden of your sins, your doubts, your fears and your anxieties wholly there? Now, this is preaching Free Grace doctrine. And if any wonder how a Calvinist can preach thus, let me say that this is the preaching that Calvin preached and better still it is the preaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles. We have Divine warrant when we tell you, "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned." Amen.

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# FAITH IN CHRIST

## NO. 3095

**TO MEN OF BUSINESS,  
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***“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.”  
Acts 16:31.***

THE subject which I have chosen for this morning and which may God the Holy Spirit bless to us, is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the way of salvation. Nothing can be of more importance than this subject and, therefore, nothing will more thoroughly interest a company of practical businessmen.

The preaching of the Gospel has become, happily, very common in these days. You may hear it at the corner of the streets and any day you may have the same message pushed into your hands in the form of a tract as you go about your business. Since the late revival, when so many were drawn together to hear the Word of God, I should hope that there are few now among us who are unaware that the religion of the Gospel sets forth faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the *only way of salvation*. I have no doubt that there may remain a remnant to whom this will be news but, in this city, after the great stir that was made, I should suppose that at least the vast majority of intelligent, educated people know that this is the teaching of Christ's ministers—that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is not condemned, but has passed from death unto life.

Salvation by Grace through Faith is no new Doctrine. In addition to its being in the Word of God, as taught by our Lord and His Apostles, it is the distinguishing Doctrine of the Christian religion all through its history—and it is always clearest when that Christianity is most pure. Especially is it the very heart and essence of Protestantism. When Luther was upon the Santa Scala at Rome, hoping to earn merit and indulgences by creeping up and down that idolized staircase upon his knees, repeating many prayers, this text came to him, “The just shall live by faith.” And he got up and forsook his superstitions once and for all. Finding peace by faith in Jesus, he began at once to declare to others the message which had brought life and light and freedom and joy to his own soul! The Reformers, following Luther's example, made this the cardinal point of their preaching. And today it is still true that the article of a standing or a falling Church is the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, or that men, believing in Jesus Christ, are accounted just before the bar of God.

Let me set forth the manner of this Doctrine. We have sinned against God and it is inevitable that sin should be followed by punishment.

“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” And a judge who never punishes does not do right, but neglects his office. God, who is all Love, as a necessary consequence is also sternly just, for the omission of Justice from His Character would be the omission of an essential ingredient of love. God, therefore, must punish sin. And every transgression must have its just recompense of reward. But His only-begotten Son, in wondrous compassion to our souls, came into this world, took upon Himself our nature and veiled the Godhead in human flesh and, being found in fashion as a Man, He suffered in our place the penalty which was due to the Law of God—

**“He bore, that we might never bear,  
His Father’s righteous ire.”**

He took the debts of this people upon Himself and upon the Cross, by death, discharged them all—so that they are blotted out and can never be mentioned against His people any more forever. But who are His people? Who are the people for whom He died? Who are those for whom He was an actual, literal and efficient Substitute? They are known by this—*that they believe in Him*. According to His own saying, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” Our Lord tells us that the Son of Man was lifted up, “That whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” And yet again, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” By His death our Lord has made a full Atonement for the sins of all who believe in Him and they are, therefore, justified in the sight of God!

This believing in Christ has been illustrated in a great many ways and I do but repeat what you have often heard. Believing is relying upon, or *trusting*. It is not a mere assent to a dogma, or the acknowledgment of a fact of the past. It is trust—trust in that Christ who died upon the Cross, that through His merit, He can remove the guilt and punishment of sin. And also trust in that Christ who rose from the dead and is gone into Heaven, that by the power of His eternal Spirit, He can cleanse us from the dominion and habit of sin. That is the faith which saves—trust in the living Jesus who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them. We have heard faith illustrated by the picture of a child in a burning house. In vain does he attempt to escape from the fire. The flames are bursting into the room. He rushes to an upper window, he hangs there grasping the sill. Can he be saved? Yes, a strong man stands beneath him and cries, “Drop into my arms! I will catch you.” The boy looks down. He observes that the man is strong. He believes that fact, but that belief does not save him, though it leads up to it. The act which really saves him is when he trustfully lets go of every other hold and simply drops into the arms which are ready to receive him. Here you and I, by nature, hang in danger, and Christ beneath us says, “Drop, and you shall be safe in the arms of Jesus.” The act of faith is not believing that Christ is an actual Person, nor the believing that He is able to save us, but the practical act of the mind arising out of the two beliefs which leads us to give up everything else and trust to Him.

I remember hearing an illustration of faith which struck me very much. It came from an idiot. They had been teaching him all they could, but it was weary work. He had a little brain left and, after long teaching, and especially teaching him the great Doctrine of Faith, one of the teachers began to question him and said, "John, have you a soul?" The poor creature replied, "No, I have no soul." The teacher felt grieved and thought that he had spent his labor for nothing. But the poor fellow went on to say, "I had a soul once, but I lost it. And Jesus Christ found it and so I always let Him keep it, and so it is His and not mine." Truly, the very essence of faith lies there—the consciousness of being lost in ourselves and found in Christ, and the leaving of one's soul in Jesus' hands! When we go to Christ, faith does very much the same as when a man takes his money and deposits it at the bank. I see you come up to the counter and pay in very large sums of money. But you do not come back in half-an-hour and say, "Show me my money." You do not stand there at the counter half the day to watch the sovereigns as they are counted in order that you may make sure that your money is safe! No, you trust in the bank and go your way. So do we deposit our souls in the hands of Christ, committing them to Him as unto a faithful Creator. And then we say with the Apostle Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him unto that day."

Now, this believing in Christ has appeared to some persons to be far too simple and they have said, "Well, but why is not *everybody* saved, if they are to be saved merely by trusting in Christ?" Truly, it is very simple, and yet of all the mental acts that are ever performed by mankind, this is one of the most difficult. "How so?" you ask. I will express myself in a paradox—its easiness makes it difficult. Let the story of Naaman illustrate it. He comes in great pomp from Syria to be healed by Israel's Prophet. He was a great man with his master—his retinue was considerable and, therefore, with no little self-importance he drove in his chariot to the Prophet's door, hoping to be healed of his leprosy. The Prophet only sent him a message—"Go wash in Jordan seven times." Naaman was angry. He thought that surely the Prophet would come out to him—such a great man as he was—and that he would go through certain ritualistic performances and, among other things, strike his hand over the place and cure the leprosy. But, "Wash in Jordan seven times? Does he insinuate that I need a bath?" The prescription was too commonplace and the course of cure by far too simple! It was too difficult for him because it was so easy—and he turned and went away in a rage! But his servants wisely said, "My father, if the Prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather then, when he says to you, Wash, and be clean?" Had not the servants been wiser than the master, Naaman would have gone away with his leprosy uncured!

And so it is all the world over—our proud hearts reject the simple, artless, unencumbered plan of believe and live. If there were orders given today from Heaven that if we went on pilgrimage from Bishopsgate to John o'Groat's House barefooted we would be saved, many of us would be on the road at once! But when the message of mercy consists only of,

“Believe and live”—when God declares that we have only to trust His Son and rest in the Atonement which He has made, we say, “No, it is too simple a business.” The difficulty lies only in our proud hearts! They are so lofty and self-sufficient that they do not readily stoop to be saved by Another’s merits and never, until the Spirit of God brings us down humbly to feel our need of such an Atonement, are we willing to accept the salvation of Jesus Christ!

But simple as the whole matter is, there is a great misunderstanding about it among some who look unfavorably upon evangelistic efforts. I have noticed in the newspapers a controversy which arises from a misunderstanding as to what faith is. Somebody has very severely condemned a hymn which says—

**“Nothing, either great or small—  
Nothing, Sinner—no  
Jesus did it—did it all,  
Long, long ago.”**

Now it has been supposed that we teach that faith in Christ, altogether apart from moral character or obedience to the Law of God, will save the soul—and it is then charged that we undervalue the decencies and moralities of life! It is no means so. We have never taught that a faith which is without works will save a man, for we know that such a faith is dead and is, therefore, of no value! We do teach—and every man who rightly preaches the Gospel teaches—that we are saved by faith in Christ and not by works. But we also teach that he who is saved, is saved from sin, is saved from unholiness, is saved to morality and to something a great deal better—to holiness and careful walking before the living God!

What is salvation? It is necessary to explain that word in order to make this matter clear. Salvation is not merely being snatched from Hell and being admitted to Heaven. The greatest trouble of a really awakened conscience is not Hell, but sin. “How can I be saved from sin?” is the anxious enquirer’s main question. Since I spoke here last week I have received notes from persons present who have said, “Speak to us about how we can conquer besetting sins. Tell us how we can get supremacy over carnal lusts,” and the like. That question I am answering now! Christ’s salvation rescues men from themselves and frees them from the domination of evil! I would give nothing for a supposed deliverance from Hell if it does not come by way of deliverance from sin! It is sin that makes Hell, for there would be no Hell if man had no evil within him, as there certainly can be no Heaven for a man till he is made good and fit to dwell with God, for the fire of Hell is a guilty conscience before God—and the bliss of Heaven is holiness and reconciliation to the Most High.

Now, this kind of salvation comes to a man by faith, or in other words by trusting Jesus to save him. It is not merely that I believe the fact that Christ died on the Cross—I do believe that, but the mere historical belief in a past transaction will not save me! I trust in Him who died for me and believe that He will set me free from the power of my sins. Jesus Christ, who still lives in the highest heavens, says to me, “You are sick in soul. I can save you. Will you trust Me? You must trust not anything *you* can do, or anything you can be, but trust Me.” Very well. My reply to Him, if I am really led by the Spirit of God, is, “Great Physician of Souls, I do trust

You.” Now what follows upon trusting a physician? Obedience to his orders! Imagine a physician calling upon a person who is sick and promising him a cure upon the one condition that he will have perfect confidence and leave himself in the doctor’s hands. The physician remarks, “Your disease is a very terrible one. What are you accustomed to eat?” The patient at once mentions certain articles of diet and the physician shakes his head and says, “If you continue to eat in that fashion, I can do nothing for you. You really must give up the unhealthy matters upon which your disease feeds.” Then he adds, “Here is the medicine which I prescribe. I have never known it fail. You are quite sure you trust me?” “Yes, Sir, implicitly.” “Then all will be well.”

The physician goes his way and calls again in due time, but the patient is not a bit better. “You are no better. How is this?” The doctor looks surprised. “What food have you been eating?” The patient tells him and it turns out that he has been taking precisely what he was forbidden to take. “Well,” says the doctor, “you do not trust me. You have no faith in me.” “Oh yes I have, Sir! I have the greatest possible faith in you.” “Then why do you act in this fashion? You are mocking me! I consider myself to be trifled with and I shall have no more to do with the case unless I have your confidence. You have no faith in me if you persist in disobedience. You do not trust me unless you keep to the regimen which I prescribe. Did you take the medicine?” “No, I did not like it. I tasted it and I did not admire the flavor—and so I set it aside.” “And yet you say that you trust me?” “Yes! And you said that if I trusted you, you would work a cure.” “But,” replies the physician, “you know what I meant and you are mocking me! You do not trust me at all, or else you would both forego what I forbid you and gladly accept what I prescribe you.”

Is not this reasonable? Carry it, then, into the matter of trust in Jesus. The faith in the Lord Jesus Christ which saves the soul shows itself in obedience to the precepts which He lays down and in forsaking the habits which He condemns. This is the faith which we declare saves the soul and I defy any man to say that there is anything in such teaching which is detrimental to morality or opposed to good works! No, rather, but whatever things are pure and of good repute are fostered by such preaching and are undoubtedly produced by the saving faith in Jesus Christ of which we speak!

Now, the assertion that simple faith in Jesus Christ will save a man from sin and will ultimately make him perfect if it shall work in him by the power of the Spirit of God is most reasonable. The natural and inevitable fruit of faith in Christ is holiness. For observe. We spoke last week about a child that had no love to its father and of the great grief of the father’s heart because the child was alienated. What would be one of the readiest ways to get back the boy’s heart? If you can get that lad to believe in his father—to confide in his father! The affection which he had lost will come back again. When a man trusts God and accepts His way of salvation, that trust naturally influences his affections and through his affections it is sure to influence his life. That is clear enough to any man who chooses to remember the laws of the human mind. Confidence in a person’s love tends to make us love him in return.

A sense of pardon is a wonderful curative of sin and this comes by faith. The man who is conscious of being guilty is usually possessed by a sort of sullen despondency as to better things. The old proverb that you may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb operates on many a man, "I am lost," he says, "and if lost, I may just as well go in and enjoy myself while I am here." But oh, when that man is led to believe Christ, quite another feeling possesses him! The joy of pardon banishes all gloom and he cheerfully cries, "How shall I continue in sin after such a loving forgiveness? Has Christ washed it all away and cast it all behind His back? Then will I labor with all my heart to show my gratitude to Him and henceforth the evil which I once loved shall be detested by me!" Many a man has felt more influence exerted upon his mind by the Grace that has pardoned him than by the Justice which threatened to punish him! And when God comes and deals with us in that fashion, assuring us that we are forgiven, there is a conquest attained over sin!

He who believes that he has been forgiven by the merit of the Redeemer's death, loves Christ. And let any man who loves Christ answer me—Is not the love of Christ the most potent force conceivable for delivering you from sin? You cannot see yonder Cross and mark the drops that flow from Jesus' wounds and say, "Thus my sins were washed away"—and then go and offend Him. No! But for the love you bear His name, you feel ready and willing to do anything and suffer anything, rather than grieve His Spirit. The love of Christ constrains us to all sorts of self-denials and self-sacrifices when once we are fully possessed with it! It purges from all that is petty, mean, selfish and impure—and as he who believes in Jesus Christ has a faith which works by love after this fashion, you can clearly see how faith leads on to a holy life.

There is one fact connected with our being saved through faith which ought always to be remembered. It is thought that if a man knows himself to be forgiven and saved he will go about the world and feel that he is somebody and look down upon other people as if they were almost unworthy of his acquaintance. I have never met with any case where that has occurred but, still, it is thought that such would be the case. But observe—if this salvation comes to a man not at all by his own merits, but only as the free gift of God. And if all that he has done has been to accept it and lay hold upon it by simple faith—instead of feeling *proud*, he feels humbled by the great mercy which he has received! He cannot trace any of it to himself, so as to claim the smallest measure of credit for it—and so he is saved from the tendency to pride and Phariseeism which otherwise his distinguished position as a saved soul might have suggested to him! The principle which delivers from pride and self-conceit, which is in itself no small salvation—is that of faith in Christ!

He who believes in Jesus has another means by which he overcomes sin, namely, that he reckons himself henceforth not to be his own but to be henceforth the property of his Redeemer. This rings in his ears—"For you are not your own: you are bought with a price." And so, if he is true to his convictions, he cannot live to himself. He has higher aims and nobler objectives than any which concern his own personal advantages. He reckons that his time, his substance, his faculties, his position do not belong to himself, but he uses them as a steward for his Master and

gives to his Lord the interest. I think I need not dwell longer on this point, for it will be clear to all who wish to see it, that faith in Jesus is a very operative faculty and tends to promote holiness.

But faith is not that mere cold, barren thing which says, "The creed is true," and then doubles it up and forgets it, or puts it on the shelf all the week to be taken down only on Sundays—it is a loving trust in Christ which changes the heart and affects the entire life! It is the grandest, greatest power ever seen on earth, for by it the Holy Spirit displays His might in the salvation of men!

But, men and Brothers, the proof of any theory must always lie in results. What are the facts? Has Gospel preaching produced morality, purity, holiness, or the reverse? There are some of us who have been preaching the Doctrine of Justification by Faith for years. What have been the results? According to the opinion of some, we ought to have gathered around us a frightful nest of hypocrites who would strut about the world, looking down upon everybody else but really being the most lustful and licentious of men since they are free from all the restraints which are supposed to arise out of the doctrine of salvation by works! That, of course, would be the consequence if it is, indeed, true that Justification by Faith discourages morality! The preacher ought to be the center of a happy hunting ground for the police if our objectors have any foundation for their allegations! But how have we found it? I will not vaunt myself beyond my line and measure, but I will say that the purest, holiest, most honest and most worthy people I have ever known are Believers in this Truth of God. Do you tell me that they were naturally excellent and would never have gone wrong whatever they had believed? I have a reply for this also. I know scores of those who were once degraded women and even harlots of the street, who, at this moment, are chaste women, scrupulous in purity and loving their Lord! I know thieves, drunkards, persons of all classes and castes from whom I have heard the story of their lives and who have told me that they would have continued as they were—sinful and leading others into sin—if it had not been that they heard of free salvation through the precious blood and believed and lived!

We cannot bring these people up before you to speak personally, because you yourselves see that it would be an indiscreet and improper proceeding. But if the case had to be tried like any other in a court of law we could produce proofs by the hundreds that faith is the friend of morals and the source of purity! Yes, we could not only bring you brands plucked out of the fire from the lower ranks of society, but there are gentlemen who are equally illustrious instances of Divine Grace. We have heard of gentlemen respected in their spheres who, nevertheless, behind the wall were living in fornication and adultery and all sorts of filthiness, but who, nevertheless, chanced to drop in and hear the Gospel and were led by Grace to believe it—and their lives have become henceforth renewed and purified! It has been their earnest wish to undo the mischief they have done and to live all the more devotedly to the Glory of God because they know that they have done so much damage to society and to their own souls. We are not here to unveil private lives, or make

heroes out of great sinners, but we cannot and will not have it said that faith in Christ does not cleanse men when we know to the contrary! If, as I stand preaching on the Sabbath, I were to say, "Let those who have felt the power of the Gospel and have been delivered by it from gross sin, stand up," there are not a few who would run the risk of being thought immodest and who would rise and say, "Yes, blessed be Jehovah Jesus' name, we are brands plucked out of the burning! We have felt the transforming power of Divine Grace."

What has done this except the Gospel? Truly I know not! I heard a missionary say the other day that he stood in public places in India and preached the unity of the Godhead—and that when the Hindus rose and objected, he knew their objections and answered them. Then he preached the deity of Christ and the Muslims opposed him. "But," he said, "I was so familiar with the controversy that I could reply to all their remarks and win the victory. I did this for years," he said, "but I saw small good come of it. But when I changed my plan and began to preach the great love of God to man through Jesus Christ and taught them to believe and live, then came success! I saw them moved to tears and converts came to prove the power of the Gospel." What does Dr. Chalmers say—(no mean witness)—that for years he preached morality and virtue till he scarcely could find any in his parish! But when he began to preach Jesus Christ and simple faith in Him, then he saw the worst of the worst reformed and men sought after holiness and truth! We cannot but speak what we know and testify what we have seen! The quaint old English proverb is that "the proof of the pudding is in the eating," and one great proof of the Gospel lies in the effect that it produces. If, good Sir, you profess to believe in Jesus Christ and your faith does not affect your heart and your life—it is a counterfeit and you will do well to be rid of it as soon as possible lest so suspicious an article should be found upon you!

My time has almost expired and, therefore, let me use it in pleading with you. Jesus Christ has a great claim upon the faith of everyone of us here present. My Brothers, you who believe in Him, do not believe in Him half enough. You who trust Him with your souls, should trust Him with everything else. Rely upon Him in Providence as well as in Grace.

To those who do not trust Him, let us say this. Do you believe in the New Testament? Is that to you an Inspired volume? Then to you I speak. You believe that Jesus Christ is God—can you not trust your soul with God? What can be too hard for Him? What if you are guilty—cannot God pardon you? What if your heart is evil—cannot God change you? Cannot He who made you, make you new? Surely, then, to doubt God is insanity, since where there is Omnipotent power there is no rational room for doubt!

Remember, next, that Christ came into this world commissioned by God to save. He did not come as an amateur, taking the office upon Himself without authorization. When He descended on the breast of Mary and lay in the manger, God sent Him with a high commission at His back, giving Him authority to be a Prince and a Savior. We may well trust the Messiah whom God, the Everlasting One, sends with unquestionable warrant!

Remember, too, that the work which He had to do He has altogether finished. To put away sin was Christ's work—He has put it away! Not a pang of punishment remains to be borne for sin by anyone who believes in Jesus—

***“He to the utmost farthing paid  
Whatever His people owed.”***

He who believes in Christ may know that Christ took all the load of sin upon Himself—every particle of it—past, present and to come—and threw it into the depths of the sea where it is drowned forever! It were somewhat harder to believe in a Christ who has to do this, than in a Christ who has done it! But Jesus claims our trust because He has already done the work!

Many like ourselves have been saved. Look at Heaven—filling with the redeemed. And look at earth—how many still among us are wending their way to the blest abode! Trust Him of whom no man ever dared to say that He deceived him! I have stood by scores of dying beds, but I have never heard a Christian say, “I trusted in Christ, but He has failed me.” I have seen them with the clammy death sweat upon their brows, but I have never heard them say, “I die deceived, for I trusted Christ to support me now and He has left me to perish.” Surely somewhere in the world someone would have found Him out by this time if He were not trustworthy! But, instead of it, we trust Him so implicitly that we wonder others do not, for we feel, for our own part, that if we had ten thousand souls we would ask for no other Savior, but would confide the whole ten thousand and ten thousand more in His once pierced hands!

Have you never trusted Him? Then, since He is worthy of your confidence, confide in Him now! Sitting in these benches, at this unusual hour for listening to the Gospel, hear this pleading voice—

***“Oh, believe the record true,  
God for you His Son has given!  
You may now be happy too,  
Find on earth the life of Heaven.”***

Rest in Jesus and a thrill of life will go through you such as you have never felt before!

I saw not long ago a woman who said to me, “Is it indeed true that upon trusting in Jesus I shall be saved at once?” I replied, “It is even so.” “Why,” she said, “My father, when he got religion, was nearly six years a-getting it. And they had to put him in a lunatic asylum part of the time! I thought that there was no getting saved without going through a very dreadful process.” I spoke to her of the Person and the work of Jesus, and repeated to her the Divine Command, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” She caught the idea and obeyed the command! I perceived that she yielded to the Truth of God and really trusted, for I saw a change come over her face which betokened the rest of her soul. Those who are familiar with such scenes know what a beauty lights up the countenance of the plainest persons when they come to see the way of peace and enter upon it. “I am saved,” she said, and she hastened off, saying, “I will get away now, for your time must not be wasted! I am saved and you can tell the Truth to some others and perhaps they will rejoice as I do.”

Are there none here this morning to whom this Gospel will be good news? Young man, it may be that you will begin this morning a new life and that there will be for you a grand career in the service of God! The beginning of the new life is faith in Jesus Christ—

***“Only trust Him, only trust Him!  
Only trust Him now!  
He will save you, He will save you,  
He will save you now!”***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JOHN 3:1-21**

**Verses 1, 2.** *There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that You are a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that You do, except God be with him.* When enquirers come to see any of you who are Christians, do not begin talking to them, but let them begin by telling you what they have to say, for it will probably guide you as to what you shall say to them in return. Our Lord Jesus could read all hearts and He needed no one to tell Him what was there, yet, for our sakes He sets the example of letting Nicodemus speak first. This man was a Pharisee and, consequently, was apt to attach too much importance to the outward part of religion—so observe how the Savior deals with him by dwelling on the inner part of it—upon the necessity of the new birth. He has less to say to him about believing and more about experimental godliness and the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart. Our main business, in dealing with men’s souls, is not to teach them what they want to know but what they really *need* to know, bringing forward ever that Truth of God which, if it is not the most palatable, shall be the most profitable to them.

**3.** *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* “He has no idea of what it is. He cannot perceive it. He has not the faculty by which he could see or understand the meaning of the Kingdom of God.”

**4.** *Nicodemus said unto Him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb and be born?* His religion was external, you see—he could not grasp the spiritual idea which Christ had set before him. This matter of the new birth is very simple to all of us who know what Jesus meant, but it was exceedingly difficult to Nicodemus—as it has been to all but those who have experienced it.

**5.** *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* The entrance into that Kingdom is by a new birth in which water and the Spirit of God are both necessary. There is a cleansing and there is a new creation. There is the cleansing water of the merit of Christ and there is the Divine operation of the Spirit of God. Or, if the Savior only means entrance into His *visible* Kingdom, then it is through Baptism that the man outwardly makes his profession of faith in Christ. It is through the Spirit of God alone, however, that he really enters into the Kingdom of

God. Note the distinction between *seeing* the Kingdom and *entering* into it—no man can even see the Kingdom of God, much less enter it, except by that new birth which is worked only by the Holy Spirit!

**6.** *That which is born of the flesh is flesh.* No matter who the father is, nor who the mother is, there is no such thing as inherited godliness. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and nothing more. All that is born of the flesh cannot rise beyond its original source. However much the man may improve himself, our Savior’s words will still remain true—“That which is born of the flesh is flesh.”

**6.** *And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* Everything is according to its birth and according to its nature. The Spirit of God must, therefore, operate upon us and we must have a new birth if we are to see and to enter the Kingdom of God.

**7.** *Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born-again.* “Do not wonder at this, for it must be so. The first birth, at its best, can only give you flesh. There must be another birth, a birth from above, to bring you into the realm of spirit that you may understand and share in spiritual things.”

**8.** *The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.* He is a mysterious personage, not to be understood by carnal man. You see his outward life, but you cannot see the hidden spring by which that life is moved and controlled, for that mysterious inner life is only discerned by those who possess it.

**9, 10.** *Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things?* “Do you profess to teach others and have you never been taught this first great spiritual Truth of God?” Nicodemus was not the last Rabbi who did not understand what it is to be born-again, and it is greatly to be feared that there are still many who are teachers of others, who yet have never experienced this all-important change. The Lord have mercy upon them!

**11.** *Verily, verily, I say unto you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen; and you receive not Our witness.* The testimony of Christ and of His Apostles, and of all true disciple of Christ is this—that there is such a thing as a new birth. Men may not believe that it is true but, for all that, it is as certain as any other fact in the history of the world! It is foolish for any to deny it because they have not experienced it themselves. Although they have not experienced it, others have, and those who declare that they have been born-again are as honest, as reasonable and as trustworthy as any other people in the world. If any counsel had to prove his case in a court of law, by the mouth of five or six witnesses, I am sure that he would not want better witnesses than those who declare that they have been born-again! Many of them are well known people of high repute and their testimony ought to be believed. But it is not a question of six, or a dozen, or a dozen thousand witnesses. There have been hundreds of thousands of men and women who have borne witness that a miraculous change has taken place in them, by which they have been born into a new world and have received a new life!

And the testimony of these witnesses ought to be believed. It was hard that Christ should have to say, “You receive not Our witness.”

**12.** *If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?*” For regeneration is, as it were, one of the commonplaces of the Christian religion. It is a thing that very often takes place among men. But if this foundation Truth of God is not believed, how can men expect that yet higher Truths of God shall be revealed to them?

**13.** *And no man has ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man who is in Heaven.* So far, this chapter treats of the new birth and there are many people who are much perplexed because they cannot comprehend this great mystery. They ask, “How, then, can we be saved? Is there no way of salvation without the new birth?” Assuredly there is none, yet the way of salvation is very simple and clear. It is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved,” and it is very significant that this chapter which, beyond any other, teaches the Doctrine of the New Birth and, with equal clearness, teaches the Doctrine of Salvation by Faith in Christ. Listen—

**14-18.** *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* That is the proof of his condemnation—he must be an enemy to God who will not believe on His Son! He who refuses to believe the witness of God is, by that very fact, convicted and condemned! And if he had no other sin, it is sin enough to sink him to the lowest Hell to deny the veracity of God—to make God a liar by refusing to believe in Jesus Christ His Son! See, then, how these two Truths are blended. “You must be born-again,” and, “he that believes on Him is not condemned.” Why is that? Because he is born-again! That new birth has taken place in him and eternal life is his because he has believed on the only begotten Son of God!

**19-21.** *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are worked in God.* Now, my Friend, are you willing to come to the light—to the light of Scripture—to the light of Revelation? If so, so far well. God grant us Grace to feel that light is our friend—that we do not need to shun it, but desire to walk in it!

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

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

# HOUSEHOLD SALVATION

## NO. 1019

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 5, 1871,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And they spoke unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”*  
**Acts 16:32-34.**

IT sometimes happens that a good man has to go alone to Heaven—God's election has separated him from the midst of an ungodly family, and, notwithstanding his example and his prayers, and his admonitions, they still remain unconverted, and he himself, a solitary one, a speckled bird among them, has to pursue his lonely flight to the skies. Far more often, however, it happens that the God who is the God of Abraham becomes the God of Sarah, and then of Isaac, and then of Jacob, and though Grace does not run in the blood, and regeneration is not of blood nor of birth, yet does it very frequently—I was about to say almost always—happen that God, by means of one of a household, draws the rest to Himself.

He calls an individual, and then uses him to be a sort of spiritual decoy to bring the rest of the family into the Gospel net. John Bunyan, in the first part of his “Pilgrim's Progress,” describes Christian as a lonely traveler, pursuing his road to the Celestial City alone. Occasionally he is attended by Faithful, or he meets with a Hopeful. But these are casual acquaintances, and are not of his kith or kin—brother or child after the flesh he has none with him. The second part of Bunyan's book exhibits *family* piety, for we see Christiana, and the children, and many friends all traveling in company to the better land.

And though it is often said that the second part of Bunyan's wondrous allegory is somewhat weaker than the former, and probably it is so, yet many a gentle spirit has found it sweeter than the former, and it has given to many a loving heart great delight to feel that there is a possibility, beneath the leadership of one of the Lord's Great-hearts, to form a convoy to the skies, so that a sacred caravan shall traverse the desert of earth, and women and children shall find their way, in happy association, to the City of Habitations. We rejoice to think of whole families enclosed within the lines of electing Grace, and entire households redeemed by blood, devoting themselves to the service of the God of Love.

I am sure any of you, who yourselves have tasted that the Lord is gracious, are most anxious to bring others into reconciliation with God. It is an instinct with the Christian to desire that his fellow men should, as he has done, both taste and see that the Lord is good. Judaism wraps itself up within itself, and claims a monopoly of blessing for the chosen nation. The heir after the flesh gnashes with his teeth when we declare that the

true heirs of Abraham are born after the Spirit and are found in every land.

They would reserve all heavenly privileges to the circumcised, and keep up the ancient middle wall of partition. It is the very genius of Christianity to embrace all mankind in its love. If there is anything true, let all believe it—if there is anything good, let all receive it. We desire no gates of brass to shut out the multitude. And if there are barriers, we would throw them down, and pray eternal mercy to induce the teeming millions to draw near to the Fountain of Life. It will not be wrong, but, on the contrary, most natural and proper, that your desire for the salvation of others should, first of all, rest upon your own families.

If charity begins at home, so, assuredly, piety will. They have special claims upon us who gather around our table and our hearth. God has not reversed the laws of Nature, but He has sanctified them by the rules of Divine Grace. It foretells nothing of selfishness that a man should first seek to have his own kindred saved. I will give nothing for your love for the wide world if you have not a special love for your own household. The rule of Paul may, with a little variation, be applied here. We are to “do good unto all men, but specially unto such as are of the household of faith.” So are we to seek the good of all mankind, but specially of those who are of our own near kindred.

Let Abraham’s prayer be for Ishmael. Let Hannah pray for Samuel, let David plead for Solomon. Let Andrew find first his brother Simon, and Eunice train her Timothy—they will be none the less large or prevalent in their pleadings for others because they were mindful of those allied to them by ties of blood. To allure and encourage you to long for family religion, I have selected this text this morning. God grant it may answer the purpose designed. May many here have a spiritual hunger and thirst that they may receive the blessing which so largely rested upon the Philippian jailer.

Note in our text five things. We have *a whole household hearing the Word, a whole household believing it, a whole household baptized, a whole household working for God, and then, a whole household rejoicing.*

**I.** Observe, first, in the passage before us, A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD HEARING THE WORD. I do not know whether they had ever heard the Gospel before—perhaps they had. We have no certain proof that the jailer heard the name of Jesus Christ for the first time amidst the tumult of the earthquake. He may have listened to Paul in the streets, and so have known something of the Gospel and of the name of Jesus Christ. But this is hardly probable, as he would then have scarcely treated the Apostle so harshly.

Most likely the Word of God sounded at midnight in the ears of the jailer and his household for the first time, and, on that remarkable occasion, they all heard it together. The father first, in his alarm, asked the question, “What must I do to be saved?” and received personally the answer, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, and your house.” And then it appears that all the family gathered around their parent and the two holy men, while Paul and Silas spoke unto him the Word of the Lord, and also to all that were in his house. We do not know

whether there were children there, but if so, and we will assume it for this occasion, all were hearers that night.

There was not a solitary exception, no one was away from that sermon in a jail. His wife, his children, his servants, all that were in his house listened to the heavenly message. It is true, he who preached was a prisoner, but that made the Word none the less powerful, for he was to them an ambassador in bonds. Prisoner as he was, he preached to them a free Gospel, and a Gospel of Divine authority. He erred not from the Truth in what he taught. He preached unto them the "Word of God."

Would to God that all preachers would keep to the Word of God, and, above all things, would exalt the Incarnate Word of God. This were infinitely better than to delude men's minds with those "gems of thought," those strikingly new ideas, those metaphysical subtleties, and speculations, and theories, and discoveries of science, falsely so called, which are nowadays so fashionable. If all ministers could preach the Word, the revealed mind and will of God, then hearers would in larger numbers become converts—for God will bless His own Word—but He will not bless anything else.

The jailor's household all heard God's Word faithfully declared, and there was the main cause of blessing, for, alas, with many hearers, the Sunday is utterly wasted! Though they are attentive listeners, they are left without a blessing because that which they hear is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I have, myself, heard sermons which, I am persuaded, God Almighty Himself could not bless to the conversion of anybody. He could not, because it would have been a denial of Himself.

The discourses were not true, nor according to His Word. They were not such as were calculated to honor Himself, and how can He bless that which is not to His own honor? And how can He set His seal to a lie? The Word of God must be preached, and then the place, the hour, or the garb of the preacher will matter nothing. The minister may have been led up from a prison, and the smell of the dungeon may be upon him, but when he opens his mouth with the glad tidings, the name of Jesus will be as ointment poured forth.

I began my remarks on this point by noting that they all heard Paul. And observe the need of this, as a starting-point, for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." It is not all who hear that will be saved, but the ordinary way with God is for men first to hear, then to believe, and so to be saved. "Being in the way, God met with me," said Obadiah. And the road which a soul should follow to be met with by God is the way of *hearing*. Though it may seem a very trite thing to say, it is nevertheless exceedingly important if we are to have household conversion, that there should be a household hearing of the Word.

This is the chosen instrumentality, and we must bring all under the instrumentality if we wish them to obtain the blessing. Now, in this city, many *fathers* never hear the Word of God because they regard the Sunday as a day of laziness. They work so hard all the week, they say, that they are not fit to rise from their beds on Sunday morning. And then, after a heavy dinner, the evening must be spent in loitering about, and chatting away time. Brethren, if you want to see your fellow workmen saved, you should earnestly endeavor to bring them under the sound of the Gospel.

Here is a very useful occupation for many of you. You cannot preach, but you can gather a congregation for those who do? A little persuasion would succeed in many cases, and once bring them here, we would hope to hold them. If I could not be the instrument of converting a soul by preaching the Gospel myself, I would habitually addict myself to the bringing of strangers to listen to those whom God has owned to the conversion of souls. Why, our congregations need never be thin—I speak not now for myself, for I have no need—but in no place where the Gospel is preached need there be a thin audience, if those who already appreciate the Gospel would feel it to be a Christian duty to bring others to hear it. Do this, I pray you.

I believe it to be one of the most important efforts which a Christian can make, to endeavor to bring the working men of London, and, indeed, all classes of men everywhere, to listen to the Gospel of Christ. The men, the fathers, the heads of households, we must have. If we are to have the household saved, however, the *mothers* must hear the Word as well as the fathers. Many of them do, but I know cases, and, perhaps there may be such present, and I wish to speak what is practical—where a man comes to hear the Word himself—but his wife is detained at home with the children.

Perhaps she is not converted, and has not much care to go to the service. Perhaps she is a Christian, and though she would wish to go, she must look after the children. In either case it is the duty of every such father, if he does not keep a servant to attend to the children, to take his turn with the wife and let her have her fair share of opportunity for hearing the Gospel. He meanly shirks the duty of a husband, who, being a working man, does not take his turn at home and give his wife as good an opportunity of learning the way of salvation as himself. This may be a new suggestion to some, I only hope they will carry it out. It is plain that if we are to have whole households saved, we must have whole households hearing the Word, and if the mother cannot hear the Word, we cannot rationally expect the blessing to come to her.

Then the *children*, also, must be thought of. We desire to see them converted as children. There is no need that they should wait until they are grown up and have run into sin as their fathers did, that they may be afterwards brought back. It would be infinitely better if they were preserved from such wanderings, and brought early into the fold of Jesus. The blessing which God gave to the jailor's children by hearing, He gives in the same way to other children. Let the little ones be brought to hear the Gospel. They can hear it in the Sunday school, and there are special services adapted to them. But, for my part, I like also to preach that boys and girls shall be interested, and I shall feel that I am very faulty in my style if children cannot understand much that I teach in the congregation.

Bring all who have reached years of understanding with you. Suffer none to be at home, except for good reasons. Bring each young Samuel to the house of the Lord. Let it be said of you, as it is written in the Book of Chronicles, "And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children." If nothing else shall come from children's attending our worship, the holy habit of going up to God's House will be a

perpetual heritage to them. And who knows but while they are yet young their hearing the Word shall be the means of their salvation.

Then there are the *servants*, and by no means are they to be overlooked. To have all that are in the house saved, all that are in the house must hear the Gospel. Do you all make such opportunities for your servants on the Sunday as you should? I do not know, of course, how you conduct your family arrangements. But I know of some who do not think enough of their servants' hearing the Gospel. Servants frequently are sent out in the afternoon, when there is no preaching worth the hearing. It may be unavoidable in many cases. But I would ask, What is the use of their going out at an hour when no preaching is to be found?

If we give them only opportunities of going out when there is nothing to hear, we certainly have not given them a fair portion of the Lord's Day. By some contrivance or other, perhaps with a little pinch and self-sacrifice, our servants might hear our own minister. You cannot pray God to save your household, and be honest, unless you give the whole household an opportunity of being saved. And God's way of saving souls—we repeat it—is by the preaching and the hearing of the Word of God.

Oh, let every one of us be able to say, as masters and as parents, "I cannot save my children, and I cannot save my servants, but this I have done, I have directed them to a man of God who preaches the Gospel faithfully. I do not send them to a place merely because there is talent or fashion there, but I have selected for them a ministry which God blesses, and I do my best to put them all in the way of the blessing, praying and beseeching the Lord to call them all by His Grace."

I anticipate the many difficulties you will urge, but would again say, if we love souls, we should try to meet these difficulties, and if we cannot do all we would, we should at least do all we *can*—that we may have all our households every Sunday hearing the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.

**II.** We now turn to the next, which is a most comfortable and cheering sight. Here is A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD BELIEVING. We know that the whole household believed, for we are told so in the thirty-fourth verse; "Believing in God with all his house." All, all! All were powerfully affected, savingly affected by the Gospel which Paul preached to them. I have already remarked that they were very probably new hearers. Certainly, if they had heard the Word before, it could not have been many times. And yet they all believed!

Is it not a most sad fact that many of my old hearers have not believed? The battering-ram has beaten often on their walls, but it has not shaken them yet. Wooing invitations of the Gospel have been presented to them again and again, accompanied by the soul-piercing music of a Savior's dying cries. And yet, for all that, they remain unconverted still. Oh, the responsibilities that are heaped up upon Gospel-hardened sinners! Take home to yourselves that warning word, I pray you. This household heard the Gospel probably but once, certainly only once or twice, yet they believed, and here are some of us who have heard it from our youth up, and remain rebellious still.

Of this family it may be said that as they were new hearers, so they were most unlikely hearers. The Romans did not select for jailers the most tender-hearted of men. Frequently they were old soldiers who had seen

service in bloody wars, and been in cruel fights. And when these men settled down as, in a measure, pensioners of the empire, they were allotted such offices as that which the jailer held.

In the society and associations of a jail there was very little that could be likely to improve the mother, to benefit the children, or elevate the servants. They were, then, most unpromising hearers. Yet how often are the most unlikely persons convinced of sin and led to the Savior? How true is it still of many who are most moral and excellent, and even outwardly religious, that “the publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of Heaven before them.” This is an encouragement to you who work in lodging houses and in the slums of this vast city, to bring all kinds of people to hear the Word—for if a jailer and his household were numbered among the first fruits unto God at Philippi—may we not hope that others of an unlikely class may be converted, too?

Who are you that you should say, “It is of no use to invite such a man to hear, for he would not be converted”? The more improbable it seems to be in *your* judgment, perhaps the more likely it is that God will look upon him with an eye of love. How happy a thing it was for the jailer that, in the Providence of God, his hardened but probably honest spirit was brought under the influence of the earnest Apostle. Bring others, like he, into the place of worship, for who can tell? Note that though they were thus unlikely hearers, yet they were *immediately* converted, then and there. It took but a short time.

I do not know how long Paul’s sermon was. He was a wise man, and I should not think he would preach a long sermon in the dead of the night, just after an earthquake! I have no doubt it was a simple exposition of the doctrine of the Cross. And then Silas talked, too, perhaps, when Paul had done. Silas gave a little exhortation, a brief address to finish up with, and fill up anything which Paul had left out. The teaching was soon over, and at its close the jailer, his wife, his children (if he had any), his servants, and, indeed, all that were in the house, avowed themselves to be Believers. It does not take a month to convert a soul!

Glory be to God, if He wills to do it, He can convert all here this morning in a moment! Once hearing the Gospel may be sufficient to make a man a Christian. When the Eternal Word of God comes forth with Omnipotent energy, it turns lions into lambs, and that in a single instant of time. As the lightning flash can split the oak from its loftiest bough to the earth in a single second, so the ever-blessed lightning of God’s Spirit can cleave the heart of man in a moment. Our text shows us a whole family saved at once. It is said particularly of them all that, “they believed.”

Was that the only thing? Could it not be said that they all prayed? I dare say it could, and many other good things. But then faith was at the root of them all. It was the sneer of an old Greek philosopher against the Christians of his day—“Faith,” he said, “is your only wisdom.” Yes, and we rejoice in the same wisdom *now*—faith. For the moment we receive faith we are saved. It is the one essential Grace—“*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” The moment God gives a man faith—and that He can do at any time—the instant the heart casts itself into the arms of Jesus crucified, and rests there. Whoever it is, he is saved in an instant! Effectually and infallibly saved!

He is, in all respects, a new creature in Christ Jesus. Faith is an instantaneous act at its beginning, and then it remains as an abiding Grace. Its first act, by the power of God, puts a man into the present possession of immediate salvation. I wonder if we preachers fully believe this as a matter of fact. If I were to go into a jail tomorrow evening, and were to preach to the jailer and his household, should I expect to see all saved then and there? And if they were, should I believe it? Most likely I should not see it, and the reason would lie because I should not have faith enough to *expect* it.

We preach the Gospel, no doubt, but it is with the slender hope that *some* may be converted, and they are converted, here and there. But if God would clothe us with the faith of the Apostles, we should see far greater things. When He works in us a larger faith, He will also restore to us the hundredfold harvest, which, alas, is so rare in these days. Notice very particularly that these persons, though converted thus suddenly, all of them were, nevertheless, very hearty converts.

They did that night, as I shall show you soon, abundantly prove how thoroughly converted they were. They were quick to do all that in them lay for the Apostle, and for the good cause. They were not half converted, as many people are. I like to see a man renewed all over from head to foot. It is delightful to meet your hearty Christian, who, when he gave his heart to Jesus, meant it, and devoted his whole body, soul, and spirit to the good Lord who had bought him with His blood.

Some of you have only got a little-finger conversion—just enough to wear the ring of profession, and look respectable. But oh, to have hand and foot, lungs, heart, voice, and soul, all saturated with the Spirit's influence and consecrated to the cause of God! We have a few such men, full of the Holy Spirit, but, alas, we have too many other converts who are rather tintured with Grace, than saturated with it, and to whom sprinkling is a very significant ordinance, for it would appear that they never have received anything but a sprinkling of Grace. Oh, for saints in whom there will be a thorough death and burial to the world, and a new life, in the resurrection image of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the true Baptism of the Holy Spirit!

However, I must return on this head to the point that they all believed. What a sweet picture for you to look upon. The father is a Believer in Jesus, but he has not to kneel down and pray, "Lord, save my dear wife," for look, and rejoice as you see it, she is a Believer, too! And then there is the elder son and the daughters. We know not, and we must not guess, how many there might be—but there they are—all rejoicing in their father's God. And then there are the servants! The old nurse who brought up the little ones, and the little maid, and the warders who have to look after the prisoners—they are all of them ready to sing the Psalm of praise, and all delighted to look upon those who were once their prisoners as now their instructors and their fathers in the faith.

O Brethren, if some of us should ever see all our children and our servants saved, we would cry like Simeon of old, "Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace according to Your Word." Many have seen it. The jailor's case is by no means an exceptional one, and I hope all of us are earnestly crying to God that we may gain the same unspeakable privilege.

**III.** We have, in the third place in our text, A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD BAPTIZED. “He was baptized, he and all his straightway.” In almost every case in Scripture where you read of a household Baptism, you are distinctly informed that they were also a believing household. In the case of Lydia it may not be so. But then there are remarkable circumstances about her case which render that information needless. In this instance they were all Believers, and, therefore, they were all of them baptized. First, “HE” was baptized—the jailor. He was ready first to submit himself to the ordinance in which he declared himself to be dead to the world, and risen anew in Christ Jesus.

Then “*all his*” followed. What a glorious Baptism, amidst the glare of the torches that night! Perhaps in the prison bath, or in the pool which was usually in the center of most oriental houses, or perhaps the stream that watered Philippi ran by the prison wall, and was used for the occasion. It matters not, but into the water they descended, one after another—mother, children, servants. And Paul and Silas stood there delighted to aid them in declaring themselves to be on the Lord’s side, “buried with Him in Baptism.”

And this was done, mark you, *straightway*. There was not one who wished to have it put off till he had tried himself a little, and seen whether he was really regenerated. In those days no one had any scruple or objection to obey—none advocated the following of some ancient and doubtful tradition—all were obedient to the Divine will. No one shrank from Baptism for fear that water might damage his health, or in some way cause him inconvenience. But he and all his, wishing to follow the plain example of our Lord Jesus Christ, were baptized, and that straightway—at once, and on the spot.

No minister has any right to refuse to baptize any person who professes faith in Jesus Christ, unless there is some glaring fact to cast doubt upon the candidate’s sincerity. I, for one, would never ask from any person weeks and months of delay in which the man should prove to me that he was a Believer. But I would follow the example of the Apostle. The Gospel of Christ was preached, the people were converted, and they were baptized—and all perhaps in the space of an hour. The whole transaction may not have taken up so much time as I shall occupy in preaching about it this morning.

How, then, is it with you who wait so long? Where is the precept or example to warrant your hesitation? Permit me to remind you that duties delayed are *sins*. Will you take that home with you, you who have been Believers for years and yet are not baptized? Permit me to remind you, also, that privileges postponed are *losses*. Put the two together, and where duty and privilege meet, do not incur the sin and the loss, but, like David, “make haste and delay not” to keep the Divine command.

“Why say so much about Baptism?” says somebody. Much about Baptism? Never was a remark more ungenerous, if it is made against *me*! I might, far more justly, be censured for saying so *little* about it. Much about Baptism? I call you all to witness that unless it comes across my path in the Scriptures, I never go away from the text to drag it in. I am no partisan—I never made Baptism my main teaching—and God forbid I should! But I will not be hindered from preaching the whole Truth, and, I

dare say no less than I am now saying. The Holy Spirit has recorded the Baptism here—will you think little of what He chooses to record?

Paul and Silas—an Apostle and his companion, dared not neglect the ordinance—how dare you despise it? It was the dead of the night, it was in a prison. If it might have been put off, it surely might have been then—it was not a reputable place to dispense Baptism, some would have said. It was hardly a seasonable hour, but they thought it so important that then and there, and at once, they baptized the whole household! If this is God's command—and I solemnly believe it to be so—do not despise it, I beseech you. As you love Christ, do not talk about its being non-essential. If the Lord commands, shall His servant talk about its being non-essential?

It is essential in all things to do my Master's will, and to preach it. For has He not said, "He that shall break one of the least of these, My Commandments, and shall teach men so, the same shall be least in the kingdom of Heaven"? I hope it may be our privilege here to see whole families baptized. Come along with you, beloved Father, if you are a Believer in Jesus—come with him, Mother—come with him, Daughters—come with your mother, you godly Sons, and come you Servants, too.

If you have come to the Cross, and all your hope is placed there, then come and declare that you are Christ's. Touch not the ordinance till you believe in Jesus Christ—it may work you mighty mischief if you do. The Sacramentarianism, which is so rampant in this age, is of all lies I think the most deadly, and you encourage Sacramentarianism if you give a Christian ordinance to an unconverted person. Touch it not, then, until you are saved. Until you are Believers, ordinances are not for you, and it is a sacrilege for you to intrude yourselves into them. How I long to see whole households believe, for then I may safely rejoice at seeing them baptized!

**IV.** Next, we have A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD AT WORK FOR GOD. Read the passage and you will see that they all did something. The father called for a light, the servants brought the torches, and the lamps such as were used in the prisons. He took his prisoners the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes. Here is work for himself, and work for gentle hands to do, to relieve the pains of those poor bleeding backs—to wash out the grit that had come there through their lying on their backs on the dungeon floor, and to mollify and bind up their wounds.

There was suitable occupation for the mother and for the servants, for they set meat before the holy men. The kitchen was sanctified to supply the needs of the ministers of Christ. Everything was done for their comfort. They were hungry, and they gave them meat. They were bleeding and they bathed their wounds. The whole household was astir that night! They had all believed and been baptized, and their very first enquiry is, "What can we do for Jesus?" It was clear to them that they could help the two men who had brought them to Christ, and they did so affectionately.

No Martha had to complain that her sister left her to serve alone. I am persuaded there was not one of the family who shirked the pleasant duty of hospitality, though it was at dead of night. They soon had a meal ready. And how pleased they felt when they saw the two holy men reclining at their ease at the table, instead of lying with their feet fast in the stocks in the prison. They did not take the food down to the prison to them, or wash

them and send them back to the dungeon! They brought them up from the cell into their own house, and accommodated them with the best they had.

Now, Beloved, it is a great mercy when you have a family saved and baptized, if the whole household sets to work to serve God, for there is something for all to do. Is there a lazy Church member here? Friend, you miss a great blessing. Is there a mother here whose husband is very diligent in serving God, but she neglects to lead her children in the way of the Truth of God? Ah, dear Woman, you are losing what would be a great comfort to your own soul. I know you are—for one of the best means for a soul to be built up in Christ is for it to do something for Christ.

We cease to grow when we cease either to labor or to suffer for the Lord. Bringing forth fruit unto God is, unto ourselves, a most pleasant and profitable operation. Even our children, when they are saved, can do something for the Master. The little hand that drops its halfpence into the offering box out of love to Jesus is accepted of the Lord. The young child trying to tell its brother or sister of the dear Savior who has loved it is a true missionary of the Cross. We should train our children as the Spartans trained their sons early for feats of war. We must have them first saved, but after that we must never think that they may be idle till they come to a certain period of life.

I have known a little boy take his young companion aside and kneel down in a field and pray with him, and I have heard of that young lad's being now, in the judgment of his parents, a Believer in Christ. I have seen it, and my heart has been touched when I have seen it—two or three boys gathered round another to seek that boy's salvation—and praying to God as heartily and earnestly as their parents could have done. There is room for all to work to help in the growing kingdom. And blessed shall that father be who shall see all his children enlisted in the grand army of God's elect, and all striving together for the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom!

**V.** That brings me to the fifth point, which is A FAMILY REJOICING, for he rejoices in God with all his home. According to the run of the text the object of their joy was that they had believed. Believing obtains the pardon of all sin, and brings Christ's righteousness into our possession. It declares us to be the sons of God—gives us heirship with Christ, and secures us His blessing here and Glory hereafter—who would not rejoice at this? If the family had been left a fortune they would have rejoiced, but they had found more than all the world's wealth at once in finding a Savior and therefore were they glad.

But though their joy sprang mainly from their believing, it also arose from their being baptized, for do we not read of the Ethiopian of old after he was baptized that he "went on his way rejoicing." God often gives a clearing of the skies to those who are obedient to His command. I have known persons habitually the subjects of doubts and fears, who have suddenly leaped into joy and strength when they have done as their Lord commanded them. Not *for* keeping, but "*in* keeping His Commandments there is great reward." They rejoiced, no doubt, also because they had enjoyed an opportunity of serving the Church in waiting upon the Apostle.

They felt glad to think that Paul was at their table—very sorry that he had been imprisoned—but glad that they were his jailers. They were sorry that he had been beaten, but thankful that they could wash his stripes. And Christian people are never so happy as when they are busy for Jesus. When you do most for Christ you shall feel most of His love in your hearts. Why it makes my heart tingle with joy when I feel that I can honor my God! Rejoice, my Brethren, that you have doors of usefulness set open before you, and now we can glorify the Savior's name.

Now we can visit the sick. Now we can teach the ignorant. Now we can bring sinners to the Savior. Why, there is no joy except the joy of Heaven itself, which excels the bliss of serving the Savior who has done so much for us! I have no doubt that their joy was permanent and continued. There would not be any quarrelling in that house now, no disobedient children, no short-tempered father, no fretful mother, no cruel brother, no exacting sister, no purloining servants, or eye-servers. No warders who would exceed their duty, or be capable of receiving bribes from the prisoners. The whole house would become a holy house, and a happy house from then on.

It is remarkable they should be so happy, because they might have thought sorrowfully of what they had been. They had fastened the Apostle's feet in the stocks. Ah, but that was all gone, and they were happy to know that it was all forgiven. The father had been a rough soldier, and perhaps his sons had been little better. But it was all blotted out—Christ's blood had covered all their sin—they were happy though they were penitent. It is true, they had a poor prospect before them, as the world would say, for they would be likely to be persecuted, and to suffer much. Here were two of the great ones of the Church who had been scourged and put in prison—the humble members could not expect to fare better.

Ah, never mind, they rejoiced in God! If they had known they would have to die for it, they would have rejoiced, for to have a Savior is such a source of thankfulness to believing souls that if we had to burn tomorrow, we would rejoice today! If we had to die a thousand deaths in the course of the next month, yet, to find a Savior such as Jesus Christ is, is joy enough to make us laugh at death itself! They were a rejoicing family because they were a renewed family.

In closing, regard these two words. That household is now in Glory—they are ALL there—the jailer, and his spouse, and his children, and his servants—they are all there, for is it not written, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved"? They were obedient to that Word, and they are saved. Now, with some of you the father is in Heaven, and the mother is on the road, but the children, ah, the children!

With others of you, your little ones have gone before you, snatched away from the mother's breast. And your grandsire is also in Glory. But, ah, husband and wife, your faces are turned towards the ways and wages of sin, and you will never meet your children and your parents. There will be broken households around the Throne, and if it could mar their joy—if anything could—it would be the thought that there is a son in Hell, or perhaps a husband in the flames, while the wife and mother sing the endless song. O God, grant it never may be so! May no child of our loins die an heir of wrath!

May none that have slept in our bosoms be banished from Jehovah's Presence. By the bliss of a united family, I beseech you seek after it that you may have that united family in Heaven. For this is the last question, "Will my family be there?" Will yours be there? Turn it over in your minds, my Brothers and Sisters, and if you can give the happy answer, and say, "Yes, by the blessings of God, I believe we shall all be there," then, I will ask you to serve God very much, for you owe Him very much. You are deep debtors to the mercy of God, you parents who have godly children. You ought to do twice as much. No! Seven times as much for Jesus as any other Christians.

But on the other hand, if you have to give a painful answer, then let this day be a day of prayer, and I would say to you, could not you fathers, who love the Lord, call your children together this afternoon and tell them what I have been talking about? Say to the boy, "My dear boy, our minister this morning has been speaking about a household in Heaven, and a household being baptized because they believed. I pray that you may be a Believer." Pray with the boys, pray with the girls, pray with the mother. And I do not know but what this very afternoon your whole household may be brought to the Savior!

Who can tell? You, dear Boys just below me, who are a few out of my large family at the Orphanage, some of you have fathers in Heaven. I hope you will follow them in the right way. The Church of God tries to take care of you because you are orphans, and God has promised to be the Father of the fatherless. O dear Boys, give Him your hearts! Some of you have godly mothers. I know them, and I know that they pray for you. May their prayers be heard for you. I hope you will trust the Savior and grow up to serve Him. May it not be long before you profess your faith in Baptism. And may we all of us meet in Glory above, every one without exception! The Lord grant it, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Acts 16:6-40.**

Mr. Spurgeon begs to inform his friends that the usual Almanac is now ready for 1872, and also a sheet for the walls, by John Ploughman. Both are to be had for one penny each, and it is hoped that their circulation will do good both spiritually and morally. Friends are requested to circulate them. They are both published by Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster, and may be had of all booksellers.

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# **BELIEF, BAPTISM, BLESSING**

## **NO. 2275**

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1892.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING. FEBRUARY 9, 1890.**

***“And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”  
Acts 16:33, 34.***

THE Gospel, attended by the Spirit of God, is always victorious, but it is very pleasant to make notes of its victories. The Gospel came to Lydia, a devout woman, who was one given to prayer, and who worshipped God, although she did not know the Lord Jesus Christ. She was a woman of tender heart and she was soon won. The Lord gently knocked at the door of her heart and it was opened. She heard Paul's plain preaching, she received the Truth of God, was baptized, and became the cornerstone of the Church at Philippi. “Well,” says one, “that is an instance of what the Gospel does with delicate, tender, gentle natures.”

Now, here is an old soldier. He has been in the wars, he has earned distinction and has been appointed to the office of jailor at Philippi, an office of some importance under the Roman Emperor. He is a man who knows the sight of blood—he is of a coarse, though apparently honest, disposition. He keeps prisoners and that is not an office that brings much gentleness with it—and he is under very stern law. He carries out strict discipline in the prison. He is as hard as a bit of the lower millstone. What will the Gospel do with *him*? Brothers and Sisters, it triumphed as much in the jailor at Philippi as it did in the lady from Thyatira! And while it won its way into the heart of the dealer in purple, it also worked its way into the heart of the dealer in crimson who had often shed precious blood! The victory over the rough Philippian jailor was as illustrious as the victory over the gentle and devout Lydia.

I want especially to call your attention to this point—the Philippian jailor stands before us as one who was converted, baptized and who brought forth useful fruit all in the compass of an hour or so. “Straightway,” says my text. It also says, “The same hour of the night.” This man was brought from darkness into the marvelous Light of God all of a sudden! He was so distinctly brought that he avowed his conversion, then and there, and went on to prove its reality right then, in his own house, by

entertaining the men whom, a few hours before, he had thrust into the inner prison and whose feet he had made fast in the stocks.

In a great many cases, conversion may be said to be a slow work. I do not think that it really is so, but it *appears* to be so. There is the early training, there is the awakening of conscience, there is the seeking to find Christ, the struggling, the little Light of God, the dim hope, the faith like a grain of mustard seed and, by-and-by, a little confidence—afterwards faith more clear and then, after a long time, comes the public avowal of the joy and peace received through believing! We have a great many people round us who are very slow. Why it is, I do not know, for this is not a slow age. People are fast enough about the things of this world. We cannot *travel* fast enough. Everything must be done at express speed! But in the things of God there are numbers of persons who are as slow as snails. I have often wondered how the snail got into the ark—he must have started very early to get in. I am thankful that he did get in, however, as certainly as the hare or the gazelle. And many of our crawling friends, I trust, will be found in Heaven, and will be really saved, although they are a long while in coming to Christ. It takes a long time to get some of them even a small distance on the road towards a comfortable assurance of salvation.

I have no doubt that the work of Grace is very gradual in some people. It is like the sunrise in this country. I am sure that you cannot tell, on foggy mornings, when the sun rises. I have sometimes questioned whether he ever does rise in England—I have seen very little of him for the last few days. I believe that the sun has been seen in England—I take it as a matter of trust that that ruddy wafer that I saw the other day really was the sun—although it is a great contrast to the king of day who rules in the sunny South! Who can tell when he begins to shine upon the earth? There is a little gray light, by-and-by a little more, and a little more, and at last you can say that the sun has fairly risen. So it is with some Christians. There is a tiny gleam of light and then a little more light, and then a further ray of light—but it is only after a considerable time that you can say that the full light has really come into their souls.

Yet, mark you, there is a moment when the sun's disc first appears above the horizon. There is a moment when the circle of the sun is really first visible, just an instant, the smallest portion of time and, in conversion, there must be a time in which death has gone and life has come—and that must be as sharp a division as the razor's edge could make. There really cannot be anything between life and death. The man is either dead or alive—and there must be some point at which he ceases to be dead and becomes living. A man cannot be somewhere between condemnation and justification—there is no land in between. The man is either condemned on account of sin, or he is justified through the righteousness of Christ! He cannot be between those two states so that, after all, in its essence, salvation must be an *instantaneous* thing. It may be, it will be, surrounded by a good deal that seems to lead up to it and makes it appear to be gradual. But, in reality, if you get to the root of the matter, there is a turning point, well-defined and sharp, and if not clear to *you*, it

is clear to the Great Worker who has worked in the heart that is changed from death to life, and from condemnation through sin to justification through Jesus Christ!

**I.** In this Philippian jailor's case, everything is sharp, clear, distinct. In considering it, I will first call your attention to the fact that **HERE IS A PERSON CONVERTED AT ONCE.**

This man's conversion was worked at once. There was no previous thought. There is nothing that I can imagine in his previous life that led up to it. He had not been plied with sermons, instructions, invitations, entreaties. Probably, up to that night he had never even *heard* the name of Jesus Christ—and what he did hear was that these two men, who had come to Philippi preaching Christ, were to be treated with severity and kept safely. Therefore, he thrust them into the inner dungeon and made their feet fast in the stocks. All his previous education was un-Christian, if not *anti-Christian*. All his former life, whatever may have been his Roman virtues, was quite clear of anything like Christian virtue. He knew nothing about that. Nothing could be a greater contrast than the ethics of Rome and the teachings of Christ. This jailor was a good Roman, but he was nothing of a Christian when he thrust the Apostles into prison. And yet, before the sun again rose, there was not a better Christian anywhere than that man was! He had passed from death unto life! He was resting on the Christian foundation! He was the possessor of Christian Graces!

Hear this, you who have never thought of Christ—and let any man who came in here, tonight, a total stranger to true religion, pray that the same may be the case with him—that before the midnight bell shall toll, he, too, may find the Savior!

What do you think impressed this man? I think, in part, it may have been the behavior of Paul and Silas. They had no curses on their lips when he made their feet fast in the stocks. They used no ribald language when he thrust them into the innermost cell. They let fall words, I do not doubt, the like of which he had never heard. And their patience, their cheerfulness, their dauntless courage, their holy joy must all have struck him. They belonged to a different order of prisoners from any he had ever seen before. The jail at Philippi had never held the like of these before and the jailor could not make them out. He fell asleep that night with many thoughts of a new character. Who were these men? Who was this Jesus of whom they spoke?

Then, in the middle of the night, an amazing miracle was worked. The prison is shaken by an earthquake. The keeper rises. The prisoners must have gone, for the doors are open. He had not carelessly left them unbolted—he had fastened them before he went to bed—but they are all open and the prisoners are without chains! They will get away and he will have to suffer for it. He puts the sword to his own breast—he is about to kill himself, when, just at that moment, he hears a loud voice crying—“Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.” What a surprise for him! What a revulsion of feeling those words caused! “We are all here.” He thinks to himself, “Truly there is a God. It must be the God of Paul and Silas who has

worked this miracle.” He begins to tremble. He has lived without knowing this God. He has ill-treated the messengers of this God. He brings them out. He respectfully addresses them, “Sirs,” he earnestly cries to them, “What must I do to be saved?” The idea of being lost has come over him. It is not that he is afraid to die, for he was about to put himself to death—but he is afraid of what is to follow after death! He is a lost man and, therefore, he asks, “What must I do to be saved?”

Now it is that he is plainly told the way of salvation. It was put with great brevity, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.” Probably he did not understand it when he heard it, and so, “they spoke unto him the Word of the Lord and to all that were in his house.” His wife, his children, his servants, whoever made up his household, all gathered round the two preachers—and they explained the way of salvation, salvation by faith in Christ, salvation by the atoning Sacrifice of Christ, salvation by faith in the precious blood of Christ. Paul and Silas doubtless told the company that whoever believed in Jesus should not perish, but have everlasting life. The jailor believed it, believed every word of it, and he was, therefore, saved, and saved at once!

If you have never heard the Gospel before and you hear it, tonight, and believe in Christ, you will be saved at once! If you have been a total stranger to all good things, yet, if you now receive the blessed tidings of mercy through the Son of God, pardon through His shed blood, you shall go out of this house justified, saved—saved in an instant—saved by the simple act of faith! It is a happy circumstance that the Gospel is so simple. There are certain preachers who seem as if they must mystify it, like the preacher who said, “Brothers and Sisters, I have read you a chapter, and now I will confound it.” No doubt there are many who are always making out the Gospel to be a very difficult thing to understand—philosophical, deep and so on—but it was meant for the common people, it was given not merely for the elite, the learned, the instructed, but, “the poor have the Gospel preached to them,” and the Gospel is suitable to be preached to the poor. This is the Gospel, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.*” Trust Christ—and if you do, you shall be saved!

**II.** Secondly, HERE IS A PERSON CONFESSING HIS FAITH AT ONCE. “He was baptized, he and all his, straightway.”

Should a person be baptized as soon as he believes? As a rule, yes, but there may be good reasons why he cannot be. There was no good reason for delay in this man’s case, for, in the first place, his conversion was clear as noonday. Paul had no question about it. The man was really converted. Silas felt sure of it, too, and they did not hesitate to baptize him and all his household, for they all believed in God. Remember how it was with Philip and the eunuch? That Ethiopian nobleman said, “Look, here is water: what does hinder me to be baptized?” Philip replied, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” That being so, they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him then and there. If the baptizer believes that the professor of faith in Christ is sincere, then

he may not hesitate. If he has any doubt about it—if he is afraid that the confession is made in ignorance, or made without due thought—then it may be incumbent upon him to wait a while. But otherwise, he must do as Ananias did to Saul of Tarsus—he must baptize him upon profession of his faith, as soon as he applies. The jailor’s conversion, then, was clear.

In his case, also, there was no other reason for delay. In the case of many young persons, there are reasons for delay. I remember, in my own case, my parents not believing in the Baptism of Believers, and I, being between 15 and 16 years of age, thought it my duty to consult my father and mother, and ask their counsel and advice. I think I did right. I did not expect them to agree with me, but I did expect them to give me their loving concurrence, which they did, and I waited until I had obtained it. Sometimes it will be right on the part of other young people to do the same. There may be reasons, practical reasons for delay, or physical, moral, spiritual—I cannot go into them all at this time. A man may be excusable who, though a Believer, is not immediately baptized, seeing that he intends to be as soon as it would be fitting and right and decorous and, in connection with other duties, a right thing. But there was no reason for delay in the jailor’s case. The man was his own master and his children and his servants had no difficulty in gaining his consent to their Baptism, seeing that he, himself, was about to lead the way in confessing Christ in the Scriptural fashion.

In this man’s case, note, also, that he was not hindered by selfish considerations. Had the jailor been like some people that I know, he would have found plenty of reasons for delaying his Baptism. First, he would have said, “Well, it is the middle of the night. Would you have me baptized at this hour?” He would have said that he did not know that there were conveniences for Baptism, for it is so easy to find it inconvenient when you do not like it. He might also have said, “I do not know how the magistrates will like it.” He did not care about the magistrates! Perhaps he would lose his employment. He did not take his employment into consideration. Then what would the soldiers in the Philippian colony say when they heard that the jailor had been baptized into the name of Christ? Oh, the guffaws of the guard room, the jokes that there would be all over Philippi! This brave man did not take those things into consideration. Or if he did, he dismissed them in a moment. It was right for him, now that he believed in Christ, to confess his faith in Christ—and he would do it, and he would do it “straightway.”

Ah, dear Friends, there are some of you here who have never come out as Christians! You are what I call the rats behind the wainscot, or the black beetles that come out at night, when there is nobody about, to get a bit of food and then go back again. You never say what you are—you never come out on Christ’s side! I am not going to condemn you. I wish that you would condemn yourselves, however, for I think that you ought to judge that you are acting a very mean part. The promise of eternal life is not made to a faith which is never declared. Allow me to say that over again. The promise of salvation is not made to a faith which is never de-

clared. "He that believes *and is baptized shall be saved.*" "With the heart man believes unto righteousness and *with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*" Our Lord's own words are, "Whoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in Heaven." And He also said, in connection with this confession, "but whoever shall deny Me" (which must mean, "whoever *does not confess Me*") "before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in Heaven." If you have not faith enough in Christ to say that you believe in Him, I do not think that you have faith enough in Christ to take you to Heaven, for it is written concerning the place of doom, "the fearful," (that is, *the cowardly*), and unbelieving, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone."

The fact was this man was in downright earnest and, therefore, he would not delay his Baptism. He had enlisted in the army of Christ and he would wear Christ's regimentals straightway. I wish that some who profess conversion, or who profess to desire to be converted, were as much in earnest as this jailor was. "Well," says one, "do not be too severe upon us. I hope that I am a Christian, although I have never confessed Christ yet." Why do you not confess Christ if you belong to Him? I spoke like this to a man who had been, according to his own confession, 20 years a Christian. He had never joined the Church. He had never made any open profession of religion. And when I spoke to him, what do you think he said to me? He said, "He that believes shall not make haste." "Well," I replied, "if you were to be baptized and to join the Church tomorrow morning, I do not think that there would be much haste in it as you have been a Believer 20 years! But a much more suitable text for you would be this word of the Psalmist, 'I made haste, and delayed not to keep Your Commandments.'"

"Well," says another, "I have put it off a little while, and ..."—"A little while!" Is that what you allow your boy to say to you? You say to him, "John, go up into the city for me on an errand." In about an hour afterwards you see him still at home and you ask why he has not done your bidding, and he says, "Father, I have put it off a little while." I think it is likely that you would make him recollect that excuse and not repeat it! But if you were to see him still about the house, hour after hour, and he said to you that he was not disobedient, but he had some little things of his own that he wanted to see to first, I fancy you would teach him what a son's duty is! A servant of that kind would probably have to find a new master very quickly—and do you call yourself a servant of Christ when you have been putting off confessing him by being baptized, putting it off, and putting it off, until, as far as I can see, you are as far off obedience to your Lord's command as ever you were?

This jailor, "the same hour of the night" made confession of his faith, "and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." And soon they were all sitting down with Paul and Silas at a love feast, enjoying happy fellowship with the people of God. Dear Friend, if you are converted, do not stand back from confessing Christ! You rob your minister of his wages, for it is his reward to hear that God has blessed your soul! You are also robbing

the Church. If you have a right to stand out and not confess Christ, everybody else has the same right—and where would there be any confession of Christ, or any visible Church, or any ordinances, or any minister? If you have a right not to come to Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, every other Christian has a right to neglect these things, also. Then why were these ordinances instituted at all? What is Christ in His own house? Is He Master, or are *you* the master? And do you take liberty to do or not do just what you please? Come along and let my text be true of all of you who believe—"He was baptized, he and all his, straightway."

**III.** Now, thirdly, HERE IS A PERSON USEFUL AT ONCE. Useful? What could he do?

Well, he did all he could. First, he performed an act of mercy—"He took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes." Dear, good men—they were covered all over with the marks of the Roman rods. They had been beaten black and blue—and their blood had flowed freely. I think I see how tenderly the jailor washed their stripes. It was before he was baptized that he brought forth fruits meet for repentance. The ill-used ministers needed washing—how could their wounds be healed unless they were properly washed? With all the dust and dirt of the street and the grit of the prison in the welts and the wounds, how could they heal? "He washed their stripes." I like to read these words. I am sure Paul and Silas must have enjoyed to have their stripes washed by one who, a little while ago, had been so rough with them. I do not know that he could have done anything better to show his sincere repentance.

He washed their stripes and when he had done that, and had been baptized, we read that he brought them into his house and set meat before them. Thus, he exercised hospitality. He used his hands and his bath in washing the disciples. Now he uses his table, his larder, and his dining room to entertain them. What more could he do? Seeing that it was the middle of the night, I cannot think of anything more that he could do. So now, if you love the Lord. If you have only just believed in Him, begin to do something for Him at once! It is a pity that we have so many Christian people, so-called, who do nothing for Christ—literally nothing! They have paid their pew rent, perhaps, and that is all Christ is to have out of them! He dies for them, redeems them with His precious blood—but they have done nothing for Him in return.

"I do not know what I can do," says one. I know you could do *something*. This jailor, within the boundaries of his prison, can do the most necessary things for Paul and Silas. And you, within the boundaries of this house, can do something for Jesus Christ. I would ask you, if you have only tonight believed in Christ, do something for Him tonight. By speaking to your wife, or children, or servants, or neighbors, do something for Christ tonight! There is probably no minister shut up in prison in any part of your house who needs to have his stripes washed. If not, there may be some poor soul somewhere near you that needs a little help. Do an act of charity for Christ's sake! Or there may be some child of God whose heart you could cheer tonight. Do an act of hospitality for some

needy saint and so show your gratitude for what the Lord has done for you. You must do something for Christ if you are a real Christian.

We need to have a Church in which all the members do something, in which all do all they can, in which all are always doing all they can—for this is what our Lord deserves to have from a living, loving people bought with His precious blood! If He has saved me, I will serve Him forever and ever. And whatever lies in my power to do for His Glory, that shall be my delight to do, and to do at once! Oh, if some of you get saved, tonight, when you get home, there will be a difference in your house! Ah, and within a day or two, even your *cat* will know that there is a change in you! Everybody in the house will know that you are different from what you were. When a man who has been a drinker gets saved, or one who has been accustomed to use bad language, or one who has given way to passion, or a Sabbath-breaker, or a godless, Christless wretch—when he gets converted, it is as if Hell were turned into Heaven and the devil transformed into an angel! God make it so with any such who are here, by the working of Sovereign Grace!

I seem, at this moment, to remember that morning when I found the Savior. It was a cold snowy morning, and I remember standing before the fire, leaning on the mantel, after I got home, and my mother spoke to me, and I heard her say outside the door, “There is a change come over Charles.” She had not had half-a-dozen words with me, but she saw that I was not what I had been! I had been dull, melancholy, sorrowful, depressed—but when I had looked to Christ, the appearance of my face was changed—I had a smile, a cheerful, happy, contented look at once, and she could see it! And a few words let her know that her melancholy boy had risen out of his despondency and had become bright and cheerful. May some such change as that pass over you!

**IV.** Here is one thing more to finish with. Fourthly, **HERE IS A PERSON PERFECTLY HAPPY AT ONCE.** When the jailor had brought Paul and Silas into his house, “he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”

Oh, that was a happy, happy time! “He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.” He rejoiced that he was saved. His heart kept beating, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” As he sat at that table with his two strange guests, he had, indeed, cause for joy. His sin was forgiven! His nature was changed! He had found a Savior! He had given up his idol gods and he rejoiced, believing in God. He had been told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. He was no Unitarian. He believed Jesus Christ to be God and he rejoiced, believing in God with all his heart!

And then he rejoiced that all his household were saved. What a delight it was to see all his household converted! There was his wife. If she had not been converted, it would have been a very awkward thing for him to have asked Paul and Silas in to that midnight meal. She would have said, “I do not want prisoners coming into my best parlor and eating up all the cold meat.” She would not have liked it. As a prudent housewife, she would have objected to it. But there was Mrs. Jailor waiting on them all

with a holy happiness, a new kind of cheerfulness! I do not know whether they had any boys or girls. It may be, or may not be—but however many there were in his household, children or servants—they all *believed*, “believing in God with all his house.” They were all baptized, too, the sons and daughters and the servants, also, for they were included in the household.

I do not like it when you count up your household and leave out Mary Ann, the little servant girl, the last you have hired. You treat her as a drudge, but if she has come into your family, reckon her to be a part of your household. And pray God that they may all be converted—Jane and Mary, your own children—and the other people’s children who have come into your houses to do necessary domestic work for you.

The jailor’s rejoicing was also a seal of the Spirit upon his fidelity. Would it not be delightful for him to sit down with the two preachers of the Word in the middle of the night? Those two men must have had good appetites. They had probably had nothing to eat for many hours and they had been lying in their dreadful dungeon with their feet in the stocks, after having been cruelly beaten. So they were prepared to eat, whether it was the middle of the night or the middle of the day. And the rest of the family came and sat down at the table with them—and all rejoiced. Such a night in a prison had never been known before! The jailor “rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”

I think I heard a friend over there fetch a deep sigh as I quoted those last words of my text. I know what it meant—it meant that he has not all his house converted. Ah, dear Brother, I cannot sympathize with you by experience, for I thank God that I have had all my house brought to Christ, but it must be a great sorrow to have that biggest boy of yours acting as he does, or to have that dear girl, of whom you had such bright hopes, turning aside to crooked ways! Let me ask you a question—Have you had faith about your house? Remember that Paul said to the jailor, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.” May God give you faith about your house! You have had faith about yourself and you are saved—exercise faith about your children! Cry to God to give you faith about them! Pray believingly that they may be led to have faith for themselves and so may be saved.

Oh, that all in this great assembly may meet in Heaven! You who have heard the Word these many years, may you, tonight, believe in Christ and live! You who have never listened to it before, may you also come to Christ and believe in Him, as the jailor did. And like he, you shall be saved! The Lord shall have all the praise and the glory, but oh, that He would work this miracle of mercy tonight! Let us pray for it. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON**  
**ACTS 16:9-34.**

**Verse 9.** *And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.* Our dreams often follow the leading thoughts of the day or, if not of the day, yet the chief thoughts that are upon the mind. Paul dreams about mission work, for his heart is in it. I should not wonder if some before me, who are deeply engaged in earnest Christian work, have often dreamt about their Sunday school, or their mission station. Where the mind goes when we are awake, it often goes when we are asleep. This vision that appeared to Paul was supernatural and was an indication of what God wanted him to do.

**10.** *And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the Gospel unto them.* In the vision, the man prayed, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us.” The best help that Paul could render to the Macedonians was “to preach the Gospel unto them.” The best help you can give men socially is to help them *religiously*—and the best religious help is to preach the Gospel to them.

**11, 12.** *Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and from there to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.* Waiting to know what they were to do. In God’s work, we are not to go on in blundering haste. Sometimes, a little waiting may be good for us. And, by waiting, we may find out the true path of success.

**13.** *And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a riverside, where prayer was known to be made.* Some quiet corner, where good people were known to gather by the brook to pray.

**13.** *And we sat down, and spoke unto the women which resorted there.* This was probably the first religious meeting of Christians that was ever held in Europe! It is remarkable that it was a Prayer Meeting—a Prayer Meeting attended by women! A Prayer Meeting to which two ministers came and preached the Gospel to the women who resorted there. To be able to be present at a Prayer Meeting ought always to be reckoned a great privilege to all of us who are Christians. In this way the Gospel first came to us. In this way the Gospel will be best preserved to us. And in this way we may best obtain guidance from God as to how we may carry the Gospel to others.

**14, 15.** *And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized.* She seems to have become a Believer in Christ and to have been baptized at once.

**15.** *And her household, she besought us, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.* Lydia was evidently a woman of some property. The purple which she sold was an expensive article. She seems to have been engaged in business on her own account. And when Paul met with her, she was far

off from her workshop and her home. She had a house, therefore, in the place to which she had come to sell her purple. And she “constrained” the men of God to make use of her house and to tarry there. Thus was Christianity brought into Europe, for which we praise the name of the Lord!

**16.** *And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying.* She professed to tell fortunes and to speak under inspiration. She was really “possessed” by an evil spirit.

**17, 18.** *The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.* Here was an evil spirit bearing witness to the Truth of God—and it grieved Paul. When you hear a bad man ridiculing religion, do not be surprised—what else can you expect from him? But if you heard the *devil* recommending Christ, then you ought to be grieved, for the Lord Jesus does not need patronage or praise from Satan! Men would begin to suspect that Christ was in league with Satan if Satan began to speak well of Christ. Dread to be spoken well of by ungodly men, for there is great danger in such praise! There may be a motive at the bottom of the flattery which may be full of mischief. Paul, being grieved, silenced the demon and cast him out of the damsel. Like his Lord, he would not allow the devil to testify concerning himself and his mission.

**19, 20.** *And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market place unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates.* They dragged them into the Forum, the place where the courts usually sat, and brought them before the magistrates, “saying”—what?—“These men have cured a demoniac, they have performed a miracle, and cast a devil out of a young woman”? Oh no! There would have been no wrong in *that*, so they must invent a charge. What do they say?

**20, 21.** *Saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.* They did not know that Paul was a Roman citizen, or they surely would not have brought such a charge as *that* against him.

**22.** *And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.* They beat them first and tried them afterwards. That is often the rule with those who persecute God’s people—“Let them be hanged out of the way and then we will enquire what they teach.”

**23-25.** *And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God.* Another Prayer Meeting—and a praise meeting, too! There were only two persons at it, but they “prayed and sang praises unto God.”

**26.** *And the prisoners heard them.* Paul and Silas were in the lower prison. The sound of their prayer and praise rose up through the different tiers of cells where other prisoners were confined.

**26.** *And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bands were loosed.* This was no common earthquake! An ordinary earthquake might have brought the prison down about their ears—it would not have loosed the shackles of the prisoners!

**27.** *And the keeper of the prison, awaking out of his sleep and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.* For the law was that if a jailer lost a prisoner, he was to suffer whatever penalty the prisoner would have suffered. He therefore knew that, in all probability, his own life would be taken and, strange to say, to save his life he would kill himself! Suicide is always absurd and unreasonable. The worst that could happen to him would be to die by the sword of justice—and to escape from that, he tries to die by the sword of a suicide!

**28.** *But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do yourself no harm: for we are all here!* Every prisoner was loosed from his shackles, but not one had escaped, nor had any even *attempted* to escape—which was another miracle—for men who see their bands broken and the prison doors open, are pretty sure to run away! These men did not, for a heavenly charm was upon them. They stayed in their cells, so that Paul could cry out to the jailor—“Do yourself no harm: for we are all here!”

**29.** *Then he called for a light, and ran in, and came trembling.* Conscious of the supernatural, compelled to feel the hand which he had never perceived, before, he hastened into the inner prison where he had thrust the servants of Christ.

**29.** *And fell down before Paul and Silas* Whom he had handled so roughly.

**30.** *And brought them out, and said, Sirs.* What a word to address to those who were still in his charge as prisoners!

**30-34.** *What must I do to be saved. And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house. And they spoke unto him the Word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*

May God give to many of us to know the happy experience of that believing, baptized and blessed household!

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# THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

## NO. 193

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 9, 1858,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“These that have turned the world upside down are come here also.”  
Acts 17:6.***

THIS is just an old version of an oft-repeated story. When disturbances arise in a State and rebellions and mutinies cause blood to be shed it is still the custom to cry, “The Christians have done this.” In the days of Jesus we know that it was laid to the charge of our blessed and Divine Master that He was a stirrer of sedition, whereas He Himself had refused to be a king when His followers would have taken Him by force to make Him one. He said, “My kingdom is not of this world”—yet was He crucified under the two false charges of sedition and blasphemy.

The same thing occurred with the Apostles. Wherever they went to preach the Gospel the Jews who opposed them sought to stir up the refuse of the city to put an end to their ministry. And then a great tumult was made by the Jews themselves. They recruited certain lewd fellows of the baser sort and gathered a riotous crowd and set all the city in an uproar. They then assaulted the house of Jason and sought to bring him out to the people—laying the tumult and the uproar at the door of the Apostles, saying, “These that have turned the world upside down are come here also.”

This plan was followed all through the Roman empire until Christianity became the State religion. There was never a calamity that befell Rome, never a war arose, never a famine or a plague, but the vulgar multitude cried, “The Christians to the lions! The Christians have done this.” Nero himself imputed the burning of Rome, of which he himself doubtless was the incendiary, to the Christians. The believers in Jesus were slandered as if they were the common sewer into which all the filth of sin was to be poured. But they were like Solomon’s great brazen sea which was full of the purest water—wherein even priests themselves might wash their robes.

And to this day the world still lays its ills at the door of the Christians. Was it not the foolish cry a few months ago and are there not some weak-minded individuals who still believe that the great massacre and mutiny in India was caused by the missionaries? In truth—the men who turned the world upside down had gone there also. And because men broke through all the restraints of nature and of law and committed deeds for which fiends might blush, this must be laid at the door of Christ’s holy Gospel and the men of peace must bear on their shoulders the blame of war!

Ah, we need not refute this—the calumny is too idle to need a refutation. Can it be true that He whose Gospel is love should be the tormenter of disturbance? Can it be fair for a moment to lay mutiny and rebellion at the door of the Gospel, the very motto of which is, “Peace on earth, good will towards men”? Did not our Master say, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s”? Did He not Himself pay tribute though He sent to the fish of the sea to get the shekel? And have not His followers at all times been a peaceful generation?—save only and except where the liberty of their conscience was touched and then they were not the men to bow their knees to tyrants and kings—but with brave old Oliver they did bind their kings in chains and their nobles in fetters of iron. And they will do it again if their liberty ever should be infringed so that they should not have power to worship God as they ought.

We believe that what these Jews said of the Apostles was just a downright willful lie. They knew better. The Apostles were not the disturbers of States. It is true they preached that which would disturb the sinful constitution of a kingdom and which would disturb the evil practices of false priests, but they never meant to set men in an uproar. They did come to set men at arms with SIN. They did draw the sword against iniquity. But against men as men, against kings as kings they had no battle. It is with iniquity and sin and wrong everywhere that they proclaimed an everlasting warfare.

But still, Brethren, there is many a true word spoken in jest and we say surely there is many a true word spoken in malice. They said the Apostles turned the world upside down. They meant by that that they were disturbers of the peace. But they said a great true thing. For Christ’s Gospel does turn the world upside down. It was the wrong way upwards before and now that the Gospel is preached and when it shall prevail—it will set the world right by turning it upside down.

And now I shall try to show how, in the *world at large*, Christ’s Gospel turns the world upside down. And then I shall endeavor, as well as God shall help me, to show how the *little world that is within every man* is turned upside down when he becomes a believer in the Gospel of Christ.

**I.** First, then, the Gospel of Christ turns the world upside down WITH REGARD TO THE POSITION OF DIFFERENT CLASSES OF MEN.

In the esteem of *men* the kingdom of Heaven is something like this. High there on the summit sits the most grand rabbi, the right venerable, estimable and excellent doctor of divinity, the great philosopher, the highly learned, the deeply instructed, the immensely intellectual man. He sits on the apex—he is the highest, because he is the wisest. And just below him there is a class of men who are deeply studied—not quite so skilled as the former, but still exceeding wise—who look down at those who stand at the basement of the pyramid and who say to them, “Ah, they are the ignoble multitude, they know nothing at all.”

A little lower down, we come to the sober, respectable thinking men—not those who set up for teachers, but those who seldom will be taught—because they already in their own opinion know all that is to be learned.

Then after them there come a still larger number of very estimable folks who are exceeding wise in worldly wisdom, although not quite so exalted as the philosopher and the rabbi.

Lower still come those who have just a respectable amount of wisdom and knowledge and then at the very basement there come the fool and the little child and the babe. When we look at these we say, "This is the wisdom of this world. Behold how great a difference there is between the babe at the bottom and the learned doctor on the summit! How wide the distinction between the ignorant simpleton who forms the hard, rocky, stubborn basement and the wise man of polished marble, who stands there resplendent at the apex of the pyramid."

Now, just see how Christ turns the world upside down. There it stands. He just reverses it. "Except you be converted and become as little children, you can in no wise enter into the kingdom of Heaven." "Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty men are chosen. But God has chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom." It is turning the whole social fabric upside down! And the wise man finds now that he has to go upstairs towards his simplicity. He has been all his life trying as far as he could to get away from the simplicity of the credulous child. He has been thinking and judging and weighing and bringing his logic to cut up every truth he heard and now he has to begin and go up again—he has to become a little child and turn back to his former simplicity. This is the world turned upside down with a vengeance! And therefore the wise seldom love it.

If you wish to see the world turned upside down to perfection just turn to the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew—here you have a whole summary of the world reversed. Jesus Christ turned the world upside down the first sermon He preached. Look at the third verse. "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.*" Now we like a man who has an ambitious spirit—a man who, as we say, knows how to push his way up in the world—who looks up—is not content with the position that he occupies, but is always climbing higher and higher.

And we have a very fair opinion, too, of a man who has a very fair opinion of himself—a man who is not going to bow and cringe. He will have his rights, he will—he will not give way to anybody. He believes himself to be something and he will stand on his own belief and will prove it to the world. He is not one of your poor, mean-spirited fellows who are content with poverty and sit still. He will not be contented. Now such a man as this the world admires. But Christ just turns that man upside down and says, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.*"

The men who have no strength of their own, but look to Christ for all—the men who have no spirit to run with a wicked world but who would rather suffer an injury than cause one—the men who are lowly and of a humble carriage, who seek not to lift their heads above their fellows—who if they are great have greatness thrust upon them but never seek it—who are content along the cool sequestered vale of life, to keep the even tenor of their way—who seem to have always ringing in their ears, "Seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not"—"the poor in spirit." Happy in

their poverty who are content with the Lord's Providence and think themselves far more rich than they deserve to be. Now, these men, Christ says, are blessed. The world says they are soft—they are fools. But Christ puts those on the top whom the world puts at the bottom. "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."

Then there is another lot of people in the world—they are always *mourning*. They do not let you see it often for their Master has told them when they fast to *anoint* their face so that they appear not unto men to fast—but still secretly before God they have to groan. They hang their harps upon the willows. They mourn for their own sin and then they mourn for the sin of the times. The world says of these, "They are a moping, melancholy set. I would not care to belong to their number." And the merry reveler comes in and he almost spits upon them in his scorn. For what are they? They love the darkness. They are the willows of the stream, but this man, like the proud poplar, lifts his head and is swayed to and fro in the wind of his joy, boasting of his greatness and his freedom.

Hear how the merry youth talks to his mourning friend who is under conviction of sin. "Ah, yours is a morbid disposition. I pity you. You ought to be under the hand of a physician. You go mourning through this world. What a miserable thing—to be plunging through waves of tribulation! What a dismal case is yours! I would not stand in your shoes and be in your position for all the world." No, but Christ turns the world upside down. And so those people whom you think to be mournful and sorrowful are the very ones who are to rejoice.

For read the fourth verse, "Blessed are they that mourn. For they shall be comforted." Yes, Worldling, your joy is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. It blazes a little and makes a great noise—it is soon done with. But "light is *sown* for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart." You cannot see the light now because it is sown. Perhaps it lies under the clods of poverty and shame and persecution. But when the great harvest day shall come the blades of light, rising at the second coming, shall bring forth "the full corn in the ear" of bliss and glory everlasting. O you mourning Souls, be glad! For whereas the world puts you beneath it, Christ puts you above the world's head. He turns the world upside down when He says you *shall* be comforted.

Then there is another race of people called "*the meek*." You may have met with them now and then. Let me describe the opposite. I know a man who never feels happy unless he has a law-suit in progress. He would never pay a bill unless he had a writ about it. He is fond of law. The idea of pulling another up before the court is a great delicacy to him. A slight affront he would not easily forget. He has a very large amount of meek dignity. And if he is ever so slightly touched, if a harsh word is spoken against him, or one slander uttered he is down upon his enemy at once. For he is a man of a hard temper and he casts the debtor into prison and verily I say unto you, if you get in there by his writ, you shall never come out until you have paid the uttermost farthing.

Now the meek are of a very different disposition. You may revile them but they will not revile back. You may injure them, but they know that

their Master has said, "I say unto you, resist not evil." They do not put themselves into airs and passions on a slight affront. They know that all men are imperfect and therefore they think that perhaps their Brother made a mistake and did not wish to hurt their feelings. Therefore they say, "Well, if he did not wish to do it, then I will not be hurt by it. I dare say he meant well and therefore I will take the will for the deed and though he spoke harshly, yet he will be sorry for it tomorrow. I will not mention it to him—I will put up with whatever he chooses to say."

There is a slander uttered against him—he says, "Well, let it alone. It will die of itself. Where no wood is, the fire goes out." Another speaks exceedingly ill against him in his hearing. But he just holds his tongue. He is dumb and opens not his mouth. He is not like the sons of Zeruah who said to David, "Let us go and take off that dead dog's head, because he cursed the king." He says, "No, if the Lord has bid him curse. Let him curse." "Vengeance is Mine. I will repay, says the Lord." He is quite content to bear and forbear and put up with a thousand injuries rather than inflict one. Meekly and quietly he goes his way through the world and people say, "Ah, such a man as that will never be successful. He will always be taken in."

"Why, he will be lending money and will never get it back. He will be giving his substance to the poor and he will never receive it back. How stupid he is! He allows people to infringe on his rights. He has no strength of mind. He does not know how to stand up for himself, fool that he is." Yes, but Christ turns it upside down and *He* says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Is not that provoking to you graspers, you high-spirited people, you lawyers, you that are always trying to get your neighbor in trouble for infringing on your rights? You do it in order that you may inherit the earth. See how Christ spites you and treads your wisdom under your feet.

He says, "*The meek shall inherit the earth.*" After all, very often the best way to get our rights is to let them alone. I am quite certain that the safest way to defend your character is never to say a word about it. If every person in this place chooses to slander me and utter the most furious libels that he pleases, he may rest quite assured he will never have a law-suit from me. I am not quite fool enough for that. I have always noticed that when a man defends himself in a court of law against any slander, he just does his enemy's business with his own hand. Our enemies cannot hurt us unless we hurt ourselves. No man's character was ever really injured except by himself. Be you among the meek and you shall inherit the earth. Bear all things, hope all things, believe all things and it shall be the best—even on this earth—in the end.

Do you see that very respectable gentleman yonder who has never omitted to attend his Church or his Chapel twice every Sunday ever since he became a man? He reads his Bible, too, and he has family prayers. It is true that there are certain stories flying about that he is rather hard upon his laborers and exacting at times in his payments—but he does justice to all men—although no further will he go. This man is on very good terms with himself. When he gets up in the morning he always shakes hands

with himself and compliments himself on being a very excellent person. He generally lives in a front street, in his opinion and the first number in the street, too.

If you speak to him about his state before God, he says that if *he* does not go to Heaven nobody will. For he pays twenty shillings in the pound to everybody. He is strictly upright and there is no one who can find any fault with his character. Isn't he a good man? Don't you envy him—a man who has so excellent an opinion of himself that he thinks himself perfect? Or if he is not quite perfect, yet he is so good that he believes that with a little help he shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

Well, now, do you see standing at the back of the Church there, a poor woman with tears running down her eyes? Come forward, ma'am. Let us hear your history. She is afraid to come forward. She dares not speak in the presence of respectable persons. But we gather thus much from her—she has lately found out that she is full of sin and she desires to know what she must do to be saved. Ask her. She tells you she has no merits of her own. Her song is, "I am the chief of sinners. Oh, that mercy would save me!" She never compliments herself upon her good works, for she says she has none. All her righteousnesses are as filthy rags. She puts her mouth in the very dust when she prays and she dares not lift so much as her eyes towards Heaven.

You pity that poor woman. You would not like to be in her case. The other man whom I have just mentioned stands at the very top of the ladder, does he not? But this poor woman stands at the bottom. Now just see the Gospel process—the world turned upside down. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness—for they shall be filled." While the man who is content with himself has this for his portion—"As many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse. Publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of Heaven before you, because you seek not the righteousness which is of faith, but you seek it as it were by the works of the Law." So here you see again is the world turned upside down in the first sermon Christ ever preached.

Now turn to the next Beatitude—in the seventh verse—"Blessed are the *merciful*—for they shall obtain mercy." Of this I have already spoken. The merciful are not much respected in this world—at least if they are imprudently merciful. The man who forgives too much, or who is too generous is not considered to be wise. But Christ declares that he who has been merciful—merciful to supply the wants of the poor, merciful to forgive his enemies and to pass by offenses shall obtain mercy. Here, again, is the world turned upside down.

"Blessed are the *pure in heart*—for they shall see God." The *world* says, "Blessed is the man who indulges in a merry life." If you ask the common run of mankind who is the happy man—they will tell you—"The happy man is he who has abundance of money and spends it freely and is freed from restraint. He who leads a merry life. He who drinks deep of the cup of intoxication—who revels riotously—who, like the wild horse of the prairie is not bitted by order, or restrained by reason. He who dashes across the broad plains of sin, not harnessed, unguided, unrestrained." This is

the man whom the world calls happy—the proud man, the mighty man, the Nimrod. The man who can do just as he wishes and who spurns to keep the narrow way of holiness.

Now Scripture says the opposite—“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”—

***“Blest is the man who shuns the place  
Where sinners love to meet;  
Who fears to tread their wicked ways,  
And hates the scoffer’s seat,”***

the man who cannot touch one thing because that would be lascivious, nor another because that would spoil his communion with his Master. A man who cannot frequent this place of amusement because he could not pray there and cannot go to another because he could not hope to have his Master’s sanction upon an hour so spent. That man, pure in heart, is said to be a Puritanical moralist, a strict Sabbatarian, a man who has not any mind of his own. But Jesus Christ puts this all straight, for He says these are the blessed men, these are the happy ones. “Blessed are the pure in heart—for they shall see God.”

And now look at the ninth verse. What a turning of the world upside down that is! You walk through London and who are the men that we put upon our columns and pillars and upon our park gates and so on? Read the ninth verse and see how that turns the world upside down. There upon the very top of the world—high, high up, can be seen the armless sleeve of a Nelson—there he stands, exalted high above his fellows. And there, in another place, with a long file up his back, stands a duke. And in another place, riding upon a war horse is a mighty man of war. These are the world’s blest heroes. Go into the capital of what empire you choose to select and you shall see that the blessed men who are put upon pedestals and who have statues erected to their memory—who are even put into our St. Paul’s Cathedral and our Westminster Abbey—are not exactly the men mentioned in the ninth verse.

Let us read it. “Blessed are the *peace-makers*. For they shall be called the children of God.” Ah, but you do not often bless the peace-makers, do you? The man who comes between two belligerents and bears the stroke himself—the man who will lie down on the earth and plead with others that they would cease from warfare—these are the blessed. How rarely are they set on high. They are generally set aside—as people who cannot be blessed—even though it seems that they try to make others so.

Here is the world turned upside down. The warrior with his garment stained in blood is put into the ignoble earth—to die and rot. But the peace-maker is lifted up and God’s crown of blessing is put round about his head and men one day shall see it and, struck with admiration, they shall lament their own folly—that they exalted the blood-red sword of the warrior—that they did rip the modest mantle of the men who did make peace among mankind.

And to conclude our Savior’s sermon—notice once more that we find in this world a race of persons who have always been hated—a class of men who have been hunted like the wild goat. They have been persecuted, afflicted and tormented. As an old divine says, “The Christian has been

looked upon as if he had a wolf's head, for as the wolf was hunted for his head everywhere, so has the Christian been hunted to the uttermost ends of the earth." And in reading history we are apt to say, "These persecuted persons occupy the lowest room of blessedness. These who have been sawn asunder, who have been burned, who have seen their houses destroyed and have been driven as houseless exiles into every part of the earth—these men who have wandered about in sheep's skins and goat's skins—these are the very least of mankind."

Not so. The Gospel reverses all this and it says, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for *righteousness*' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." I repeat it—the whole of these Beatitudes are in conflict with the world's opinion and we may quote the words of the Jew and say, "Jesus Christ was 'the man who turned the world upside down.'"

And now I find I must be very brief for I have taken so much time in endeavoring to show how Christ's Gospel turned the world upside down, in the position of its characters, that I shall have no space left for anything else. But if you will have patience with me I will briefly pass through the other points.

I have next to remark that the Christian religion turns the world upside down in *its maxims*. I will just quote a few texts which show this very clearly. "It was said by them of old time, eye for eye and tooth for tooth. But I say unto you, resist not evil." It has generally been held by each of us that we are not to allow anyone to infringe upon our rights. But the Savior says, "Whosoever would sue you at the law and take your cloak, let him take your coat also." "If any man smite you on the one cheek, turn unto him the other also." If these precepts were kept, would it not turn the world upside down?

"It has been said by them of old time, love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But Jesus Christ said, "Let love be unto all men." He commands us to love our enemies and to pray for them who despitefully use us. He says, "If your enemy hunger, feed him and if he thirst give him drink, for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head." This would indeed be turning the world upside down! For what would become of our war ships and our warriors if at the port-holes where now we put our cannons, we should send out to some burning city of our enemies—for instance, to burning Sebastopol—if we should send to the houseless inhabitants barrels of beef and bundles of bread and clothes, to supply their wants?

That would have been a reversal of all human policy, but yet it would have been the carrying out of Christ's Law, after all. So shall it be in the days that are to come—our enemies shall be loved and fed. We are told, too, in these times that it is good for a man to heap unto himself abundant wealth and make himself rich. But Jesus Christ turned the world upside down, for He said there was a certain rich man who was clothed in scarlet and fared sumptuously every day and so on and his fields brought forth abundantly. And he said, "I will pull down my barns and build greater." But the Lord says, "You fool!"

That is reversing everything in this world. You would have made an Alderman of him, or a Lord Mayor. And fathers would have patted their boys

on the head and said, "That is all through his frugality and taking care—see how he has got on in the world? When he had a good crop he did not give it away to the poor as that extravagant man does who has kept on working all his life and will never be able to retire from business. He saved it all up—be as good a boy as So-and-So and get on, too." But Christ said "You fool, this night shall your soul be required of you." A turning of everything upside down.

And others of us will have it that we ought to be very careful every day—always looking forward to the future and always fretting about what is to be. Here is a turning of the world upside down, when Jesus Christ says, "Remember the ravens. They sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not better than they?" I do believe that at this day the maxims of business are directly opposed to the maxims of Christ. But I shall be answered by this, "Business is business." Yes, I know business is business—but business has no business to be such business as it is. Oh, that it might be altered till every man could make his business his religion—and make a religion of his business!

I have not detained you long upon that point. And therefore I am free to mention a third. How Christ has turned the world upside down as to our *religious notions*. Why the mass of mankind believe that if any man wills to be saved that is all which is necessary. Many of our preachers do in effect preach this worldly maxim. They tell men that they must make themselves willing. Now, just hear how the Gospel upsets that. "It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy."

The world will have an universal religion, too. But how Christ overturns that. "I pray for them. I pray not for the world." He has ordained us *from among men*. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth." "The Lord knows them that are His." How that runs counter to all the world's opinion of religion! The world's religion is this—"Do and you shall live." Christ's religion is—"Believe and live."

We will have it that if a man is righteous, sober and upright he shall enter the kingdom of Heaven. But Christ says this you ought to have done. But still, this can never cleanse you. "As many as are under the works of the Law are under the curse." "By the works of the Law shall no flesh living be justified." "Believe and live," is just the upsetting of every human notion. Cast yourself on Christ—trust in Him. Have good works *afterwards*. But first of all trust in Him that died upon the tree.

This is the overturning of every opinion of man. And hence mortals will always fight against it so long as the human heart is what it is. Oh, that we *knew* the Gospel! Oh, that we *felt* the Gospel! For it would be the upsetting of all self-righteousness and the casting down of every high look and of every proud thing.

**II.** And now, Beloved, spare me a little time while I try to show THAT WHICH IS TRUE IN THE WORLD IS TRUE IN THE HEART. Instead, however, of enlarging at full length upon the different topics, I shall make my last point the subject of examination.

Man is a little world and what God does in the outer world He does in the inner. If any of you would be saved your hearts must be turned upside down. I will now appeal to you and ask you whether you have ever felt this—whether you know the meaning of it?

In the first place, your *judgment* must be turned upside down. Cannot many of you say that which you now believe to be the Truth of God is very far opposed to your former carnal notions? Why, if anyone had told you that you should be a believer in the distinguishing doctrines of free and Sovereign Grace you would have laughed in his face. “What? *I* believe the doctrine of *election*? What? *I* ever hold the doctrine of *particular redemption*, or *final perseverance*? Pshaw! Nonsense! It cannot be!”

But now you do hold it and the thing which you thought unreasonable and unjust now seems to you to be for God’s glory and for man’s eternal benefit. You can kiss the doctrine which once you despised and you meekly receive it as sweeter than the droppings of honey from the honeycomb though once you thought it to be as the very poison of asps and gall and wormwood. Yes, when grace enters the heart there is a turning upside down of all our opinions. And the great Truth of Jesus sits reigning on our soul.

Is there not, again, a total change of all your *hopes*? Why, your hopes used to be all for this world. If you could but get rich. If you could but be great and honored you would be happy! You looked forward to it. All you were expecting was a Paradise this side the flood. And now where are your hopes?—not on earth. For where your treasure is, there must your heart be also. You are looking for a city that hands have not built. Your desires are heavenly, whereas they were gross and carnal once. Can you say that?

Oh, all you members of this congregation, can you say that your hopes and your desires are changed? Are you looking upward, instead of downward? Are you looking to serve God on earth and to enjoy Him forever? Or are you still content with thinking, “What you shall eat and what you shall drink and wherewithal you shall be clothed”?

Again, it is a complete upsetting of all your *pleasures*. You loved the tavern once, you hate it now. You hated God’s house once. It is now your much-loved habitation. The song, the Sunday newspaper, the lewd novel—all these were sweet to your taste. But you have burned the books that once enchanted you and now the dusty Bible from the back of the shelf is taken down and there it lies wide open upon the family table and it is read both morning and night—much loved, much prized and delighted in. The Sabbath was once the dullest day of the week to you. You either loitered outside the door in your shirt-sleeves if you were poor, or if you were rich you spent the day in your drawing room and had company in the evening.

Now, instead thereof, your company you find in the Church of the living God and you make the Lord’s house the drawing room where you entertain your friends. Your feast is no longer a banquet of wine, but a banquet of communion with Christ. There are some of you who once loved nothing better than the theater, the low concert room, or the casino—over such places you now see a great black mark of the curse and you never go

there. You seek now the Prayer Meeting, the Church meeting, the gathering of the righteous, the habitation of the Lord God of hosts.

It is marvelous how great a change the Gospel makes in a man's *house*, too. Why, it turns his house upside down. Look over the mantle! There is a vile daub of a picture there, or a wretched print and the subject is worse than the style of the thing. But when the man follows Jesus he takes that down and he gets a print of John Bunyan in his prison, or his wife standing before the magistrate, or a print of the Apostle Paul preaching at Athens, or some good old subject representing something Biblical.

There is a pack of cards and a cribbage board in the cupboard. He turns them out and instead he puts there perhaps the monthly magazine, or perhaps a few works of old divines, just here and there one of the publications of the Religious Tract Society, or a volume of a Commentary. Everything is upside down there. The children say, "Father is so changed." They never knew such a thing. He used to come home sometimes drunk at night and the children used to run up stairs and be in bed before he came in. And now little John and little Sarah sit at the window and watch till he comes home.

And they go toddling down the street to meet him and he takes one in his arms and the other by the hand and brings them home with him. He used to teach them to sing, "Begone dull care," or something worse—now he tells them of, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild"—or puts into their mouth some sweet song of old. A jolly set of companions he used to have come to see him and a roaring party there used to be on a Sunday afternoon. But that is all done with.

The mother smiles upon her husband—she is a happy woman now. She knows that he will no longer disgrace himself by plunging into the vilest of society and being seduced into the worst of sins. Now, if you could take a man's heart out and put a new heart right into him—it would not be half as good if it were another natural heart—as the change that God works when He takes out the heart of stone and puts in a heart of flesh—

***"A heart resigned, submissive, meek,  
Our dear Redeemer's throne  
Where only Christ is heard to speak,  
Where Jesus reigns alone."***

I put, then, the question to you again—"Have you been turned upside down?" How about your companions? You loved those the best who could swear the loudest, talk the fastest and tell the greatest falsehoods. Now you love those who can pray the most earnestly and tell you the most of Jesus. Everything is changed with you. If you were to meet your old self going down the street you would not know him except by hearsay. You are no relation to him at all. Sometimes the old gentleman comes to your house and he begins to tempt you to go back. But you turn him out of doors as soon as you can and say, "Begone! I never got on so long as I knew you. I had a ragged coat to my back then and I was always giving the publican all my money. I never went to God's house but cursed my Maker and added sin to sin and tied a millstone round my neck. So away from me—I will have nothing to do with you. I have been buried with

Christ and I have risen with Him. I am a new man in Christ Jesus—old things have passed away and behold, all things have become new.”

I have some here, however, who belong to a different class of society—who could not indulge in any of these things. But ah, Ladies and Gentlemen, if you are ever converted you must have as great a sweeping out as the poorest man that ever lived. There must be as true a turning upside down in the salvation of an earl, or a duke, or a lord, as in the salvation of a pauper or a peasant. There is as much sin in the higher ranks as in the lower and sometimes more, because they have more light, more knowledge, more influence and when they sin, they not only damn themselves, but others, too.

O you that are rich, have you had a change, too? Have the frivolities of this world become sickening things to you? Do you turn away with loathing from the common cant and conventionalism of high life? Have you forsaken it? And can you now say, “Although I am in the world, yet am I not of it. Its pomp and vanities I do eschew. Its pride and its glory I trample under foot. These are nothing to me. I would follow my Master bearing His Cross through evil report and through good report”? If such is not the case, if you are not changed, remember, there are no exceptions—one Truth is true for all—“Except you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of Heaven.” And that amounts in substance to my text—except you are thoroughly renewed, turned upside down, you cannot be saved.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” For he that believes shall be sanctified and renewed—shall be saved at last—but he that believes not must be cast away in the great day of God’s account.

The Lord bless you, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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# **GOD'S NEARNESS TO US**

## **NO. 1973**

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 17, 1887,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*"Though He is not far from each one of us."  
Acts 17:27.*

WHEN man disobeyed his God he died spiritually and that death consisted in the separation of his soul from God. From that moment man began to think that God was far away and this has since been his religion in all ages. Either he has said, "There is no God," or he has believed the visible creation to be God, which is much the same as having no God. Or else he has thought God to be some far-away, mysterious Being who takes no notice of man. Even after obtaining a better conception of God, he has thought Him hard to find and hard to be entreated of. Because his own heart is far from God, he imagines that God's heart is far from him. But it is not so. The living God is not far from any one of us, for, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being."

The nearness of God to man is a teaching of Revelation. Look back to the record of the Garden of Eden and see an early evidence of God's nearness to man. Adam, having transgressed, hid himself among the trees of the garden, but in his hiding place God sought him and the Voice of the Lord God was heard, walking among the trees of the garden and saying, "Adam, where are you?" Man will not seek God, but God seeks man! Though man's voice is not, "Where is my God?" yet God's voice is, "Adam, where are you?" All through history God has been familiar with man. He has spoken to him in divers ways, but principally through chosen men. One after another He has raised up Prophets and by their warning voices He has pleaded with men and invited them to seek His face. His own voice might have caused dismay and distance and so He has used human voices, that He might come nearer to the heart. All the history of the chosen nation, as we read it in the Old Testament, reveals the nearness of Jehovah. Whatever we read upon the page, we know that within, above, or behind it, the Lord is near, even when He seems to have hidden Himself. In these latter days, the Lord has come still nearer to us, for He has spoken to us by His Son. The Son of God became the Friend of sinners—could He come nearer than that? The Word was made flesh and dwelt among men and men beheld His Glory. Bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh is the Christ and yet He is very God of very God. In Him God is next-of-kin to man and manhood is brought near to the Eternal Throne. Christ Jesus is God and Man in one Person and thus the closest union is formed

between God and man. Verily, verily, the Lord God is not far from each one of us in His own dear Son!

Today, though Jesus has gone up on high, the Spirit of God abides in the midst of the Church and thus, again, the Lord is near. The Comforter is still at work. The Convincer still presses upon man's conscience sin, righteousness and judgment to come. Still does the Holy Spirit work with the Word of God, directing His ministers so to speak that their hearers shall perceive a personality and pointedness in the Word delivered. Oh, you that hear the Gospel, be sure of this, that the Kingdom of God has come near to you in a very special sense! I may say of you with an emphasis, "He is not far from any of you and you are not far from the Kingdom of God."

That God is near by His Omnipresence and by His gracious dealings with men is the clear teaching of the inspired volume. To the enlightened mind, God is evidently seen to be near in the works of Nature. Whose voice was it that we heard last night thundering overhead? Who fashioned the drops of rain that refreshed the fields? Who breathed the gentle breeze which cooled and cheered the drooping flowers? Who has sent us this day so clear, so calm, so bright, "the bridal of the earth and sky"? Who is creating for us our harvests and preparing food for man and beast? It is God that does this, doing it in ways beyond our comprehension, yet doing it before our eyes! There is no other force in the universe save that which is derived from God. There is no other life except the life which has leaped from the eternal Self-Existence. God is in ALL! Above us in the stars He shines, but He also works in the grass beneath our feet. Each dewdrop gleams His glory and every grain of dust bears His impress. He is within us, keeping our hearts in motion—and around us, giving to the air we breathe its power to sustain life.

So also is the Lord very near in Providence. Albeit that this godless age seeks to banish God, yet is He present in the transactions of every day. All things come from Him, both the little and the great. He ordains, rules, or over-rules. Pestilence and famine, earthquake and hurricane are His heavier treads—and days and nights, harvests and springtides are His gentler footsteps. The events of history, whether on a large or small scale, betray an evident design and arrangement. All things work together with singular accuracy and punctuality to accomplish a lofty purpose. It is the fashion, nowadays, to say that these are *coincidences*. It is a pretty word for boys to play with! Some of us observe God's Providences and we are never without a Providence to observe. We see the hand of God in daily life and we are glad to do so, though we are laughed at as poor fools. Those who can see may well be content to bear the jests of the blind! In my own personal experience I have met with numbers of singular and special tokens of God's working in Providence, some of which I would scarce dare to tell because they might seem incredible. I remember preaching at Halifax, in a huge timber building which was erected for the purpose. During the previous day the snow fell heavily and it lay deep upon the ground. Nevertheless, the people came in their thousands and thronged the enormous edifice. And gratefully do I remember how they went away to their homes

in safety. They had no sooner cleared the building to the last man, than it fell in one gigantic ruin! Why had it not fallen when the crowds were there? In my joy that no one was harmed I thought that God was there, and I praised His holy name. Was that a piece of superstition?

Take another instance. I was one day in great perplexity upon a certain matter of great importance to the cause of God. I laid it before God in prayer, but still I did not see my way—I could get no direction or guidance. Having to preach in North London, a friend kindly drove me to the spot and afterwards I asked Him to take me to the house of one of our people whom I wished to see. I scarcely noticed my way, till at last I found myself in a street unknown to me. I then said, “You are surely going wrong.” “No,” He said, “I am right enough.” He was making for the private *house* of the person I had named, but I knew that he would, at that time, be at his office in the City and I had *intended* to go there after him. We were on the wrong track and so the horse’s head was turned down a side street unknown to me. And as we passed along it, I saw the only man in all the world who could assist me out of my difficulty. How he came to be *there* I could not tell! How *I* came to be there I have already told you. Strangely had the Lord guided me and the information guided the affair to a happy issue. God was near me. *Mere coincidences*, they tell me! *Mere coincidences!*

Let me tell a true story. The other day I met with a series of similar “mere coincidences.” I set out by railway to a certain town and the train went on till we came to a junction and I was bid to change. By a strange coincidence another train had drawn up and was going in the direction I desired. I had only time to cross a platform and take my place and off it went. A few miles further I again heard a voice, saying, “change here!” I changed a second time and by another coincidence a train was just starting for my destination. When I reached the end of my railway journey, another coincidence was in store for me, for a well-known friend was waiting with his carriage and he took me to his house, where, by another coincidence, a dinner was ready. At the dinner there happened to be a dish upon the table intended for a person who did not eat meat. Was not this a special coincidence for me? I went to the chapel to preach and I found it crowded with people anxious to hear—another coincidence, of course!

Somebody cries, “You talk nonsense! It was all arranged!” I confess I thought so. I am glad that you acknowledge the arranging hand, but, pardon me, I saw an arranging hand in the other cases, also, and I think it was as clear in the other cases as in this! To the story of my journey you find a clue in a previous arrangement—and in the history of nations and in the story of each human life I also find a clue in the Presence of a Divine mind which arranges all things! When human arrangement explains a series of events, you admit it without question—why not admit *Divine* arrangement since it equally well explains the great occurrences of history? Do you object? I fear it is that you resolve not to believe in the one case, while in the other, having no theory to maintain, you follow your natural common sense.

God is so near us that He hears the prayers of His people and orders events in correspondence to those prayers. Do you doubt this? Do you tell me that the many answers to prayer which we joyfully narrate are mere *coincidences*? I have hardly patience to answer you. Yet let me tell you of some strange incidents which happened to me yesterday. In the morning, when I came into my study, I needed to break my fast. I had scarcely wished it before my breakfast was on the table. During the day I wished for a glass of water. In a few moments it stood by my side. I required someone to take a telegram to the post office for me. Lo! Presto! A suitable messenger appeared. Was this magic? The evening came on and I desired to have the lamps lighted and the curtains drawn. In a few seconds my desire was accomplished. Were these matters “mere coincidences”? “No,” cries one, “you rang the bell.”

Now, come to think of it, someone *did* pull at a handle—but I saw no bell! Yet you assure me that the ringing of a bell accounts for it all! I will not argue the point with you. Only when I yield to you, I want you also to yield to me when I tell you that we pray to the Lord our God and that we receive answers to our prayers! Our daily experience is that prayer *is* answered by the Lord our God, for He is near to fulfill His promises and to grant the petitions of them that put their trust in Him. You believe in the power of the bell and we believe in the power of prayer! Our speaking to the living God is as much a fact and a reality to us as the ringing of a bell to you! Why, then, do you heap scorn upon us? Why do you snuff us out with your big talk about coincidences? Scoff away! We shall not pray any the less so long as in our experience we find the Lord so swift to hear, so bountiful to bless! The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God,” but even he is not so much a fool as he who, believing that there *is* a God, will not allow that He is near enough to hear and answer prayer! Oh, that my Hearers who doubt the nearness of God would cry to Him and see if He would not be found of them!

Beloved, the fact is that God is everywhere. He is so present in all places that He is specially near to each person. His circumference is nowhere, but His center is everywhere! God is as much with you as if there were no other person in the world. His being near to you does not make Him far off from another. This Truth of God is high and we cannot attain to it, but it is none the less sure. God is near each one of us, observing us with exactness, perceiving the secret intents of our hearts. He is near us, feeling for us and thinking of us. He is near us in active energy, ready to interpose and help us. He is near us in all places and at all times. By night and by day He surrounds us. At this moment, “surely God is in this place.” Know it and be filled with awe! I pray that before the service is over you may know it by feeling the power of His Grace. In answer to prayer, may the Lord’s Presence and Power be with the words which I shall try to speak to you, though I speak in great feebleness.

First, I am going to address myself for a little *to those who only feel after Him*, but as yet have not perceived Him. And then I shall speak *to those who have found Him* and who know by a sweet experience how near He is to His chosen.

**I. TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE FEELING AFTER GOD** I speak in deep earnestness. Like blind men who grope for the wall, you stretch out your hands to feel after Him. Rejoice, for He is not far from you!

What then? *How impious* is sin when seen in this light! You have transgressed the commands of the great King in the King's Presence. When you blasphemed Him, you thought little of Him—but you spoke into His ear. When you ridiculed His ways and His people, you did it to His face. You insulted your Creator while His eyes were fixed on you. Did you dream that you were in the outskirts of His dominion, far off from His Throne? And did you, therefore, take liberty to offend? O Sir, you were mistaken! You rebelled in His courts! He heard your evil words; He noted your unrighteous acts. Think of this, you that have never sought mercy at His hands—from your childhood until now you have lived under His close inspection! You have, perhaps, seen those hives which permit you, through a glass, to see all that the bees are doing. You have watched them busy in their cells. All the world is but a hive of this sort to the mind of God. You could not read the designs and intents of the bees, but the Lord has read your *thoughts* and *imagination*s. Would some of you have sinned as you have done if you had realized the Divine Presence? Would you have dared to go to such lengths as you have gone, if you had seen Him as He has seen you? "Hush," they say, when they are speaking evil of any person, "here he comes." Why did you not, "hush," since God was there? Servants who have wasted their master's time will hurry up when they see that he is near—how is it that you have not only loitered, but done mischief while your Master has been looking the other way? How impious is that sin which is done despite the Presence and observation of God!

Next, note *how profane is indifference!* To be indifferent to God when God is near in the Glory of His majesty and the riches of His love, is a sign of great hardness of heart. God is near, supplying you with breath, keeping you in life and yet you care not! Holy men have trembled with awe in His Presence and you have trifled! How is this? If He had gone on a journey and you had forgotten Him, there might be some little excuse—but with the Lord close to you, how could you ignore Him? Can I call this less than sheer profanity? If an angel in the Presence of the Most High refused to adore. If a spirit before His burning Throne maintained a sullen silence, we should count it unmistakable sedition! What is it in your case? What shall I say to those who, here, in the Presence of God, have lived 10, 20, 30, 40, or 50 years and yet have never given their Lord a serious thought? Do you so lightly esteem your Maker? Is He not worth a *thought*? Will you neither bow your knee in homage, nor lift up your voice in thankfulness? O men and women, why do you act so unjustly, so ungratefully? What has God done that you should slight Him? How can you excuse yourselves, that you live and move in Him, and yet have no more care for Him than if there were no such Being?

Furthermore, if God is so near, this shows *the evident impossibility of deceiving Him*. God is not mocked! Do you think that if you will go to God's House that will avail you, though you go not to *God*? Do you imagine that to repeat certain gracious words will suffice, though your heart is

wandering on the mountains of vanity? Have you thought that to make a religious profession will be enough? And that God will be so duped as to think you are His servant and His child if you take upon yourself the names which belong to such relationships? Do you think that He can be deceived when He is near you, around you and *within* you? Your heart is as open to Him as your Bible is open before you—and He reads you as you read the plainest print. How, then, can you deceive Him? Beware, I beseech you, of having any dealings with God but those which are in downright honesty! We must be true to the core before the All-Seeing One. A lie to our fellow men is meanness, but a lie to God is madness! What do you mean, you pretender to godliness, if your heart is not right with God? Do you think to play tricks with the only wise God? Can you cheat the eyes before which all things are naked and open? He besets you behind and before and lays His hand upon you—He possesses your reins and searches your heart! Be plain and sincere with Him lest He smite you as He smote Ananias and Sapphira! Oh, that the words of Hagar in the wilderness would rise from every heart—“You God see me”! That God is as near to us as we are to ourselves should make us greatly ashamed if, in any way whatever, we seem to be what, in the depths of our being, we are not.

But, listen, this shows us *how vain is all hope of escape from God!* What if a man says there is no God? God is all the same. What if a man forgets God and, therefore, ceases to tremble? There is as much cause for trembling as ever and somewhat more. What if a man is able throughout life to shut his eyes to his lost estate and, at last, dies without bands in his death—what of that? He cannot escape the Judgment, he cannot flee from the far-reaching arms of Justice. The Lord's impartial sentence will find him out though he plunge into depths of darkness or make his bed in Hell! It was once said of the whole world that it was nothing better than a prison for the man that had offended Caesar—and I may say of the great universe, however wide it is, that it is but a narrow cell for the man who has offended God! Where can you flee, my Hearer? Where can you hide? Neither mountains nor abysses can conceal you from those eyes of fire! If you had but half a grain of sense, you would fall at the feet of your pursuer and invoke His mercy! Confess your wickedness and beg for pardon! Quit your sin and be reconciled to your Judge through the death of His Son—then those eyes shall be suns of light to you, whereas now they are as flames of fire!

This is the solemn side of the matter and I confess it is dark as the pillar of cloud when it turned its blackness on the Egyptians. Oh, this God! This God who is not far from us! What shall we do? We have provoked Him! He is angry with the wicked every day! His great long-suffering holds back the strokes of His Justice, but they must come, one day, for He will by no means spare the guilty! Oh, my ungodly Hearer, you have sinned and you are sinning in the Presence of your God! I beseech you, think of this! You have been indifferent and you are still indifferent in the Presence of One who with a *thought* can wither you—and with a word can send you

where hope can never come! Be warned, I pray you. May God bless this solemn warning to your soul's awakening!

There is a bright side to this great Truth of the Divine nearness. If God is not far from each one of us, then *how hopeful is our seeking of Him!* If I seek God and He is not far from me, I shall surely find Him! I have not to climb to Heaven nor to dive into the abyss, for He is near! Oh, for faith to perceive Him! Where I sit, or stand, I may come to Him. If I seek Him, He is seeking me for certain, or else I would never have sought Him! When the sinner seeks God and God seeks the sinner, they will soon meet. Is it not written, "If you seek Him, He will be found of you"? "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near." Omnipresence yields good cheer to those who are panting for their God.

*How perceptible must repentance be!* If God is near you, He sees that tear which just now scalded your cheek. He marks that sigh. He sees that heaving of the breast. He knows that trouble of the soul. He sees that restlessness. When I stand by a person who labors under emotion, it is not long before I sympathize with him—I cannot help it. God is much more tender-hearted than we are and, like a father pities his children, so He pities them that fear Him. If your heart is breaking, your God perceives it. If you are bewailing your sin, He hears it and cries, "How can I give you up?" The sight of your tears has melted Him! The hearing of your sighs has moved His compassion! Doubt not this—you cannot have Him near and yet have Him callous, for His name is Love. He heard you and He pitied you when yesterday in your chamber you were in an agony of shame and fear. He sees you at this moment in your loneliness and dire distress. A fugitive and a vagabond you may be, but yet the Lord is near!

Since the Lord is near to us, *how quick will He be to perceive our faith!* If you, this morning, glance an eye to the Cross, the Lord will see your eyes looking that way. He sees the feeble as well as the strong. If you have but a grain of mustard seed of faith He will at once discern it! When the messenger of the Church cannot perceive it and before the minister can detect it, God has seen faith! Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? Do you trust yourself with Him? God has accepted your faith and He has said, "There is now, therefore, no condemnation." If He were far off, your faith might be unnoticed, but being close at hand He sees the first glimmer of light within your mind. Though your trust is of the feeblest kind, He accepts it and protects it.

If God is so near you, poor Soul, *how readily He can reveal Himself to you!* I know how sadly you are urged to despair and yet, before that clock has finished the half-hour, your despair may vanish. There is nothing between you and your Savior but your unbelief. Let unbelief go and you shall see Jesus to your heart's joy! A prisoner was taken out to die and as he rode along in the death cart his heart was heavy at the thought of death. None of all the throng could cheer him. The gallows were in sight and this blotted out the sun for him. But lo, his prince came riding up in hot haste bearing a free pardon! Then the man opened his eyes and, as though he had risen from the dead, he returned to happy consciousness. The sight of his prince had chased all gloom away! He declared that he

had never seen a fairer countenance in all his days—and when he read his pardon, he vowed that no poetry should ever be dearer to his heart than those few lines of Sovereign Grace!

Friends, I remember well when I was in that death cart and Jesus came to me with pardon! Death and Hell were before me, but I rejoiced exceedingly when I saw the nail prints in His hands and feet and the wound in His side! When He said, “Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you,” I thought I never saw such loveliness and never heard such music in all my days! No, it was not mere *thought*—I am sure my judgment was right. Eternity, itself, shall never disclose anything to me more sweet! My pardoning Lord has no peer nor rival. Oh, what a Christ is He who appeared to *me*, a guilty, condemned sinner, on the way to Hell! Blessed be His name! He bore on the tree my curse, shame and death—and I am free! This is the manifestation which I desire for each of you! And, since Jesus is near, how readily can He grant you the blessing!

If the Lord is near, there is no reason why He should not grant pardon right now to all of you who seek it! Before the words I speak have reached your ears, God, in the Person of His Son, may manifest Himself to you and make your heart leap for joy! Do it, O Lord Jesus! Grant a vision of Yourself, good Lord! Grant it now and You shall have the praise! God often reveals Himself by men to men—why should He not speak to you through this sermon of mine? God often reveals Himself to men by the Scriptures. A precious text laid home to an aching heart will soon give it peace. Why, be of good cheer, my Hearers! God is near you and, therefore, hope is near you! Believe in Jesus and He will give you rest. He waits to be gracious! He looks out for objects of mercy. Be of good cheer, for Jesus of Nazareth passes by. Even at this hour He is near.

**II.** The time is too short, therefore I must turn at once to God’s people and speak to **THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE FOUND THE LORD**. Brothers and Sisters, you need not that I seek out choice words when I speak to *you*. You are soldiers and you only need short sentences, such as captains give to the ranks. I say to you, redeemed by precious blood and made sensitive to the all-surrounding God, note *how strictly God observes us!* Let us walk in His sight! Let us live in His presence. I charge you, remember that the Lord your God is a jealous God. Under such weighty obligations to Him and bound to Him by such marvelous ties of love, live—live obediently, live intensely, live with concentration of heart, mind and strength—live wholly unto Him! Being always in His sight, set Him always before you. Be your life such as life should be in the fierce light that beats about the Throne of Deity. Oh, our poor lives! Our empty lives! God fill them and elevate them! May He help us to rise out of our dead selves by a sense of His living Presence. If God’s nearness does not make us cry to Him to make men of us, what will? O You who are so divinely near, draw our lives into Your life!

If God is not far from us, let us see *how readily He hears our prayers!* I am sometimes startled at the power of a feeble prayer to win a speedy answer. “Startled,” you will ask, “why are you startled? For it is written, ‘Before they call, I will answer and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.’”

Yes, it is so written, but we do not always apprehend the fact. When the promise comes speedily to pass, have you never felt your flesh creep with a solemn awe in the Presence of God, who has so remarkably drawn near at the voice of prayer? You turn aside from your business but a minute and pray—and you come back calm and composed. This is the finger of God! You do not leave the counter, but simply dart a glance heavenward and the thing you sought for is bestowed upon you. Is it not often so, my Beloved? You know it is! Is it not easily accounted for by the fact that God is at your right hand, ready to be gracious? There is no need in every case to break the continuity of business and to get away from the concerns of this life, for the Lord is in the shop and in the barn, as well as in the closet! You are in the midst of a throng of wicked men, but God is there, too, if His Providence has called you into such company. The pressure of incessant occupation racks your mind, but it would be less if you felt that God is there to help and guide.

*How simple is communion with the Lord when we know that He is near us!* When you seek quietude for meditation, do you think it amazing that you enter speedily into communion with God? Is He not waiting for you? If you go into the field with Isaac, God is there! Resort, therefore, to communion with God without doubt of obtaining it. Speak, for He hears—listen, for He speaks! Pray without ceasing because God is near without ceasing. Pour out your heart before Him, for He is always near to mark your heart's outpourings. It makes life a blessed thing when we remember that we spend it with God. We dwell in Him. It is not as if we were visitors and had to make calls on God now and then, but He is our dwelling place! We have not to seek Him as though He had hidden Himself away, for He is the Sun whose Presence fills our life with strength and comfort! He is *in* us and, therefore, *with* us. Therefore let us pray, praise and hold sweet communion with Him.

Further, dear Brothers and Sisters, if God is so near us, *how securely are we defended!* A Christian lady not long ago dreamed a dream which was not a dream, but fact. She saw herself as surrounded with God—encircled above, beneath and all around, as with a blaze of light! Brilliance inconceivable made a pavilion for her and while she stood in the midst of the Glory, she saw all her cares, her troubles, her temptations and her sins wandering about outside the wall of light, unable to reach her. Unless that light itself should open and make a way for them, she was serenely secure, although she could see the perils which otherwise would destroy her. Is not the Lord a wall of fire round about us and the Glory in the midst? Is it not written, "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty"? Evil shall not come near to him who is near to God. Go where we may, a more than royal guard surrounds us, for the Lord of Hosts is with us. Blind eyes, blind eyes, you see not the Infinite Protector! If our eyes were anointed, we would see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about us! No, better than horses, though they are of fire—we would see the Omnipotent God to be our shield and buckler! I want you, dear people

of God, to feel that you are never in real danger because never far from God. How can he be in peril whom the Lord keeps both night and day?

To the living God we look for life when threatened by the powers of death. You have a little fish in your hand—it will soon die if it remains there. It is newly taken from the stream—make haste to restore it to its element and it will speedily recover. In the river it will find all it needs! Even so, in God we have all we need. In God we dwell in all-sufficiency and in perfect peace. As the dove in the dovecote, the coney in the rock and the chick beneath the hen, so do we dwell in God. Who is he that can harm us, since God is near?

If the Lord is thus near us, *how speedily He can renew our Graces!* Alas, our souls too often need restoring but, blessed be His name, He is at hand to renew our life. I confess with shame that I have felt dull and dead and heavy, and I thought it was the weather, or my bodily weakness, or some other matter. But whatever was the cause, I have only found one cure. As in a moment, quicker than the twinkling of an eye, I have been lifted into life, love, light and energy—I have awakened in the night with all the bells of my soul ringing out peals of praise! I have said to myself, “What a strange creature I am! Now I can rejoice in my God. Now I can pray with holy prevalence. Now I can leap as a hart.” Then I have wished to rush into the pulpit and preach straight away. I was all death, before, and the Lord made me all life!

Is not this to be expected since God is near to hear our moans? He speaks and it is done! “His Word runs very swiftly.” By the exercise of faith, the Lord enables us to overcome the body. Plato used to say that by thought, the soul could get out of the body. I am not philosopher enough to know whether this is true or not. Indeed, I never tried to quit my body, for I am afraid I might not find my way back again! But this I know, that by the spiritual life, the spirit can rise above the body. Some grievous ache, some bitter pain has made you feel as if you did not care to live and yet, a flash of sacred joy has gone through you and you have laughed at the pain and have even been quickened by it! Pain is a rough barebacked steed which throws every common rider, but when he comes who is taught by the Spirit, he leaps upon it, rides it and outstrips the wind! How many a grand thought has been the child of pain! Now, if God is with us, we see how such a thing can be. Never despair while the living God is near! Believe in the Living One and, touching the hem of His garment, the virtue of His life shall stream into your dying heart—“He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”

I hear people sometimes talk about “the higher life.” Happy is that man who obtained the *highest* life when he first believed in Jesus Christ! The Divine Life is neither lower nor higher, but there are increasing degrees of its strength. These are all reachable, for God is near to help us. If God is near us, Brothers and Sisters, infinite resources are near us. We need not be unbelieving. We need not be sorrowful. We need not be afraid. We need not be the captives of sin—we are able to overcome it by the Divine help. We can master ourselves, for God is near us to give us the victory.

I do not think that any of you should go away today, saying, "I feel so dull, so stupid, so unspiritual." God is not far from any one of us and His Presence should remove these complaints. What does Jesus say? "I am the Resurrection, and the Life." You looked for a miracle. Behold your Lord! *He is the miracle.* Receive Him and you have the Resurrection and the Life! What, though you are in the grave, sheeted and bound—if Jesus is at the mouth of the sepulcher, at His bidding you shall quit the abode of death! Have hope, O Lazarus! For though you are dead and stinking, yet the Christ who calls you, gives you life! Never, child of God, never think that you cannot be filled with life and power! That cry of, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" is heard by your present God and He gives you the victory through Jesus Christ!

Let me say once more, if God is so near us, *there is no reason why we should not speedily enjoy a manifestation of His Glory.* Moses keeps the flock of Jethro. Poor comrades, those woolly sheep! He has led them to the back side of the desert. Poor region, it scarcely yields a blade of grass for sheep and nothing for man. What can one expect in a howling wilderness? Stop—yonder is a bush! But what of that? No grapes or figs can be gathered there. A bird may rest in a bush, but not a man. Turn aside, O Moses, for God can make that bush to be the Throne of Deity! The commonplace can be made celestial, the despicable, Divine. Though today, dear Heart, in all your trouble and deadness of heart you will go to a home which is no home, yet since God is there, He can appear to you in anything and everything! He can make the bush of your trouble to become the embodiment of His Glory. He can manifest Himself to you as He does not to the world. Time was, they say, when God could be found under a tree, by the brook, near the town wall and even in a furnace and a lion's den—but men do not see Him, now, even in temples! Whose fault is this? It is the fault of our dull eyes and duller hearts! God is as near as always. I see Him in this House of Prayer. I pray that you may see Him and then the spot whereon you now are will become holy ground to you throughout the rest of your life! In your quiet room this afternoon, there is no reason why a door should not be opened in Heaven. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." He shows His Glory to the meek and lowly. The recognized Presence of God will make an attic as glorious as the Mount of Transfiguration! When Jesus is to us, Emanuel, God With Us, we see Him in His Glory, for this is to see Him as He is!

This Truth of the Presence of God makes me feel happy with regard to this, my much beloved Church. I often fear lest we should not have conversions. I have feared, lest coldness of heart should take hold of myself and you. And then this has been my comfort—the Lord is not far from any of us and, therefore, He can use us and work conversions in our midst! Brothers and Sisters, He can incline the outsiders to come and hear the Word—and when they hear it, He can bless them, for He is not far from them!

I read in the Life of John Wesley a story of Methodists meeting in a barn and how certain of the villagers, who were afraid to break through the door, resolved to place one inside who would open the door to them

during the service, that they might disturb the congregation. This person went in before service began and concealed himself in a sack in a corner of the barn. When the Methodists began to sing, he liked the tune so well that he would not get out of the sack till he had heard it through. Then followed a prayer and during that prayer God worked on the man in the sack, so that he began to cry for mercy! The good people looked around and were astonished to find a sinner in a sack seeking his Savior! The door was not opened to the mob, after all, for he who intended to do so was converted! It does not matter why the people come to hear the Gospel—God can bless them in any case. If Christ is preached, men will be saved, even if they come to disturb.

“Sir,” said one to me, “I had been to bargain about a pair of ducks on Sunday morning and I passed by the door, and I thought I would just look in. Then and there the Lord met with me and those ducks were forgotten, for I found a Savior!” God is not far from any and in answer to believing prayer He can deal with men and turn their hearts to Himself. Therefore, work on! Go round with your tracts this afternoon. God is not far away from those houses. Stand in the street corner and preach—God is not far away from those who pass by. Go to your Sunday school class, for God is not far from any of the children. Work with cheerful hope, for the Lord is near you!

This Presence of God which cheers in life, also sustains in death. He is not far from any one of us when all the world flies far away. This morning the end came suddenly to our friend, Mr. Murphy. He hoped to preach this morning, but he is doing better work! His congregation is gathered expecting their pastor—may they find the Master with them, though the servant is gone! If God is always near, what does it matter whether we die or live? We would like to have our friends gathered about our bed to bid them farewell but, perhaps, it will not be so. It is of small moment, after all, since our God will be near! Our best Friend will be there! Our Father will be there, for our God will be there!

Go your way and make no bargain as to whether you live or die—only plead that promise, “Certainly I will be with you.” God is with us now and soon we shall be with Him. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, abide with us, O Lord! Amen and amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Psalm 139.*  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—230, 185, 211.**

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# CHEER FOR THE WORKER AND HOPE FOR LONDON NO. 1566

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 28, 1880,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“Then spoke the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not your peace: for I am with you and no man shall set on you to hurt you: for I have much people in this city.”  
Acts 18:9, 10.***

IT is clear from this, dear Friends, that even he who was not a whit behind the chief of the Apostles sometimes needed special comfort. It is possible that even the bravest of the brave may be afraid. Sinking of heart assailed even Samson while as yet the thousand slain lay in heaps around him. Moses was cast down in the desert and David on the throne. Even iron will melt, much more a heart of flesh. Remember the faintness of Elijah when he said, “Let me die, I am no better than my fathers,” and recollect that this was a lion-like man, one of those ministers of God who are as a flame of fire! The second Elijah, he who rebuked Herod to his face, was sadly staggered while he lay in prison. John the Baptist sent to Jesus to inquire, “Are you He that should come?”

No doubt those heroes who have fought the battle of the Truth of God and have driven back its adversaries have been men of like passions with us and some of them of more than ordinary sensitiveness of feeling. Luther said, “Because I seem to be always strong and merry, men think that I walk on a bed of roses, but God knows how it is with me.” Perhaps no man ever experienced such mighty joys and such tremendous despairs as did that mighty man who shook the papacy to its foundation! Even Paul was not without his tendency to fear. He writes in one of his Epistles: “When we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.” Do not think, therefore, my dear Brother or Sister, if, in working for Christ, you get thoroughly cast down and sick of yourself, that you are undergoing an experience unknown to the sons of God. It is by no means so.

Trembling takes hold on all in turns. Faintness is common enough on all hands. Fear, like the mist of the valley, steals over the very garden of the Lord and there is not a flower in all the borders which is not, at times, bowed down with the weight of the chilly damp. But the Lord took care to visit His servant when he was in a measure of trouble, or afraid of being so. He came to him in the visions of the night. We do not expect to see the Lord Jesus Christ in visions, now, for, “we have a more sure Word of prophecy to which we do well to take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place”—we have the Word of God, Inspired and Infallible! We have the whole of the

Divinely written roll—we can read it when we will and from its pages God speaks with a clear and certain voice. A dream of the night might, perhaps, be only a dream, even in those olden times when God *did* speak in visions—but this Word of the Lord is no delusion! It stands fast forever and ever and every promise is sure, being made yes and amen in Christ Jesus.

When by faith we take the promise, it is as if Christ did speak it again to each one of us, for the promise is never exhausted. It is as fresh today, when I read it, as when the eyes of saints a thousand years ago found comfort in it! God is always appearing to you who have believing eyes! God is never silent until we are deaf. He speaks to us morning by morning and He has precept upon precept for the quiet hours of eventide. The Lord did but appear to Paul during one night, for visions are short and few, but *any* night you like to wake and open the Scriptures and seek for the power of the Spirit to rest upon them, you shall hear Jesus speaking to you—and any day you turn to that passage in Isaiah, you shall hear the very words that Jesus spoke to Paul, “Fear not, I am with you,” with these additional words, “I am your God. When you go through the fire, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you.”

Besides, visions and such like things belong to the infancy of the Church—now that she has grown strong, she exercises a greater faith in God and needs not that the Invisible should be supplemented by signs and wonders. If you plant a tree in an orchard, it is very common to put a big stake by the side of it to hold it up. Nobody thinks of putting a post to support an apple tree which has been there for the last 50 years! In fact, it could *hold* the stake rather than borrow support from it. When a ship leaves the docks and passes down the river, you will see it towed out till it reaches the sea. But that same vessel will, by-and-by, spread all her sails and with a heavenly breeze to bear her along, she will need no tug to tow her to the desired haven. The Church of God, today, is a tree that needs no support of miracles and visions! She is a vessel that has braved for 2,000 years the battle and the breeze and will still, till Christ comes, outride every storm!

At this time, O servants of Jesus, you have the Word of God, which is better than visions! Oh, that tonight the Lord Jesus would take of His own Word and, by His Spirit, speak it home to all who love Him! Then will they be as much refreshed as though they were in Patmos with the beloved Disciple. My prayer has been especially that the Lord would say to each one here present who knows His name, “Be not afraid, but speak and hold not your peace; for I am with you and no man shall set on you to hurt you: for I have much people in this city.” I am to be understood as speaking to every blood-bought man and woman with the anxious desire that the words of the text should be laid home to the heart of each one. O Spirit of God, make Your servant’s words to be as fire among stubble, that so the Gospel flame may spread abroad!

**I.** And, first, Brothers and Sisters, notice briefly THE TENDENCY OF OUR WEAKNESS. That tendency is revealed in the first word—“Be not afraid.” We feel, when we first find Christ, that we must speak for Jesus

and we do. But after a while a foolish fear freezes many a tongue and keeps many a lip silent that ought to be telling out the wondrous story of redeeming love. We get to be afraid. We are not, nowadays, afraid as the first Christians might have been—of the amphitheater and the lions, or of Nero and his sword. Happily, we are delivered from almost all open persecution, but there are times which evidently frighten a good many.

For instance, some are afraid to speak for Jesus because of the defects of their education. They fancy that when educated persons are present, if they say anything for Christ, they will make a mistake in grammar or mispronounce a word and the very learned folks will discover their ignorance and set them down for dunces. I have heard a young preacher say that in his early days, when he saw a gentleman with a white cravat come into the village chapel, he felt that he could not preach. Something very dreadful about that, no doubt! Somebody from London has entered the cottage where the dear Brother has been trying to talk about Christ and he is in a cold sweat and he hardly knows why. The stranger has a respectable black coat on and is very different from the agricultural laborers who make up the usual congregation and, for fear of *him*, the champion of the Cross is quaking!

Do you not notice that the good Brother's voice has undergone a serious toning down? He cannot speak with freedom and yet, if he only knew it, his best friend in the whole congregation is that well-dressed stranger. He is afraid of a Brother who would best sympathize with him and most earnestly pray for him—the very Brother who would encourage him most if they could have a half-hour's talk together. Friend over yonder, are you blushing because this incident has happened once and again to yourself? Do you not think that whenever you have been checked in that way it has been very foolish? Has not *pride* been at the bottom of it? Should we not be willing to be called blunderers? We should endeavor to do our Lord's work in the best possible manner, but if our education is deficient and we cannot overcome early disadvantages, ought we, therefore, to hold back? Should we not be willing to save a soul anyway?

If we can declare the Gospel in a masterly manner, by all means let us do it! But if we are slow of speech and uncouth in utterance, let not these things silence us. Was not Moses slow of utterance? Was he silent? Did not Isaiah acknowledge that his lips were unfit to deliver God's message? Was he, therefore, idle? If a man is learned and educated, let him reckon that his learning should help him to *simplicity*—and if he is *not* educated, let him talk about Jesus Christ in his own way, with the words that come fresh from his heart and let him never be afraid. I have known others to be fearful, on the other hand, because they have not gathered educated people to listen to them, but are surrounded by a rough lot whose manners and habits distress them. Sensitive Christians have shrunk from speaking to such characters for, they said, "Ah, they will turn it all to ridicule and we must not throw pearls before swine."

Brother, are you quite sure that you have any pearls and are you quite sure that the people are swine? I generally feel as if what I had to say was not so pearly that I need be alarmed about the swine treading on it! And,

also, I have felt, concerning my congregation, that as they have immortal souls, there is something about them which differentiates them from swine—and anyway, who am I to be so particular about the reception which men give to my words? Christ spoke even to those who refused Him and shall not I do the same? Our Savior did not mean, by that expression, what you think He did. Some parts of our experience are choice as pearls and these we may only tell to God's own people and not to those who cannot appreciate them. But, as for the Gospel, preach it before all the swine that ever can be gathered together, for to such is it sent!

What were all the nations in our Lord's day but a swinish multitude and yet He bade us preach the Gospel to every creature! The worse the men, the more they need the Gospel and the more we are bound to carry it to them! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, it is your business, whoever may be around you, to tell what Jesus Christ has done for you! "But they would laugh at it." Well, well, there are worse things than that in the world! Making people laugh is not the worst thing that can be done. I would sooner increase mirth in the world than sorrow. If I made men's hearts ache about nothing, as our novelists often do, I would throw away my pen and hold my tongue! But if, in consequence of some awkwardness or eccentricity, people smile at me—well, if they are the happier, it cannot hurt me. Why should they *not* laugh at me? And am I not, after all, ridiculous? "No," says one, "I do not think *I* am." Ah, but my Brother, there is a comic side to you as well as to everybody else and there is something about you, I dare say, that *is* ridiculous!

I have generally found that the man who could not bear to be ridiculed was some precise kind of body who was the very person to excite remarks. Oh, be content to take a little of the rough with the smooth for your Master's sake! Some hearts cannot be got at until, first of all, they feel a keen aversion to what they hear. Better that they should rave with wrath than feel nothing! We must get the oyster open, somehow, and if this may be done by a tempting bait as well as by sheer force, then let us try the gentle experiment. It may be the creature will only open out of spite and perhaps it thinks to nip us when it shuts its shell—but we thrust in the knife of the Gospel and the deed is done! While they are criticizing our manner, we can stab at their sin!

Sometimes the aversion which people display and the contempt which they profess to feel for the preacher may only be a secondary means of enabling the Gospel to get at them the better and, if it is so, why should we be afraid? We have known Brothers who have trembled at the slightest degree of publicity. They are tender souls and do not like to be seen. I would not harshly *condemn* all, for certain minds are quiet and timid and must be allowed to do good by stealth. But I cannot thus *excuse* all, either, for some are blamably deficient in courage. There is a beautiful modesty about them, but I would have them remember that modesty is not all the virtues, nor can it be a substitute for them. The soldier who was so very modest that he retired before the battle, I have heard say, was shot.

And as for Christian people who are so very modest that they get out of the way of everything that is to be done for Christ, I do not know how they will answer for it to their superior Officer at the last. Come, dear Brother, you sang the other day—

***“Am I a soldier of the Cross,  
A follower of the Lamb  
And shall I fear to own His cause,  
Or blush to speak His name?”***

and so on and yet you are a coward? Yes, put it down in English—you are a coward! If anybody called you so, you would turn red in the face and perhaps you are not a coward in reference to any other subject. What a shameful thing it is that while you are bold about everything else you are cowardly about Jesus Christ! Brave for the world and cowardly towards Christ!! A Christian ought to be afraid to be afraid, for His Lord has said, “Whoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him, also, shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

“Oh, but I am naturally timid,” says one. It is to you, then, that the Lord’s word is addressed—“Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not.” I have heard and I think I have observed that the bravest men in the hour of danger are timid in the prospect of it. They say that a fire-eater who dashes to the battle is often the man who fails, but he who stands trembling at the first shot—in his inmost soul dreading death—is, nevertheless, the very man to act the hero’s part because he is so overpowered by a stern sense of duty that he masters fear and steadily keeps his position with cool, immovable resolve—

***“The brave man is not  
He who feels no fear,  
For that were stupid and irrational.  
But he whose noble soul, its fear subdues,  
And bravely bares the danger nature shrinks from.”***

Up, then, you tremblers and play the man! In the matter of speaking for Jesus this should not be a severe ordeal. Oh, do not, I pray you, let timidity so check you that you cannot speak a word to your own children—cannot pray with your own girl, cannot plead as a father with your own boy, cannot speak as a neighbor or a fellow workman to the man who works side by side with you at the bench. May God help you to get out of the cold shade of cowardice, for the text says, “Be not afraid.”

Still, I hear you say, “I am afraid to speak out for religion because I should bring down upon myself a world of opposition at home.” That is painful, my dear Friend, but though painful, it is a part of the cost which you reckoned upon when you took up the Cross to follow Jesus. It is a part of the cost that, “a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” “The brother shall deliver up the brother to death and the father the child,” says Christ. It was so in old times. It is so now. It is terrible to think of what some young people have had to suffer for being faithful to their convictions. But when we consider that it is all for Jesus’ sake, happy are they who are honored to endure on that account!

For His sake, what were it if we were martyred? What were it if all men did forsake us? We ought to have such an esteem for Jesus that if all were to become our foes and to hunt us to death, we would still say, "It is well, since hereby I become a living sacrifice for Christ." Now, I charge every Christian here to be speaking boldly in Christ's name, according as he or she has opportunity and especially to take care of this tendency of our flesh to be afraid which leads, practically, to endeavors to get off easily and save ourselves from trouble. Fear not! Be brave for Christ! Live bravely for Him who died lovingly for you!

**II.** We now come to the second point—and this we will also speak upon briefly—it is THE CALLING OF OUR FAITH. "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not your peace." It is the vocation of faith to be a speaker. When the heart believes, the mouth follows suit and makes confession. Faith made Noah a preacher and caused it to be said of Abel, "He, being dead, yet speaks." "I believed," said David, "therefore have I spoken." And others unite with Him in saying, "We believe and therefore speak." Paul says of the Thessalonians, "For from you sounded out the Word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything." You see their faith had a sound about it as of a trumpet and the Gospel was made known, thereby, in all regions! Faith lives on the Word of God and then gives a voice to that Word. A dumb faith is a questionable Grace. Faith first speaks *to* Christ and then speaks *for* Christ. It hears His voice and then acts as an echo by repeating it!

Why ought those that believe in Christ speak for Him? I answer, first, because, Brothers and Sisters, we are debtors. We are put in trust with the Gospel for other people. Let us not be false to our trusteeship, but faithful stewards of the mysteries of God. Let us take care that the light is not hid under a bushel and that the talent is not wrapped in a napkin. We have the Bread of Life in our houses—let it not be hoarded, neither let a single hungry soul knock at our door in vain because we are asleep or too idle to attend to the call. We are the reservoirs of God's Gospel that it may flow out of a hundred pipes to thirsty souls who may come from all quarters of the earth and drink! Paul says, "I am debtor, both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." We owe something to every man that lives.

"Oh," says one, "I do not see that." But has not the Lord said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself"? That is a word of very wide range, for every human being is your neighbor. The Samaritan was neighbor to the Jew. The Roman Catholic is neighbor to the Protestant. The Muslim is neighbor to the Christian and the heathen is neighbor to us all. You never pass "a heathen Chinese," or a Zulu in the street without owing him something, according as you have an opportunity to do him good. We are, all of us, of one family and because of the tie of the one blood there is a debt of brotherhood from all who are enlightened to those who are yet in darkness. Who can tell what we owe to Christ? He seems to say, "Pay it back to My Brothers and Sisters. If you love Me, feed My sheep; feed My lambs. If you want to do

good for Me, do good to Mine. Bring in those that I have redeemed with blood; for this is the best reward you can give Me for having laid down My life for you." You are a keeper of the Gospel Oracles, my Brother. Take care, then, that you speak and are not silent!

But, next, you and I were saved by the testimony of other people who spoke to us personally. I owe a great deal of my being brought to Christ to my parents to whom I would always be grateful for their spiritual care of me. And as a parent, I am to repay that obligation by teaching my own children. I owe very much to a very excellent teacher in a day school. I did try, when I personally taught children, to pay back my teacher by teaching others. I owed still more to such men as Baxter and Bunyan who left their books for me to read. I have tried to write earnest books, that I may recompense, as well as I can, the Church of God for the loan which it made to me in that direction. Most of all, I owe my decision, under God, to a man I never knew, who humbly and simply preached Christ crucified to me—and I would desire to be always preaching Christ crucified to others, as the best way of making some sort of return.

Undoubtedly the most of us were brought to Christ by the personal testimony of others and, therefore, we have an obligation to pass on the sacred deposit. Even in those few cases in which no living voice was used, yet the Word of God was made useful to the soul—and where would the Word of God have been if it had not been for Wickliffe and Tyndale and those holy men who preserved it to us at the peril of their lives and wrote out a translation of it for the common people—dipping their pens in their own heart's blood to accomplish the deed? We are all debtors to the Church of God and let us repay the gift! We shall be shamefully ungrateful unless we do this.

Next, let me ask how we to are expect the Gospel to be kept alive in the world if we do not hand it on to the next generation as the former generation handed it down to us? It is from one lip to another that the Word of God is passed with a kind of living flame which books are not likely to communicate. Oh, shall it ever be said a century from now, "The people of 1880 never thought of us of 1980? They let the Gospel go! They allowed the doctrines to be denied, one after the other, and here we are without them, to perish in the darkness! The people of the Tabernacle knew the priceless Truth of God, but they cared not to make it known and here we are in ignorance through their indifference"? Oh, let it never be so! Let not the next century have to rebuke the professors of the present one and say, "You were false to God. Your men never preached the Gospel, though they had the gift! Your women never told it out to those about you and so the light flickered and almost went out and we are now left to suffer for your negligence."

May God grant that we may be clear of the blood of souls. What a crime it will be if we murder generations of men by our cowardly silence! Besides, it seems to me that common humanity calls upon every Christian to seek the salvation of others. They are perishing! Will you let them perish? "God have mercy on them," you say? Yes, but is that all? Have you nothing but that hurried prayer to give them? "Be you warmed! Be you filled," you say to

the hungry and cold and yet you fill them not from your own stores. God's curse will light on such inhuman conduct! It is ours to labor by pleadings and entreaties to snatch our infatuated neighbors from the fiery wave which will soon overwhelm impenitent sinners! But if we do not earnestly seek them, they shall perish and God will require their blood at the watchman's hands! He has set each one of His people to take a part of the watch for the souls of men. Are we awake at our post? Oh, see you well to this, I pray you, each man, each woman for himself or herself! If we love God, we must love our Brothers and Sisters, also. If the Gospel has saved us, we must wish to see others saved! Unless we are altogether hypocritical, we must burn with strong desire to bring others to the Savior!

I have been pleased as I have looked around, to see such a goodly number of young men here tonight. Never was the weather worse and yet our numbers are great and among us are young men in the hundreds! Comrades, I welcome you! I would gladly enlist you this night into the service of Christ! Come as volunteers! Or if you cannot manage that, come as pressed men. Oh, that the Lord Jesus Christ may lay His pierced hands on some young men and say, "You are studying, but what for? Study for Me and My cause." And to another, "You are working hard to prosper in business, but you have another call and you must consecrate yourself more directly to Me." Or to another man, "You are in business, making money. Are you using it for Me? Are you laying it out for the spread of My kingdom?" I would to God that He would call out to Himself a troop of valiant ones at this good hour!

I feel somewhat, tonight, in thinking about London, as Farel did when he met with Calvin. Calvin was yet a young man. He had written his famous, "Institutes," and Farel, at Geneva, saw what mental force there was in him. Here is the story from Bungener—"Farel, alike humble and courageous, had often asked if another would not succeed better than he and a sort of presentiment had bid him wait in hope of such a man. Calvin was unwilling to undertake the work. He was not made, he said, for such an office. He was willing to be a laborer in the great harvest which was ripening, or to be a soldier of the Lord, but this, he was convinced, was not his task. If He had rendered some service, it was by means of a book, the fruit of silence and of study. Farel is urgent...Calvin educed fresh reasons and it seemed as though he wanted to deter Farel by exhibiting to him the defects of his future colleague. He knew himself, he said. He was tenacious and obstinate. Once more he asked that he might be left in obscurity to busy himself in studies, for it was only thus he could be of any value. Then Farel broke out, 'Your studies are a pretext! I tell you that if you refuse to associate yourself with my work, God will curse you for having sought yourself and not Christ.' Calvin yielded to God and not to man—and the man always remained dear and venerable in his eyes."

Calvin was henceforth prompt and sincere in the work of the Lord, even when his body was tortured with diseases and worn down with pain. Would God I might find some such man here who would, this night, respond to the voice saying to him, "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not your peace." A

youth looks round and says, "I wonder whether that young man is sitting next to me?" Never mind about your neighbor—look to yourself! Are *you* the young man? Are *you* the consecrated woman? Take heed lest a curse light on you if you are disobedient to the heavenly vision!

**III.** But now, thirdly, THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF OUR SERVICE. Let us dwell on that a little while. "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not your peace, for I am with you." There is the first encouragement—God's Presence—"I am with you." When a man speaks *for* God, God speaks *in* Him. We never go to war for God at our own charges—He is sure to be with the man who is with Him. If you seek yourself, you will run without God. If you desire honor among men, you shall have no honor from God. But if your heart is set upon the blessing of your fellow men and the extension of your Redeemer's kingdom, God is with you. He never was away from any man who sought holiness, virtue and eternal life. What cause, then, can there be for fear? If God is with you, who can be against you?

Have God with you and you have strength enough, wit enough, gold enough—for you have Grace enough! Does He not say, "My Grace is sufficient for you"? He will give you thought and judgment and utterance. And He will give you within all and above all, a mysterious power which none shall be able to resist. He will help you to acquire what you have not and wisely to use what you have. If He gives you not the tongue of the learned, He will use you where your need of learning cannot hinder you. He has a sphere for you somewhere. Only trust in Him and be not afraid! O that precious word, "I am with you." What more can the most fearful require? Come, be of good courage. Take up your cross! Take up your daily service! In these shall lie a present comfort and a future reward and your God says, "My Presence shall go with you and I will give you rest."

The next consolation is God's protection. "No man shall set on you to hurt you." The Jews dragged Paul before the judgment seat of Gallio and Paul must have been amazed when he saw the persecutors, themselves, beaten. The great King knows how to protect His own ambassador! When men meddle with one of God's burning and shining lights, they will, sooner or later, burn their fingers. There is a disposition about some ungodly men to fly at Christian ministers just as gnats do at candles and they generally meet with the gnats' fate. "Touch not My anointed and do My Prophets no harm," is still the shelter of God's ministers. "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper and every tongue that rises in judgment against you, you shall condemn," is a promise which abides the same.

"Still," says one, "I am half afraid." But then the Lord is your protection and who is he that shall harm you if you follow that which is good? How feeble all your enemies are! Who are you that you should be afraid of a man that shall die and of the son of man that is but as dust. "Fear not them which can kill the body, but afterwards have no more that they can do; but fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into Hell. Yes, I say unto you, Fear Him." The protection of God should be a constant fountain of comfort to God's people.

The last comfort is God's predestination. Predestination is an ugly word to some people, but I cannot help that. Here is the doctrine in the text—"I am with you and no man shall set on you to hurt you, for I have much people in this city." That is to say, many who belonged to Christ, though they were as yet heathens. The Lord does not speak of those who were converted! Paul did not need a Revelation in the night to tell Him that God had much people in that city, if by that was meant the persons who professed faith in Christ, for he knew all about them. Night and day he had watched over them. But God knew that He had an elect people in Corinth whom He must save—a redeemed people that Christ specially bought from among men to be His own people, of whom the Lord had said, "Other sheep have I that are not yet of this flock."

Paul was cheered by the good news that God had many chosen and redeemed ones in Corinth whom He must save! I learn from this that the doctrine of God's predestination is no check to labor. "If there are so many that will be saved," says one, "then why do you preach?" That is why we *do* preach! If there are so many fish to be taken in the net, I will go and catch some of them! Because many are ordained to be caught, I spread my nets with eager expectation. I never could see why that should repress our zealous efforts! It seems to me to be the very thing that should awaken us to energy—that God has a people and that these people shall be brought in! Why, it nerves me to labor when I remember that His Word shall not return void—it shall prosper in the thing where He has sent it!

If God has ordained to save men, yet it is a part of the ordinance that they shall be saved through the preaching of the Word of God, for "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God"—and not without faith and the Word shall *any* man be saved! Nor has God ever said that any should, or ever purposed that any should! The purpose embraces the means for the carrying out of the purpose and that decree which predestinates the salvation of many in Corinth predestinates that Paul should go there and that he should stay there a year and a half—and night and day, with tears, should seek the souls of men! What a comfort it ought to be to all earnest workers that God has many people yet unsaved whom He will save and must save! Thus we go to work under the sweet shadow of the Divine decree, stimulated by it to labor with all our might.

The next thing we learn is that the certainty of success should be a great stimulus to us. That is why the Lord said to Paul, "I have much people in this city." You and I are bound to preach the Gospel, even if never a soul were converted by it, for the great objective of the Gospel is the Glory of God and God is glorified even in those who reject the Gospel! Still, it is a very sweet help to earnestness when we know that we shall not labor in vain, or spend our strength for nothing. "I have much people in this city" nerves Paul to go forth and proclaim bravely, in every place, that Word of God which is to bring the people of God home to Himself.

But, next, we see very clearly that old means and methods are quite sufficient to save souls. Our Lord did not say, "Paul, be not afraid, but deliver a Sunday afternoon lecture with a nonsensical title and little or no Gospel in it."

No, no! Our Master said, "Speak and hold not your peace, for I have much people in this city." God's way of saving souls is the best way, after all! You and I may get up all sorts of inventions and He may wink at our follies and let us go on with them, but His way of saving souls is speaking the Gospel and nothing other than the Gospel! I should like to see in the world, again, a revival like that under Jonathan Edwards in which there were no extravagances, no utterances of false doctrine, no making a noise and a riot—but just the preaching of the old-fashioned Doctrines of Grace!

Those Truths of God brought on a revival of a deep and enduring kind. Men were filled with an awful fear of God and they repented bitterly and mended their ways and sought Jesus in dreadful earnest and rested not till they found Him! They did not sing jigs, but they wept as one that is in bitterness for her firstborn. They flaunted no banners, but they laid hold on Jesus in the secret of their souls. They did not often shout, but they went home and talked, one to another, of what God had been doing in their souls and they lived near Him. I would like to see that old kind of work and life among us again! The Holy Spirit may work as He pleases, but still, that order of revival seemed to be deep and permanent and the results were found after many days—whereas, nowadays—where are the converts of your revivals? Where are the converts after a little time has passed? All Paul did, when he knew there was much people in that city, was just to go and speak the Gospel and not be afraid—I, for one, mean to keep to the old-fashioned way.

Once again, dear Friends, usefulness, according to the text is the best protection a man can have. Notice that. "No man shall set on you to hurt you, for I have much people in this city." When God means to save people by any man, that man will live till the chosen are gathered in! He may go to sea, but storms cannot drown him! He may be waylaid by ungodly men, but robbers cannot hurt him! He is immortal till his work is done! There is no protection for anybody, depend upon it, like *usefulness*—God will not allow the goat to browse upon the branch that bears fruit—or the blast to wither. Men of God have gone into fever lairs, using all care and precaution and they have been protected from the pestilence.

It has happened that Christian men have been in perils by robbers, perils by false brethren, perils everywhere, but they have survived all and triumphed in all—and when they have not been thus upheld, it may have been because their ministry was ended. They went Home because their day's work was over! Where else should they go? They went back to their Father, for their Father had no more need of them abroad. As long as God has anything for you to do, nothing will ever kill you, my Brother! Go ahead and fear not. "I have much people in this city." Go to win them and you shall be safe!

I believe that our position at this time is very much that of Paul's, for we, too, hope, trust and believe that God has much people in this city. What a city it is! Not one among us has any idea of the size of London! You shall go, today, to a well-remembered spot and find yourself, all of a sudden, in a region which you never saw before—a township which has sprung up overnight! I remember an old oak tree and a pond with geese and cowslips growing in the meadow. It is a mile in town at the present moment and the tree is gone and everything that was around it. Instead of a hedgerow I sigh to

see an endless wilderness of brown bricks and stucco. Oh, this great city! It grows at an awful rate, but God has much people in it, depend upon it!

I believe God means to bless London largely. You will ask, "Why?" Well, I look back upon its past history and I have hope. The martyrs' blood lies here! When all the country was yielding its martyrs, London furnished its full share. On this very spot where we now are, three were burnt for the Truth of God's sake. Old chronicles say, "At the Butts at Newington, three Anabaptists were burnt." These were among the earliest of martyrs, before Protestants were known or thought of. Anabaptists were always a prey and they who killed them thought they did God a favor! Members of our ancient persecuted Church were often burnt for the Truth's sake and for Christ's sake in London—and from the ground, their blood is calling still! All over this London of ours, the preaching of the Gospel was precious in the old times. You hear the name of, "Gospel Oak," as you travel in the North of London and the tree was so called because there the Gospel was preached and crowds gathered beneath its shade to listen to the joyful sound! All about the city secret groups met to worship God after the Gospel way.

Now, the Lord will never let the blood of the martyrs die out! It will forever be the seed of His Church. See, again, how London kindled with holy fire in the days of Whitfield and Wesley. Go but a mile from this place and notice Kennington Park, once Kennington Common. What thousands used to gather there to hear the Gospel preached! The men of the south of London loved the Gospel! Multitudes of them still do. I feel sure that God will yet bless London because at this very moment, if the Gospel is preached so that people can understand it, they will throng to hear it! Alas, poor men cannot understand half the preachers. They preach Latin fit for drawing rooms. If they would go to Billingsgate and learn English, they might get on.

You say, "That would be very rough English!" Well, but the roughest of English might be better than the Latinized jargon of most of our pulpits. When men preach the Gospel plainly and simply, they will never lack a congregation in this great city, I am certain of it. Away in a hack street down in a hollow way just beyond Barclay and Perkins's brewery, where there are no cabs, or other public conveyances—right out of the world and into the mud—the crowds came and discovered a boy years ago and they followed him because he preached the Gospel in a way which they could understand. They will find a man *anywhere* if he will but preach the Gospel of Christ! I am sure that the Lord has much people in this city because there is a hungering and thirsting after the Gospel, if they could but get at it.

Go ahead, then, Brothers and Sisters! Talk about Christ! Talk about Him everywhere! Talk about Him in the workshop! Speak about Him quietly and modestly, prudently and gently, but carry out the blessed Words of my text—"Be not afraid, but speak and hold not your peace." Be this to each one his word of good cheer, "For I am with you and no man shall set on you to hurt you: for I have much people in this city." God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen and amen!

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# A PRESENT HELPER

## NO. 3447

A SERMON  
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“I am with you.”*  
*Acts 18:10.*

THE Apostle Paul was about to be placed in imminent peril. He was to be brought before the Roman governor, Gallio. The Jews, rank and rabble, were hopeful that they would get him condemned to death. In this threatening crisis the Lord Jesus would give him a word of comfort to strengthen him, that his courage might not fail. The best, the most assuring word that the Savior could speak to His servant was this, “I am with you.” Nothing in Heaven or earth could be more fitted to cheer his tried spirit! To know that Jesus was with him, approving, supporting, defending him, was a safeguard against fear. Years afterwards, when Paul had to stand before the Roman emperor whose will was absolute, whose fiat could have put him to instant death, he had no man who dared stand by him. A poor despised servant of a despised Master, he was not, then, cast down or disheartened, for he said, “Nevertheless, the Lord stood by me.” Under the worst circumstances, true Christians find the richest comfort if they do but know that Jesus is with them! When our Lord went away to Heaven and left His disciples on earth, they were like a flock of sheep surrounded with wolves. Just then He would surely give them, as a parting word, the most tender and the most encouraging sentence that could fall from His lips. What do you think He said? Why, one of His farewell words was this, “*Lo, I am with you always*”—a dear and blessed legacy to His children who are still in banishment below! And when John, in Patmos, had a vision of Jesus in His Glory, where, do you think, did he see Him? Did he see Him as standing before the Throne of God, or in any position of Glory? Yes, he did, but first of all he said, “I saw Him walking among the golden candlesticks.” Now, he tells us, these golden candelabra represented the Churches—and Jesus Christ was pictured even as a glorified Savior, holding the seven stars in His right hand and walking among the seven golden candlesticks! Hence I gather that the truest comfort of the Church is for Christ to be with us—and that one of the highest joys of Jesus is to be with His people!

I shall ask you, now, to consider the grateful fact that Jesus is with Believers. The words, “I am with you,” may be taken in three ways—and the three must be combined to get the whole of their sense.

“I am with you.” This implies His *Presence*. That would not be enough—a person is not with us if he is merely in the same place as a

spectator. "I am with you" expresses His *sympathy*. He is not here as a stranger, but He is here feeling for us, compassionating with us. "I am with you" has a yet deeper significance. It involves *succor*. He is working with you—on the same side—exerting His power in connection with yours. Put the three together, and you get presence, sympathy, cooperation, to interpret the meaning. We will take the three words, and oh, as we take them, may we realize them as our own! The words, "I am with you" leave no doubt of—

### I. THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST.

Believer, Jesus Christ's spiritual and most real Presence is with you! This should greatly comfort you because it is the Presence of One whom you dearly love and who reciprocates that affection with an accord so intimate that every hope or fear you feel is reflected in His breast. His heart beats true to you. I might almost say His nerves vibrate in sympathy with you! Oh, how it calms the mind in the midst of difficulty or danger, if we have near us, by our side, One toward whom our heart goes forth and from whom a kindred yearning comes back! The child sleeps sweetly when it is with its mother, watched and tended by her quick eyes and ready hands. The loneliest part of the pilgrim's road is relieved of its tediousness and its terror when some dear companion is with him, in whose fellowship he can agree, upon whose arm he may lean and whose constancy he can trust to share any danger. A sprightly word, a kindly look, a brotherly act seem like timely aid to us all when we are tired, footsore, out of our course, and out of spirits. Ah, then you could not have a sweeter Friend with you than you have in Jesus! The society of brother or sister, husband or wife, parent or guardian, can never equal the hallowed peace of communion with Jesus, who loved you, lived for you, died for you, still lives for you, gives His whole heart to you—and only asks that you give your heart to Him in return.

Still more precious does this Presence of Jesus become when we think how ennobling it is. Some people talk all their life of having been once in the society of some great person. That is, indeed, a foolish pride! Very empty! But to have been in the society of Jesus is worthy to be remembered, deserving to be recorded and most desirable to be repeated! I reckon that the angels would look more respectfully towards a man who has had communion with Jesus than they would at a council of kings and emperors, or a parliament of princes and peers! We are made priests and kings who enter into fellowship with our great High Priest and King. His Glory overshadows us. Though He is transfigured in a way we are not, yet we participate somewhat in His honors, now, and we shall be altogether partakers of His Glory, by-and-by. "I am with you," then, is the voice of a tender Friend, and one of a superior Nature who confers dignity by His companionship!

This—"I am with you"—is an enlivening cry. It inspirits a man, quickens his pulse and enables him to bid defiance to danger. We remember when Paul was in the ship tossed with tempest—what fear seized all persons on board! So much were they discouraged that they would probably

have been unable to do anything for their own rescue had not Paul, with the coolness of faith, chided their panic, gave them counsel and bid them to eat, for, as he said, "this is for your health." After long fasting, he saw the necessity of taking refreshment. And he led the way. He took bread, gave thanks to God in the presence of them all, then broke the bread and began to eat. This manly fortitude, this moral courage of the Apostle, repressed the general agitation and nerved them all with fresh hope, inasmuch that they were all of good cheer and they also took some food. This was the turning point in their fortune and, in the end, they, everyone, came safe to land. Thus full often has it been in the time of battle. When the troops have been ready to flee, one able man has stood like a rock, has made caution look like cowardice by his own defiance of danger, has given a word which has made every soldier feel himself a hero, lion-hearted, not milk-livered! And so the battle has been turned. "I am with you," there, O Christian, is the voice of One whose Presence fills your soul with dauntless courage! No fear when Jesus is near! None can be defeated who have Him to bring them succor. The Presence of Christ with us puts an end to morbid apprehension and ghastly cowardice!

When we are told that Jesus is with us, we remember that His is a Presence which causes intense delight. We have seen men with money, who were not happy. We have seen men with honor, who were not happy. We have seen persons in power, with the command of empires, yet they were not happy. But we never saw, and never will see the individual who has Jesus with him, who is not happy! To be near Him, to have Him with us is to have our fears relieved, our griefs soothed, our wounds healed and all our sorrows turned into joy! One drop of Jesus' love would turn the whole ocean sweet! Yes, though the bitterness within you seems to have penetrated your whole being, let but Jesus whisper, "You are Mine and I am yours," and the bitterness would turn to honey at that one single phrase! Only a glimpse from Jesus' eyes and the darkness is turned to noonday. Only one word from Jesus' lips, and the tempest that raged becomes calm and the ruffled sea is still! "I am with you" bespeaks the Presence, then, of One who brings you delight.

And this Presence, as I have already hinted, transforms the soul. When Jesus is with us, He makes us like Himself. He that lives near to Jesus becomes so like Jesus that others, "take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus." Put these thoughts together and you will see how infinitely desirable and how exquisitely satisfactory the company of Christ is. But, ah, my words cannot tell you, though I had the tongue of the orator or the sweeter strains of the poet. Yes, the inspiration of the muse would fail to acquaint you with it! You must know it for yourself, or else you can never realize how transporting these words are—"I am with you"—Jesus present with His own people!

Now some of you know, by a happy experience, times and seasons when Jesus is specially present with His people. I trust we have often found Him so at the hour of prayer. Rising in the morning, it is sweet to find in those few minutes we give to God before we see the face of man,

that, like the Psalmist, we can say, "When I am awake I am still with You." Then at nightfall, when the day's work is over, and we are about to lie down and rest, it is good to find, as we kneel before Him once again, that Jesus is there! And, Oh, some of us have proved what it is in the watches of the night to have His sweetest company! When darkness compasses us, silence awes us and sleep has deserted us, our soul has said, "Now will I speak with my Beloved," and we have always found Him awake! A sigh has reached His ears—the fluttering of an unfledged prayer! A desire after Him has brought Him near to our side, close to our bed, present to our heart. We have thanked God for sleeplessness when we have had our beloved Master talking with us and indulging us with a blessed sense of communion! And, oh, how near Jesus is to His people when they are passing through the stage of penitential love. I hope you often get there, when sensitive to your own imperfection and unworthiness before God, you are abased and humbled, yet looking up at the same moment to that dear Cross on which He bled because we sinned! You see your pardon and acceptance written in crimson lines on the fair body of the dying Savior! I do not know that I have ever more tenderly felt the Presence of Jesus than when, while my heart has been broken with a sense of my own worthlessness and insignificance, I have confidently fled for refuge to the hope that is set before me in the finished Sacrifice and the perfect Redemption that Christ has accomplished!

But, Beloved, Jesus is present to us not only in our acts of penitence and devotion, He is present with His people in the battle of life! Yes, He will go with you to the workshop. The street is not too common for Him to tread side by side with you. Jesus can stand with you in the market. You can as truly maintain fellowship with Christ in your buying and your selling, if your commerce with the world is conducted in the fear of the Lord, as in your praying and your reading, which are of small account, unless "you have an unction from the Holy One." No kind of labor will ever make Christ take an aversion to you, however humble your toil, however poor the chamber in which that toil is carried on, or however rough may be the garb in which you have to earn your daily bread. Jesus cares not for these. 'Tis your soul He looks for and if you hunger and thirst for Him, He will go with you into the lowliest places and you shall find it true, "I am with you."

More especially, beloved Friends, in the ordinances of God's House, may we look for the refreshment of the Lord's Presence. Oh, what a beloved place this Tabernacle is when Jesus is here, manifestly in our midst, and witnessed by many hearts! It would be a poor meeting house if only the minister and the congregation, however large, were congregated together within its walls. Poor would it be, notwithstanding all the accessories of worship, yes, even with the bread and the wine, the elements of the Communion Supper, spread in rich abundance, without the Lord, Himself, here to bless the feast and feed the communicants! But, ah, when the King sits at His Table, then our spikenard gives forth a sweet smell and our heart is merry within us, even as the angels that are

before the Throne of God! Does He not come to you as you sit in the pews, Beloved, and say to you, "I am with you"? And when you gather yourselves together to partake of the Communion Supper, is He not with you there? Do you join in the solemn hymn, or do you unite in earnest prayer? What is it that makes the service enlivening, elevating, instructive and fruitful but the consciousness of His Presence—this same "I am with you."

Yes, and when the time shall come for you to have done with ordinances—when the preacher's voice shall no more reach your ears, when the melody of sacred song shall cease to enter your senses—when you have joined here below for the last time in the fellowship of the Supper of the Lord, for you must bear the clammy sweat upon your brow, and wear the mortal paleness on your cheeks as you are about to pass through what they call the "gate of tears"—even *then* you shall find it a gate of endless joy because this shall be true to your experience in the highest sense, "I am with you." Fear not the darkness! Dread not the loose pains, shrink not from the weakness, tremble not at the advent of the grim King of Terrors. "I am with you" will change the hue of that affliction and when you are very ill, make you say that all is well!

Oh, if my Lord would come and meet me, my soul would stretch her wings in haste, fly swiftly through death's iron gate, nor feel frightened as she passed! So it shall be with you. I have but skimmed the surface of this first point—the *Presence* of Christ—"I am with you." Do not any of you skim it. Go into the depths and enjoy it, Beloved! The words still further express—

## II. SYMPATHY.

Remember that Christ in very deed feels in His heart the sorrows of His people. Are they in the furnace? He walks the fire with them. Are they in the rivers? He says, "When you pass through the rivers, I will be with you." And this is grounded upon the precious Doctrine of Vital Union. Every Believer is livingly one with Jesus. Jesus is the Head, and the Believer is a member of the one mystical body. Now you see, whenever a member suffers, the Head must suffer, not only because the Head wills to suffer, but because of necessity—if there is a vital union, there must be a real sympathy. Let this be, then, a matter of faith with us. If I have believed in Jesus unto everlasting life, Jesus is one with me as my Head, and He must—whether I apprehend it or not at the time—He must be in sympathy with me. This He shows by the tender pity He has for His people. Do not think He is ever hard or unfeeling towards His poor, His afflicted, His depressed disciples! No, Brothers and Sisters, the heart of Jesus is full of tenderness! His heart melts with love, as He often proves by the sweet converse He has with them. Though He may leave the strong sometimes to bear, for awhile, the hardships, and grapple, as it were, alone with the troubles of life, He will not leave His tried and tempted ones, or suffer them to faint by the way. Like a mother that lets her full-grown boy alone to shift for himself, but will scarcely go out of doors while the baby is ill, so will He watch over them. And has not Je-

sus been very, very watchful over us in times of pain, weakness, and serious apprehension? You know He has! He has kept His best succor till we had got into our worst plight. When we had spent all and exhausted every resource, then He has come and brought Himself to our aid—and we found Him our All-in-All. Oh, what true sympathy this is! “A friend in need is a friend indeed.” He treats us better as we grow worse. This is just the Friend we need. One with us by vital union, He proves His oneness by His tenderness.

Now, Beloved, if this is so, the very first sympathy you ought to seek in any time of trouble is that of Jesus. You have not always gone promptly to Him. You have been far more ready to run off to some kinsman or neighbor and ask counsel or succor of an earthly helper. What would you think of a wife—would you think she had much genuine confidence, much good understanding, much true love to her husband, if, on any sudden trouble or anxiety, she left him, fled from her home, crossed the road, entered another person’s house and poured into another man’s ears the story of her plaint or her peril? You would feel convinced that there was a lack of mutual love and reciprocal fellowship! And should it ever be that your soul goes after some poor mortal for consolation—when the Beloved Bridegroom of your spirit can afford you all you need—to ask advice? It is often a helpful means, but go first to Jesus. Tell Him all! Pour out your heart before Him. He is with you. Oh, will you neglect One who is with you, and play Him so ill a part as to seek another’s help when He is ready to give you all His help—His sympathizing help in time of need? The sympathy of Jesus will, in all probability, be most clearly manifested and most richly enjoyed by you at such times as you are most in need of it. Thus, when you are persecuted for His sake, He will not hide His face from you!

We are not likely to be burnt at the stake, or even cast into prison for the profession of His name in these days of civil and religious liberty, but there are divers tortures from which our fine sensibility shrinks, such as household persecutions. Little petty spites are often vented upon Believers for Jesus Christ’s sake. Now do not think a strange thing has happened to you! Take it as a natural consequence of not being of the world—and then hear the Savior say, “I am with you. I am reproached in your reproach. I am scorned in the scorn that is cast on you.” Paul persecuted Jesus when he thought he had only persecuted some poor Jews. And the enemy persecutes Jesus when he persecutes a Believer. “I am with you,” then. Will you not say, “Lord, I will bear it for Your sake, and in Your company. Yes, if it were a thousand times worse, I would feel honored to endure it, if You are with me”? You will find Him with you sympathetically in your common sorrows. Remember, Jesus does not look for extraordinary occasions in which to sympathize with His people, though He will do it peculiarly then. But at all other times He is a faithful, feeling Friend. “Jesus wept.” It was at the death of Lazarus. Lazarus was only an ordinary saint—an ordinary Believer. There was nothing so remarkable about his death as to make it exceptional. Think not for a

moment that in the loss you have sustained, Jesus will keep aloof. With the grief that now weighs down your spirit, He fully sympathizes. In the griefs which are common to mankind, He bears you company. But if you should ever come into deeper waters—if you should have to cry, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” then you shall still hear Jesus say, “I am with you,” for He knows what strong temptations mean, and deep depressions and despondence that borders on despair. He has passed through all, that as the Captain of our salvation He might be made “perfect through suffering.” “Tempted in all points like as we are,” there is no grief in which Jesus is not near to us—we have but to open the eyes of faith and we shall see Him with us, even in the worst extremities of grief and pain!

“I am with you in sympathy.” This shall be found true anywhere and everywhere by the Believer—yes, even in death, itself, for Jesus died! He knows the death sweat, for He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. He knows the fever, for He said, “I thirst.” He knows the fainting, the languishing, for He said, “I am poured out like water; I am brought into the dust of death.” He knows death in its severest form. He died as you will not die. Under the Divine displeasure He passed away, but you shall have the light of the Divine Countenance amidst the shades of death. Fear not, therefore, that Jesus will forsake you! You have Jesus’ sympathy. I want you to feel that. Well do I know what a precious thing sympathy is. A little child’s sympathy will do you good. “Mother,” said a little girl, “I do not know why Mrs. So-and-So wants me to go into her house so often, but she told me, when I came home tonight, to be sure and go tomorrow, for I comforted her so, now her husband was dead. And do you know, Mother, all I do is, when she cries, I put my face against hers and I cry, too—and she says that comforts her.” And so it does. It is just that. We are not alone. Somebody—somebody cares for me! We shall never despair while we feel that is true.

Now there may be somebody here tonight who is alone in London—and you had better be alone in the deserts of Sahara. To be alone in London is to be alone, indeed! And you are thinking, “Nobody cares for me.” But if you will take Christ to be your Friend—if you trust in Him—Jesus will care for you and He will surely help you, for He is not one of those who will put you off by saying, “Be you warmed and be you filled.” He will practically show His love to you, and you shall yet rejoice that Jesus is with you! You are not alone, though you seem alone.” There I leave that second point, praying that you may all know the sympathy of Jesus. Once more—

**III. CO-OPERATION** is implied in the words, “I am with you.” This was just what Paul needed. He had come down to the city to preach, and God said to Him, “I have much people in this city. I am with you.” So Paul went to his preaching with a cheerful heart, for he felt that if the Lord was with him, it was good to preach. With good sowing, there would be good reaping. Now listen, Worker—worker for God—and see if there is not music for your ears in this thought. Jesus co-operates with you! How

so? Why, He commands Providence! All things are ordered according to His will! The Father has given all power into the hands of Jesus. He regulates the fields of Providence, that they may produce the best results for you. Go on, confidently, then. All things are favorable to you. As Mohammed said, in his way, to his followers, "Swiftly on to the battle, and win! I can hear the tramping of the angel Gabriel's horse as he rides into the thick of the battle to help you." They believed it and were comforted. What he said in lies, Jesus says in truth—"I am with you." You can hear the footsteps of the Prince Emmanuel! His power is ruling all creation to produce the grand result of His Glory in the salvation of souls. "I am with you"—that is, "I will prepare human hearts for your message." You that talk to others will often find others ready to be talked to! It is a cheering thought to the preacher that he has always a picked congregation, selected by Divine Providence, that out of them Divine Grace may make a further selection! They are prepared. As the rain and the wind and the frost will prepare the clods for the plow and the seed, so do God's Providence and the work of Grace prepare men's hearts for the Gospel! "I am with you."

Moreover, Worker, Jesus is with you, helping you. He will suggest suitable thoughts. He will give you right arguments. He will often guide you to fitting words. Only trust Him and when you go about His business, the Holy Spirit shall be your strength! He will be with you to back up the Word of God you utter, by the power of the Holy Spirit going with it to convince men that what you say is God's Word to them. Fear not, therefore—if the converting of souls depended upon *you*, it would never be done! If a nation had to be reformed and the whole of another nation had to do it, it would never be achieved! But the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, and what He wills to do He can accomplish, and none can say no to Him!

Lastly, O earnest Worker, Christ is with you to accept your service. Nobody has taken any notice of you lately. You have gone plodding on at your work with not a creature to help, and none to praise. Even your friend who used to, sometimes, give you a nod of approbation, appears not to have observed you lately. Never mind! Never mind! No servant that is deeply absorbed in his work cares much about what other servants may say about him by way of commendation. But if his master comes along and says, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" that is what he needs to cheer him! Some people will be overhauling your character—I know they do mine—and they are extremely welcome, for I care not as much for their opinion as for the barking of dogs in the streets! If my Master were angry with me, I would mind it, but they are no masters of mine, and they may say what they like. If my Master smiles, all the world may frown, it does not matter! But if my Master frowned, then if all said, "Well done!" it were but a poor, poor recompense to me. Servant of God, be this, then, your joy! "I am with you," says Jesus, "to see what you are doing—to accept and take your will for the deed full often—to read your real motives where men misconstrue them. I am with you. Therefore, go

on your way.” Sunday school teachers, tract distributors, or whatever you may happen to be—in one word, beloved child of God seeking to serve Jesus—take, then, this fresh from Jesus’ lips, “I am with you,” and go your way in the power of this, your might, to serve your Lord without weariness, till He shall say, “Come up higher.” “I am with you”

Oh, you that have not any Savior to be with you, I pity you! But I would say this to you—He is still to be had. There is still—

**“Life in a look at the Crucified One.”**

Jesus still has blood in which to wash the guilty—still has room in His heart for needy sinners—and the way to have Jesus for your Savior is simply to trust Him and to rely on Him implicitly. May God grant you Grace to do this, for His mercy’s sake! Amen.

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ACTS 18.**

Paul had been preaching the Gospel at Athens to the most famous men of that city gathered at Areopagus.

**Verse 1.** *After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth.* Another most important city of Greece, where he struck at the very center of the country by preaching the Gospel, since these were the centers of commerce and also of literature.

**2.** *And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come into Italy, with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome) and came unto them. Lodged with them.*

**3, 4.** *And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and worked: for by their occupation they were tent makers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.* He stepped into the synagogue and when the time came for strangers to address the audience, he began to argue that Jesus was the true Messiah. Nor did he argue in vain, for there were some who were persuaded. He endeavored to persuade them all, both the Jews and the Gentiles, who came together to listen to him.

**5.** *And when Silas and Timothy were come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.* He may not have brought out the whole Truth of God at first, but argued little by little to bring them, as it were, up the steps till they should be prepared to receive the grand Doctrine that Jesus is the Anointed One. His spirit was compelled at last to come to that point more fully

**6.** *And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.* Oh, what a blessed, “from henceforth,” that was for you and for me! He no longer confines his ministry to Jews, but goes out seeking the Gentiles—takes up his true commission—becomes the Apostle of the Gentiles. But let all of us take heed of opposing the Gospel, because it is not to be trifled with impunity! A time comes at last when God’s Gospel seems to have done with us. Its ministers say, “We are clean.” They shake off the dust of their feet and

they go elsewhere to proclaim the Gospel to others who may be less opposed to it. What a thing to be able to say, “I am clean.” I wonder how many in this house of prayer could say that of everybody round about them, “I am clean. The blood be on your own heads. I am clean. I have spoken to you about Christ. I have warned you. I have invited you.” “Night and day with tears,” as Paul says elsewhere, “I have pleaded with you, and now I am clean. I am clean.” You know there is many a man that is clean in the blood of Christ in that sense who has not yet discharged his obligations to his fellow men, and cannot say, “I am clean.” I thought it a grand thing of George Fox, the Quaker, when he was dying, when he said, “I am clean. I am clean of the blood of all men.” To the best of his knowledge he had fearlessly proclaimed all the Truth of God that he knew, wherever he had opportunity. O ministers of Christ, teachers of the young and all you who know Christ, the Holy Spirit be upon you, so that you may speak the Gospel till you can say, “I am clean.”

**7.** *And he departed from there and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one who worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.* “The nearer the church, the farther from God,” they say—but it was not so in this case. He was one that worshipped God and his house joined hard to the synagogue.

**8.** *And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.* That is the old-fashioned way, you know—“hearing, believed, and were baptized.” The new-fashioned way is baptized, *perhaps* hear, and very likely do not believe at all! That is not according to Scripture.

**9-11.** *Then spoke the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not your peace: For I am with you, and no man shall set on you to hurt you: for I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them.* Farmers like to plow good soil, where they expect large harvests. So Paul, who was accustomed to make flying visits to places, on this occasion settled down for a long time—even for a year and a half! It would pay to do it, for God had much people in that city!

**12-13.** *And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat. Saying, This fellow—“This fellow,” says our Bible but they did not say that. They had not any word bad enough, so they said “this”—*

**13-15.** *Persuades men to worship God contrary to the Law. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O you Jews, reason would that I should bear with you. But if it is a question of words and names, and of your law, look you to it, for I will be no judge of such matters.* I dare say you have heard Gallio condemned. They used to say in prayer, “Such-and-such a person went on, Gallio-like, caring for none of these things”—but in truth, Gallio does not deserve to be so condemned. It is no business of the civil magistrate to inquire into the religions of the

people brought before him. It is out of his province. He was quite right when he said, "If it is a question of words, and names, and of your law, look you to it. I will be no judge of such matters." If the kings and queens of this world had been half as sensible as Gallio, there had been no stakes in Smithfield, there had been no prisons to lock up the Puritans! Religion would be left alone, which is the one thing it needs—free Church and free State! We want neither the governor's help, nor the governor's hindrance. If he will kindly leave us alone, it is all we ask from him—and so far Gallio is to be commended! But I do not think he acted thus out of any intelligent scruples on that point. He is to be condemned because of the motive. No doubt he was indifferent and here may none of us imitate him! That he was indifferent and careless is certain, for he did not do his duty. It was his duty to leave this good man alone, but it was not his duty to allow the Gentiles, on the other hand, to begin beating the Jews. If there is six of one, there should be half a dozen of the other, and so we do not admire him when we read,

**16-17.** *And he drove them from the judgment seat. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of these things.* Perhaps liked it. "You came here," he said, "to accuse Paul, to get him beaten. Now the mob is beating you, and it serves you right. I shall not interfere. Why did you come here at all to plague me with your questions? Why did you interfere with Paul?" But I should think that this ruler of the synagogue must have opened his eyes when he found himself being beaten, instead of the persons whom he desired to have beaten! It is singular that this name, Sosthenes, should be used, when further up we find another ruler of the synagogue, Crispus, who was a believer in Christ. This was no doubt, one they had set up, instead of Crispus, having rejected Crispus for accepting Christ. And yet this man, Sosthenes, bears the same name as one that is spoken of as a Brother in Christ afterwards. I wonder whether that beating did him good—whether, in the Providence of God, he was led to see the hand of Providence in this beating falling upon him, instead of Paul—and whether this ruler of the synagogue, who ousted a better man, did, himself, become a Christian! Let us hope it was so.

**18.** *And Paul, after this, tarried there yet a good while and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed from there into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had taken a vow.* Most probably not Paul, but Aquila had shorn his head, because usually Luke puts the man first. "Aquila, and his wife Priscilla." But here, in order to state that Aquila had made a vow, he put it, "Priscilla and Aquila." I think it very questionable that Paul ever shaved his head in that way. I think it was Aquila. If Paul did it, I think he must have been under a sort of mental aberration, as he once or twice before may have been thought to have been. Even he who, above all men, had cast out Jewish rites and ceremonies, yet, you remember, took Timothy and circumcised him—a most extraordinary action to do, as in this case, if, indeed, it was he who had shorn his head.

**19.** *And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. Though he had turned away from them, yet still his heart is after his own country.*

**20-21.** *When they desired him to tarry a longer time with them, he consented not, but bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that comes in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God wills. Oh, how wise it is to say that when we are making plans and promises, "If God wills." The short way is to put a little "D.V.," which means that you are ashamed to say, "If God wills."*

**21-23.** *And he sailed from Ephesus. And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the Church, he went down to Antioch. And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. For you not only need planting, but strengthening! Young saints, like young plants, need much watering, and Paul took care of them. Evangelists have not half done their duty when they stir up a community unless they go and seek after those who are converted, to strengthen them. Hence the essential need of a permanent pastorate over churches.*

**24-25.** *And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord knowing only the baptism of John. He had not got farther than that, but it is always well to tell out what you do know. It is the way to learn more and we doubt not that many a half-instructed Christian is doing good in his way, and it is not for us to stop him, or to find fault with him, but rather quietly to endeavor to tell him more of the Truths of God. Paul did not say, "Now, Apollos, you must stop this, you know. You had better study. You do not know enough yet," but he let him tell out what he did know.*

**26-28.** *And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through Grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, allowing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ. Now let us sing ourselves an encouraging hymn that as Christ, the Lord, said to Paul, "Fear not," so His Spirit may say to us tonight—*

***"Give to the winds your fears."***

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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

# **THE SHANK-BONE SERMON—OR, TRUE BELIEVERS AND THEIR HELPERS NO. 2138**

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 13, 1890.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 23, 1890.**

***“Who, when he was come, helped them much  
which had believed through Grace.”  
Acts 18:27.***

APOLLOS is not Paul, and Paul is not Apollos. To blend the two in one would be to spoil each one of the two without producing a good third. It is a great mercy that we have Paul, Apollos, Cephas and other varieties of preachers, for not only is variety charming, but it is necessary. It is not everybody that can be profited by Paul, for it requires a great deal of fixed attention to follow him and many hearers cannot concentrate their thoughts for long. It is not everybody that can be profited by Apollos, for fine speech is thrown away on simple souls. It is written, “Then shall the lambs feed after their manner,” and assuredly each one of them have a peculiar manner of feeding.

Some of God's people are edified by one minister and some by another—it is not mere whim—it arises out of conformation of character and habit of mind. Let Paul be Paul and edify the Pauline class—and let Apollos be Apollos and instruct those of his own sort. For my part, I would try to profit by either Paul, Apollos, Cephas, John, or James but, alas, I do not know where to go to hear them! I am happy in hoping that their successors are still with us, each one with his peculiar style of things. I am not going to compare them with each other but I would commend each one and thank God by whose Grace he is what he is. It would be a very bad day's work, if we could do it, to reduce Paul to Apollos, or to bring Apollos to the style of Paul.

In the body there are different members and all members have not the same office—and in the Church of God there are different ministries and all ministries do not work after like manner though they all work towards the same end. If, my dear Friend, God gives you Grace to bring sinners to Christ and to plant churches, be thankful that you can imitate Paul. And if you cannot do that, but can help those who are already converted, be thankful for such a gift and imitate Apollos. Let not the man who plants envy the man who waters—and let not the man who waters boast over the man who simply plants and goes his way—for Paul has his place and is honored of his Master as a planter and Apollos has his place and shall not lack his reward as someone who waters.

You see that the Holy Spirit has been pleased, by the pen of Luke, to give to Paul's travels and labors a very large proportion of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. This passage from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> verse is an episode—a corner marked off to be a record of Apollos. What Apollos did afterwards we do not know. He may have been a very great evangelist—he certainly was an exceedingly useful Brother. But, dear Friends, I find no complaint from Apollos because, being mentioned in the sacred dispatches, he has so small a space allotted to him. He does not sulk because he has only four or five verses while Paul is described at great length!

If you and I should work for Christ and never be mentioned in the records of earth at all, let us not be sorry—*there is most peace to those who are least talked about*. God, who is Sovereign, dispenses according to His will and it may be that one working Brother will have all his story told and his life will make a useful biography, instructing and stimulating many for generations. Be it so. Another Brother, equally earnest and fervent, may never have his life written—there may only remain in the traditions of the Church one or two anecdotes about him, helpful and good. But let him not mind his obscurity—his real usefulness may have been great, none the less. Our record is on high! If the chronicles of earth are faulty, the registers of Heaven are perfect.

Many a man who has been forgotten here shall be remembered there. And I know that in Heaven it will give no saint the least trouble that he was not honored among men. What if no monument was set up, yet all true work is immortal. The diligent workman will be perfectly contented when his Master says to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant." The echo of those words shall be Heaven to him! Sweeter than all the harps of angels shall be the voice of his Lord's approval! Go on, Apollos! Work on, though there is little said about you and do not envy Paul, whose name the halls of the Church are ringing! He did not seek himself any more than you did and his content in the published record lies only in the fact that it honors his Lord.

But now, to come close to the text, I want you to notice these words—"When he was come, he helped them much which had believed through Grace." Apollos, following Paul at Corinth, did useful service by confirming those who had already believed in the Lord Jesus. Our first head is—*true Believers have believed through Grace*. Secondly, *such Believers need help*, and thirdly, *it is a worthy work in which to engage*—to help those who have believed through Grace. May the Holy Spirit use many of us in this hallowed service! May we ourselves be helped through Divine Grace at this time!

**I.** First, then, **THOSE WHO HAVE TRULY BELIEVED HAVE BELIEVED THROUGH DIVINE GRACE**. I suppose Luke felt it necessary to insert those words, "through Grace." Nobody in his day doubted the fact that salvation is worked in men by the Grace of God—but the Holy Spirit foresaw that many, in later days, would conceal or obscure this Truth of God and therefore He moved the Evangelist to note it very plainly.

We have it under hand and seal from the Holy Spirit that those who believed in the Lord Jesus believed through Divine Grace. Surely Grace is to the front in all good things. And here let me say, *it is Grace that gives us the Gospel which we believe—*

***“Grace first contrived the way  
To save rebellious man  
And all the steps that Grace display  
Which drew the wondrous plan.”***

It was Grace that chose the people whom God would save and gave them over to the Lord Jesus. It was Grace that gave Jesus Christ to stand in their place and bear for them that which was due to the justice of God on account of their sin. It was Grace which led the Savior to undertake and carry through the work of Substitution. Grace wrote the first letter of the Gospel—Divine Grace will write the last letter of it. Salvation is all of Divine Grace from first to last.

I would to God that all preachers and hearers knew the meaning of that word, “Grace,” and did not confuse it and mix it up with human endeavors and creature merits, for, indeed, “it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” If it is of Grace, it is no more of works, otherwise Grace is no more Grace. And if it is of works, it is not of Grace, otherwise work is no more work. “By Grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Grace signifies free, undeserved favor and as it comes from God to us, it is Sovereign Grace which is moved only by the good pleasure of Jehovah’s will.

Grace is the active movement of the Divine will to produce the results which have been graciously determined. Grace makes a distinction between man and man and it must have all the glory of what it does. Grace is exercised according to the will of God and not according to the will of man, for the Lord has said it—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Grace sat in the council chamber of eternity and devised the scheme of mercy, the plan of redemption, the method of peace through the blood, the whole dispensation of salvation by Grace through faith in Christ Jesus!

I say, then, that while Grace gives us the Gospel to believe, *Grace also gives us to believe the Gospel.* We are personally to believe the Gospel and so only can we be saved. But if I came before you tonight and had nothing further to say than, “Believe the Gospel and you shall be saved,” the message would add to your solemn responsibility and yet it would not save you—for you would not believe but would continue in your sins. Man left to himself is an unbeliever and an unbeliever he will remain. To meet the deep depravity of our nature and its settled unbelief, He who gave the Gospel to be believed also *gives* the faith that believes the Gospel! This is a wonder of Divine Grace! But then, in the realm of Grace *everything* is wonderful.

We are so set on mischief, so proud, so vain-glorious, so unbelieving that we never do come to receive the Gospel except through the operation of the Grace of God upon our consciences and wills. The faith which comes to God first came *from* God. I remember when I believed in Christ

and took Him to be my Trust and was saved—I believed, and thus I entered into life and peace. It was not till some time after that that I understood the reason why I had believed. I said to myself, “How is it that I have believed in Christ while others who have attended the same Gospel ministry and have enjoyed the same advantages, have not believed in Him?”

The enquiry was not, “Why did *they* refuse to believe?” I saw at once that their unbelief was their own fault and folly and that the blame must be laid at their door for they willfully refused the Savior. But this was not the question—I was not *judging them*—I was examining *myself* and enquiring why I had believed in the Lord Jesus. I saw that if I had believed it was not to be set down to my personal credit. I could not take to myself any honor because of it. My believing, when they did not believe, did not spring from any better nature on my part. God forbid that I should dream such a thing! It did not spring from any natural excellence of my will. There *was* a submissive will in me—but a something from above made that will submissive—and *that* something lay at the back of everything. Then I understood that it was God’s Grace that had made me to differ—and I gave to God, then and there, the glory of my faith—and the credit of my choice of Christ.

I have never met with any Christian man, whatever his doctrinal views, but he has been willing to give to God the glory of his conversion. He has ascribed it to the working of the Holy Spirit and not to himself—and he has joined with me in praising God for it. Though the Brother may quibble at the doctrine of Distinguishing Grace in the Cross, yet, in his own case in particular, he has been willing to confess that not only did Divine Grace give him a Gospel to believe, but Grace gave him to believe the Gospel. We come—but God draws. We come to God because He draws us! We came to believe in Christ because His Spirit enlightened and persuaded us and brought us into the happy state of salvation by faith in Christ.

Furthermore, I wish to add that *such believing is a sure evidence of Divine Grace*. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart—you have the Grace of God in you. There is no surer proof of it than this. Where there is faith there is Grace—the one is the inseparable fruit of the other. “He that believes on Him has everlasting life.” “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” These are not sentences of mine! I am quoting Holy Scripture to you and the Scripture cannot be broken. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” It is the *believing* that brings us into this condition of peace with God! I care not what works you shall bring me, be they ever so many—if you do not bring with you *faith*, which is the chief of all works—you have brought me nothing. If you believe in Jesus Christ, whom God has sent, you have the one sure and certain evidence of Divine Grace!

If you believe in Christ, alone, and are resting your salvation upon His finished righteousness, you have the clearest evidence that the Grace of God is in your heart. Will you not search and see whether you have real faith in the Lord Jesus? Make sure work on this point! If you believe not, you are condemned already. And what is more, if you believe through Grace, *that Grace which made you believe is the best guarantee that you*

*shall keep on believing.* Faith which is born of self will die of self—but that which is the child of Grace will live forever! If you have begun to believe of yourself you will leave off of yourself—but if God’s Grace began your believing—God’s Grace will continue your believing and you will abide in this faith wherein you stand even to the end.

This gives me great comfort whenever I think of it, for I desire certainty for days to come. If the faith whereby I have laid hold on Christ to be my Savior is altogether worked in me by the Holy Spirit, through Grace, then I defy the devil to take away that which he never gave, or to crush that which Jehovah Himself created in me! I defy my free will to fling away what it never brought to me! What God has given, created, introduced and established in the heart He will maintain there! “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up,” but what He has planted none shall root up, for it is written, “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.”

The men of Corinth to whom Apollos came had believed *through Divine Grace*. Beloved, there is a sweet ring about this description. They “had believed,” and their faith secured their *souls*. But they “had believed through *Grace*,” and that secured their *faith*. “Through Grace” is the hallmark upon the precious metal of believing. There is no such thing as true believing where Grace is not present. We believe—it is an act of our own mind. But we believe through Grace—it is the *result* of God’s Grace working upon our mind. We both will and do because God works in us to will and to do. We believe because the Holy Spirit leads us to trust in the Lord Jesus. So much upon the first point. May Divine Grace work in us true believing! O my Hearers, how I wish that you were all such Believers!

**II.** Now for the second consideration. SUCH BELIEVERS NEED HELP. I know they do, because we are told in the text that Apollos, “helped them much which had believed through Grace,” and his work was not a superfluous one, or it would not have been mentioned here with commendation. In what respects do those who have Grace need help? In what ways can true Believers be helped?

Many Believers need help in *further instruction*. Young Christians cannot be supposed to know much when they first come to Christ—but they come to be disciples, that is to say, *learners*. They know the three R’s—Ruin, Redemption, and Regeneration—and that is by no means a small part of spiritual education. But they do not know these elementary Truths of God so fully as they might know them—and even about these things they will be the better for more teaching. Oftentimes they need somebody to open up passages of Scripture, to expound to them the analogy of faith and to help them to compare spiritual things with spiritual.

Beloved, you may be a great help to new converts if you will teach them “the way of God more perfectly.” Oh, that ministries were more instructive! Alas, it seems often as if the preacher skimmed the surface and did not dare to enter into the treasure house of doctrine and open up the deep things of God! If public ministry falls short, private Christians must try to make up for it. We need the people instructed, for ignorance is the mother of superstition and skepticism. The uninstructed are easily carried away

with novelties and delusions. Those who are established in the faith and know what they believe generally stand fast. Had the teaching from the pulpit been more clear and decisive during the past 20 years we should not, now, be living in an age of uncertainty.

Many who have believed through Grace also need help by way of *consolation*. You would be astonished if you knew the large number of Believers in Christ who are tempted to doubt, despondency and distress of mind. In the present congregation there are a number of persons so depressed in spirit they can hardly look up—but who will judge, when I am speaking—that I am referring to them. And I must confess that I *am* thinking of them and do very often think *about* them—and long to see them come forth from their present gloom. It is a great joy to me if I can help them at all by describing my own experiences of being downcast and lifted up. These bruised and broken ones need binding up!

Brothers, if you are like Barnabas, “sons of consolation,” be not slack in your blessed service! O you spiritual men, trained in the school of sorrow, put forth your best endeavors to minister to diseased minds! Pour in the oil and wine of the Gospel wherever there is a gaping and bleeding wound. A word fitly spoken, a promise seasonably quoted may help much those who have believed through Grace. Apollos helped them much, also, *by defending them against opponents*. We find that, “he mightily convinced the Jews,” and in doing this he screened believing Gentiles from many a rude assault. He disputed with all his might and with great fervor of spirit against those who tried to subvert the faith of the Christians.

Nowadays the Christian had better go fully armored, for arrows fly thick as sleet in a storm. Objections are always being raised—doubts are always being insinuated. It is hard for a man to keep his feet amidst the present torrents of unbelief that sweep down our streets. You that can stand fast should help those who cannot. You that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak in the matter of doubt. Give tremblers a word to encourage them in “the faith once delivered to the saints.” Older Christians can do much in this direction by mentioning their own experiences of the certainty of Divine Truth. Tell the young people how God has helped you in the days of trial. Tell them how He has answered your prayers. Tell them what joy and peace you have had in dark times by trusting in God. Tell them, I pray you, the way by which the Lord has led you—and when you do this they will not be so likely to be staggered and cast down by every quibbler who may assault them. “He helped them much which had believed through Grace.”

Elderly Christians can do very much of this by baffling the adversary with those blessed facts of their own lives which, even to skeptics, are stubborn things. And we can also help those who have believed through Grace *by giving them a word of direction*. They frequently do not know what to do. They come to the end of their wits and their knowledge—and then the Christian who, by reason of use has had his senses exercised—may be of great service to the bewildered. We are commissioned by the Lord to be eyes to the blind, feet to the lame and guides to wanderers.

It is the lot of some of us to be employed by the King to conduct trains of pilgrims to the Celestial City—and full often we have to put ourselves in front of the women and the children to fight with Giant Grim or Giant Despair. For their sakes we enter the fight with lions, dragons and other monsters. The journey of the weaker ones to Heaven is a personally-conducted tour and the Lord of the Way employs us to be their guardians. All that have spiritual strength should carry out the commission which is implied in the very possession of that strength. You should help the weak and give a brotherly word of advice to the inexperienced.

O Beloved, do we lay ourselves out for this—those of us who have been long the people of God—as we ought to do? Do you not think that there is a tendency among many to despise the weak and leave them to themselves? How are they to grow wise and more instructed if they have no better society than their own? Do I hear an older one say, “Oh, that young lad, what does he know? What can he do towards *my* edification?” This is a very selfish question—let it not be heard among you! “I never got much out of the Church,” one said to me—and he was somewhat surprised when I replied, “I never joined the Church to get anything out of it.” “What did you join it for?” “Why, to do all I could for all who are in it.”

This wretched self-seeking poisons everything it touches. A certain lady went out with a number of Christian friends and being very easily displeased, she was soon complaining. Turning to a friend she asked him if he enjoyed himself. “No,” he said, “I did not come here to enjoy *myself*, I came here to enjoy other people.” There is a great deal in that. If you live for yourself, your object is mean and unsatisfactory. In fact if you live to yourself, you will die. But if you will learn to live to help the feeble and guide the doubtful—and to be a Great-Heart for King Jesus—you will live abundantly, for God will bless you.

Dear Friends, the bulk of Christians, when first converted, *need leaders*. They need somebody to show them the way and to go before them. I would to God that many here present who have been taught of God, if they do not become preachers and ministers, may, nevertheless, by their conduct and conversation vie with Apollos in this blessed work of helping much those who have believed through Divine Grace! By word and by example may the Holy Spirit teach you how to be convoys to the little ships which are now making the voyage of life.

**III.** So I come to the third observation which is this—IT IS A WORTHY WORK IN WHICH TO ENGAGE. Helping those who have believed through Grace is a work worthy of the highest talent and the greatest experience. I want to impress upon many of my instructed Brothers and Sisters that they should engage in it at once and keep at it continually. We are going to have a great number of converts in this place. We have been praying for them and we are sure to have them, for the Lord hears prayer and blesses His own Truth.

I want you to get ready to receive the new converts and nurse them for Christ. Whenever children are expected, somebody is warned of it and a skilled person is in readiness to cherish the weaklings. God will not send His babes to a Church that is not prepared to nurse them—and I want to

stir you up to be ready to help much those who shall believe through Divine Grace. I claim this assistance of you and I feel sure that you will cheerfully render it, even as Apollos thus aided Paul.

I feel you will help, first, *because you have been helped*. Apollos became a helper because he had himself been helped. He began to preach and he preached all that he knew—but his knowledge was very defective. What he said was good—very good—but it was not fully the Gospel, for he had only learned of John the Baptist and had not yet been taught the doctrine of Jesus. Apollos teaches very eloquently, but still there is something missing in his teaching. He has not yet reached the full chord—he does not sound out the blessed music of the Gospel to perfection. Aquila and Priscilla ask him into their tent warehouse and they say to him, “Dear Friend, do you notice you went just so far, but you should have gone a little farther. You spoke about the Lamb of God—but you did not tell them that *Jesus* was the Lamb of God and that He had died to take away sin.”

Apollos replied, “I pray you, tell me all about it.” And when they further informed him of the death, the resurrection and the ascension of the Lord Jesus—and of the coming of the Holy Spirit—Apollos said, “Thank you. Thank you. Now I have grand Truths to preach and my message will be more full and gracious than it has been! I shall go forth to the synagogue tomorrow to tell them about the Messiah who has truly come and I shall speak with greater freedom concerning Him.” Apollos had been helped and therefore Apollos was bound to help other people! Do you not think, you Christian people, that you owe something to the Church of God as well as to the Christ of God?

You were converted—was it not by a pastor’s preaching, or by a teacher’s instruction in the school, or by a book that had been written by a Christian man? Will you not repay the Church of God that which you owe to her instrumentality? If you have been helped as well as converted, you are especially bound to lay yourself out to help others. When a person who has been very despondent comes out into comfort, he should look out for desponding spirits and use his own experience as a cordial to the fainting. I do not think that I ever feel so much at home in any work as when I am trying to encourage a heart which is on the verge of despair, for I have been in that plight myself. It is a high honor to nurse our Lord’s wounded children. It is a great gift to have learned by experience how to sympathize.

“Ah!” I say to them, “I have been where you are!” They look at me and their eyes say, “No, surely *you* never felt as we do.” I therefore go further and say, “If you feel worse than I did, I pity you, indeed, for I could say with Job, ‘My soul chooses strangling rather than life.’ I could readily enough have laid violent hands upon myself to escape from my misery of spirit.” In talking to those who are in that wretched condition, I find myself at home—he who has been in the dark dungeon knows the way to the bread and the water.

If you have passed through depression and the Lord has appeared to your comfort, lay yourself out to help others who are where you used to be. If you are in prison and you get out, do not enjoy your liberty alone—

hasten to set free another captive! Are your chains broken? Then be a chain-breaker in the Lord's name! A sailor who had long been a prisoner in France, gained his liberty. He went into Seven Dials, bought a cage full of birds, and when he had paid for them, he opened the cage and let them all fly! People cried with wonder, "What did you buy them for?" "Oh," he said, "I bought them to let them fly. I know what it is to be a prisoner, myself, and I cannot bear that birds should be shut up in a cage."

Go to those who are what you were—caged birds—and let them fly by telling them of Jesus and the ransom price! Seek out poor, bound sinners and proclaim freedom to them. Proclaim liberty at the market in the name of Christ! I speak to some here who have *a measure of natural ability for this work*. Perhaps you resemble Apollos, because Apollos was an eloquent man. "Ah," says one, "I am not eloquent." I do not think that. There may be a difference of opinion as to what eloquence is. Eloquence is speaking out from the *heart*. I will tell you what I call eloquence in a *child*—it is the whole child working itself up to gain its wish and have its way.

There is a pretty thing that the child wants. He is very little, but he tries to speak about it and does his best to express his longings. He points to what he wants and clutches at it—he cries after it. Still he does not succeed and then he works himself up into an agony of desire. The boy cries all over—every bit of him pleads, demands, strives. Every hair of his head is pleading for what he wants. He not only cries with his eyes and with his tongue, but he cries with his fingers and his hair! He thinks of nothing but the one thing on which his little heart is set. I call *that* eloquence.

There is, in the Vatican, the famous group of the Laocoon. I stood one day looking at it. You remember how the father and his sons are twisted about with venomous snakes and they are writhing in agony as the deadly folds enclose them? As I stood looking at the priceless group, a gentleman said to me, "Mr. Spurgeon, look at that eloquent statue." Well, yes, I had looked at that statue. It was like a live thing, though only marble. I had not called it "eloquent" till he gave me the word—but certainly it *was* eloquent, though silent. It spoke of anguish and deadly pain. When a man speaks in earnest he is eloquent even though he may be slow of speech. His whole nature is stirred as he pleads with sinners for the Lord Jesus—and this makes him eloquent!

O my Brothers, you know not what you can do till you get at it with your whole souls! But if you happen to have the gift of fluent speech, I pray you *use* it in helping those who have believed through Divine Grace. "I have not the gift of speech," says one. Well, dear Brother, have you tried? Have you tried? Many a man has great powers of speech but he has been too bashful to develop them. Shall I put it in Saxon? He has been too much of a coward to find out his own capacity! If he could but have got rid of his fear under the impulse of a strong affection for others, he could have spoken and, by degrees, he would have spoken well.

We need more young men in this Church to go forth and preach the Gospel. Where are you, you dumb dogs? How will you answer for it if your Lord is robbed through your sinful silence? All our organizations are in

need of speaking men and of earnest, loving Christian women who can plead with souls. I believe that there are more gifts lying idle than we have ever suspected. I charge you—place your talent in the Lord's treasury at once lest its rust should witness against you! But if you have not a great measure of gift, never mind about that. I do not know but what Apollos did mischief through being too gifted and too ready of speech. When he went to Corinth he could speak better than Paul and, after a while, to his grief, he weaned the fickle ones from the Apostle.

Apollos did not do this intentionally—it was not his fault—but some of them said, “Listen to Apollos! Is he not a splendid speaker? Did you ever hear such eloquence? Paul cannot talk in that way.” One said, “I like Paul, for he is so deep but yet he is neither a polished scholar, nor an elegant speaker like Apollos. He has never been to the college at Alexandria—he has never been polished by Egyptian philosophy. Apollos is the man for me.” One cried, “I am of Paul!” And another, “I am of Apollos!” And another, “I am of Cephas!” While a few even said, “I am of Christ”—as if Christ could head a party within His own Church!

This led to a grievous dividing into parties and wretched following of men. When he saw it, Paul told them they were carnal and mere babes in Christ. Talent and education may stand in the way of a Believer and may not help him. But in your infirmity there is no such danger—so get to work in spite of your weakness! If you can only stutter, go and stutter the Gospel! And it is the *Gospel* that God will bless—not your stuttering nor your orating! If you can only write a letter in the simplest words about Jesus, go and do it! And the simplicity with which you write, while it looks like a weakness, may really be a source of strength fitting it the better for God to use!

If we have a measure of natural ability, be it great or small, let us use it—but if we have not that ability, *we may acquire one form of capacity in which Apollos abounded*. He was mighty in the Scriptures. Now we can *all* study our Bibles. If we believe in Jesus in our hearts we ought to have the Bible at our fingertips—and, if so, we shall help many by our instructive talk. The good Bible student has lips like a springing well. When the Word of God dwells in a man richly his speech drops fatness. Those who speak Scripture sow seed—and it is living and growing seed—whose harvest is salvation! It is God's Word, not our comment on God's Word, that saves men! Keep on quoting God's Inspired Truth and be yourself inspired by it so as to explain it by your own experience—and in that way you will help much them that have believed through Grace.

But, dear Friends, in addition to this, you will not do much unless you are like Apollos, *fervent in spirit*. Notice that 25<sup>th</sup> verse—“fervent in spirit.” He was a burning man—a man on fire. He burned his way by his zeal. He was not content to speak calmly and coolly—he threw his soul into his preaching. That is half the battle! I do not know whether it is not three-quarters of it. “Fervent in spirit.” If you are full of fire, full of life and full of heart, you will be a blessing to others. “How can I get warmth of heart?” asks one. Live in the Presence of God! I cannot give you any other pre-

scription. Let the Lord shine upon you as the Sun of Righteousness and you will be fervent—all other methods are mere speculations and will fail.

The famous naturalist, Buffon, had, once, a large number of the wise men of the Academy of France at his estate. They were all philosophers—and you know what a philosopher is. If you do not know, you should meet one and I do not think that your appreciation of the sect will be increased. However, these were all philosophers—great men walking in a great man's gardens—all great together. In the grounds there was a glass globe and when one of these profound philosophers touched this glass globe on the shady side, he found that it was very, very warm—while on the side that was exposed to the sun it was comparatively cool.

Herein was a marvelous thing! He called his brother philosophers around him and I picture them as they gave out their various theories why this glass globe was hotter on the side away from the sun than on the side which was bearing the full blaze of noonday. One had a theory of reflection, another of refraction, another of absorption—I cannot give you all their words for they were wonderful words and wonderful theories—and they discussed, and discussed and discussed. Finally, Buffon, not quite satisfied with the philosophical conclusions which they had reached, called the gardener and said, “Gardener, can you tell me why this side of the globe, away from the sun, is hotter than the other side upon which the sun is shining?” “Yes, Sir,” said the gardener, “Just now I turned the globe round because it was getting too hot on one side.”

This did not uphold the new philosophical theories, but it maintained an old-fashioned doctrine—namely, that the sun gives heat! You may depend upon it that the only answer to the question why a man is fervent in spirit is that he keeps his heart near his Lord! You need not enter upon any philosophical disquisitions as to how to maintain fervor and enthusiasm and all that. That is the most fervent heart which enjoys most of the light of God and that is the end of the whole matter. If you live in the light of God's Countenance you will be fervent—and if you turn away from Him you will grow cool. God give us to be fervent in spirit!

But now notice one thing more. Apollos greatly helped these people because *he preached Christ to them*. “For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.” If we are going to help those who have believed in Christ our conversation with them must be full of Christ. Nothing will really feed the soul but Jesus! His flesh is meat, indeed! His blood is drink, indeed! All else is froth, or wind. Reading yesterday, in “Israel my Glory,” a book by Mr. Wilkinson who is the director of the Jewish mission at Mildmay, I saw a statement there which was quite new to me. He is speaking of the Jewish Passover at the present day.

Now you know what the Passover was according to the law of Moses—how a lamb was killed and the blood was sprinkled on the lintel and the two side-posts—while the flesh was roasted and eaten. The Jews at this day observe the Passover, but they observe it in a way which is according to the Rabbis and not according to Moses. On the table there are Passover cakes, lettuce, chervil and parsley as the bitter herbs. This I understand,

but what is this concoction—a mixture of lime and mortar? And from where do they get the egg and the salt water? Moses knows nothing of eggs and mortar! What is there, do you suppose, besides? “Oh,” you say, “the Paschal Lamb.” No, no—they have left that out!

What is there at the Jewish Passover at the present time instead of the lamb? A shank-bone! A shank-bone, mark you—with no meat upon it! Only a shank-bone! The blood is gone and in place of it is an egg. The Lamb is gone and instead there is a shank-bone. “Ah, me! How can they thus make void the Law of God?” This I said involuntarily but very soon I remembered that I could not blame the Jews, for they are only imitating the Christians!

Go and hear many who pretend to preach the Gospel. Where is the Lamb, the Sacrifice, to be fed upon? Where is the sprinkled blood? Why they are ashamed to speak of “the blood”! They think the very word is vulgar. But what do they give us? A bone! A bone! A bone that no dog would care for—a bone of modern thought put in the place of the Lamb who ought to be fed upon by all the living Israel of God! I thank Mr. Wilkinson for such a simile. I smile to think of my Israelite friends sitting down to the table with their shank-bone and calling it the Passover—but they are quite as near the mark as my Christian friends sitting down to their divinity out of which the great doctrine of the Atonement has been taken—and calling it the Christian faith!

There is no food for bodies in the shank-bone, nor any food for souls in the modern theology—but in Christ Crucified there is every help that a soul can need. Are you burdened with sin? He bore it on the Cross. Are you afraid that sin will conquer you? You shall overcome by the blood of the Lamb. Trust in the atoning Sacrifice, alone and entirely, and you shall enter into a peace and joy which shall be the strength of your soul in future conflicts with evil. I need not say more—but I would press upon my dear friends who know the Lord to go “help them much that have believed through Grace.”

As for those who have not yet believed in Jesus, may they now come and trust Him! The moment that you trust Him you are saved. “Look unto Me,” He says, “and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” Look at once! Look and live!

***“There is life in a look at the Crucified One.”***

The Lord, by His Grace, constrain and enable you to give that look and to Him be glory forever and ever! Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 18.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—414, 483, 781.***

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# RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT NO. 1790

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 13, 1884,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He said unto them, Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?”  
Acts 19:2.***

IT may be well to notice what question the Apostle did *not* put to these Ephesian disciples of John. He did *not* say to them, “Have you believed?” This would have been a very important question and it ought to be settled once and for all. Our faith must either be boldly affirmed or sorrowfully denied—it should not remain the subject of question. It is a great pity that so many Christians are always saying, “Have I believed?” and allowing that most vital point to be a matter of debate—for as long as the existence of faith within our souls is the subject of question, we must be unhappy. Faith is the cornerstone of the edifice of godliness—if it is not well laid and *known* to be well laid—there can be no sense of security to the inhabitant of the house. We not only ought to *know* that we believe, but to know Whom we believe! And it would be well for us to advance beyond common believing to assurance—and then to full assurance—the assurance of faith, the assurance of hope and the assurance of understanding.

Again, Paul does not put the question, “If you have believed, how came it about? By what agencies was faith created in your souls? When did you first become Believers?” These are very proper questions if we view them as points of interest, but they do not touch the essence of salvation. A man may be saved and yet know *none* of the details of his conversion. No doubt there are many strong Believers who could not point to any special agency as the means by which faith was begotten within them. In general, it was by the hearing of the Word of God and by the operation of the Holy Spirit—but they do not remember, as some do, a remarkable text, or a thrilling sermon, or a striking Providence, through which they were turned from darkness to the Light of God.

Thousands in the fold of Jesus come to the Good Shepherd by degrees. Many who now walk in the Light received daylight, not by the leaping of the sun above the horizon in a moment, but as our days mostly begin in this country—a little light tinged the eastern sky and then came a rosy hue, followed by a dim dawn—and afterwards came the actual rising of the sun which comes out of the chambers of the east and runs his course till he has created perfect day. Many are gradually brought to Christ and yet they are *truly* brought to Christ. I say we may ask about the when and the how of conversion if we wish to be interested, as we have a right to be,

in the stories of the godly, but we must not ask such questions as if they were of vital importance and should stand first.

Paul does not enquire about ways, means and times, but he does ask—“Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?” Our Revised Version reads it, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” and others who are probably quite as accurate read it, “Are you receiving the Holy Spirit now that you have believed?” It does not matter one atom which way you read it—all the renderings come to this—“Do you see a connection between your believing and the Holy Spirit? Did you receive Him when you believed? Have you received Him since you believed? Are you daily receiving Him as you believe?”

That is the subject which is now before us—the Holy Spirit in our hearts as Believers. Has your faith been sealed by the impress of the Holy Spirit? This is a point of the utmost importance and upon it I desire to speak with deep and solemn earnestness in the power of the Holy Spirit, Himself. You know, dear Friends, when the Holy Spirit was given in the earliest ages, He showed His Presence by certain miraculous signs. Some of those who received the Holy Spirit spoke with tongues; others began to prophesy and a third class received the gifts of healing—so that wherever they laid their hands, disease fled before them. I am sure that if these powers were given *now* in connection with the reception of the Holy Spirit and your believing, you would all be anxious to possess them. I can hardly imagine a single Christian who would not put to himself the enquiry, “Have I received the Holy Spirit in that fashion?” You would want to be healing, or to be speaking with tongues, or to be working miracles by which you could benefit your fellow men and glorify God! Would you not?

Now, be it never forgotten that those works of the Holy Spirit which are *permanent* must assuredly be of greater value than those which were transitory. We cannot suppose that the Holy Spirit brought forth the best wine at first and that His operations gradually deteriorated. It is a rule of the Kingdom of God to keep the best wine for the last and, therefore, I conclude that you and I are not left to partake of the dregs, but that those works of the Holy Spirit which are at this time vouchsafed to the Church of God are, in every way, as valuable as those earlier miraculous gifts which have departed from us. The work of the Holy Spirit, by which men are quickened from their death in sin, is not inferior to the power which made men speak with tongues! The work of the Holy Spirit, when He comforts men and makes them glad in Christ, is by no means second to the opening of the eyes of the blind! Why, Sirs, men might have the gifts of the Spirit as to miracles and yet might perish, after all! But he that has the *spiritual* gifts of the Holy Spirit shall *never* perish—they are *saving* blessings and where they come, they lift the man out of his sinful state and make him to be a child of God!

I would, therefore, press it upon you, this morning, that as you would certainly enquire whether you had the gifts of healing and miracle-working, if such gifts were now given to Believers, much more should you enquire whether you have those more permanent gifts of the Spirit which are, this day, open to you all. By them you shall work no physical miracle,

but shall achieve *spiritual* wonders of the grander sort! If we come to weigh spiritual operations, they are by no means secondary in the judgment of enlightened servants of God. Have you then received the Spirit since you believed? Beloved, are you now *receiving* the Spirit? Are you living under His Divine influence? Are you filled with His power?

Put the question personally. I am afraid some professors will have to admit that they hardly know whether there is any Holy Spirit. And others will have to confess that though they have enjoyed a little of His saving work, yet they do not know much of His ennobling and sanctifying influence. We have, none of us, participated in His operations as we might have done—we have sipped where we might have drunk! We have drunk where we might have bathed! We have bathed up to the ankles where we might have found rivers to swim in! Alas, of many Christians it must be affirmed that they have been naked, poor and miserable when they might, in the power of the Holy Spirit, have been clad in golden garments and have been rich and increased in goods.

He waits to be gracious, but we linger in indifference, like those of whom we read, “they could not enter in because of unbelief.” There are many such cases and, therefore, it is not improper that I should, with all vehemence, press home upon you the question of the Apostle, “Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?” Did you receive Him when you believed? Are you receiving Him now that you are believing in Christ Jesus? We will, first, this morning, consider the question. And then we will listen to *the lessons* which it is calculated to teach.

**I.** I want you to consider THE QUESTION. In some respects it is *a vital question*. I shall not be playing around the outskirts of religion now, but plunging into its very center. This question has nothing to do with the sect to which you belong, nor with the particular condition in which your mind may happen to be for the present hour—it is an enquiry which touches the heart of the man and the inmost life of his spirit. “Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?” For, remember, the Holy Spirit is the Author of all spiritual *life*. Life does not lie latent in natural men for themselves to stir up—until the Holy Spirit visits them they are dead in trespasses and sins. If, when you believed, you had not a life imparted by the Holy Spirit, your believing was a *dead* believing, a mere counterfeit of living faith—and not the faith of God’s elect!

If the Holy Spirit has not been with you since your conversion, every act of your religion has been formal, dead and unaccepted! In vain have you sung your formal songs! In vain have you attempted to adore! Your Hosannas have languished on your tongues and your devotion has fallen like a corpse before the altar. If the Holy Spirit is not there, *life* is not there—your many prayers have been mockeries! Your joys have been delusions and your griefs have been carnal! That which is born of the flesh is flesh and nothing better—let that flesh be washed and cleansed—yet all that comes of it is flesh! Only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit! There must, then, be a work from Heaven, a work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, or else you have not believed unto life and you still abide in death.

As the Holy Spirit is the Author of our quickening, the Lord and Giver of life, so is He the Author of all true *instruction*. Brother, you have professed to be a Believer, but you know nothing at all unless the Holy Spirit has taught you. "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." To be taught of the minister is *nothing*—but to be taught of the Lord is everything! It is only the Spirit of God who can engrave the Truth of God upon the fleshy tablets of the heart. We speak to the ear, but only He can speak to the inmost soul. He that professes to be a Believer while he has never received the Truth of God in the power of it, as sent home by the Spirit of light and fire, has need to begin again and learn the first rudiments of the faith! He has learned nothing aright who has not been under the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. The knowledge of the letter only puffs up those who rest in it—and eventually the letter kills. But the inward whisper, the secret admonition, the silent operation of the Spirit of God which falls as the dew from Heaven upon the heart—this is quite another thing. He that has it not is blind and ignorant, though he has a Doctor of Divinity and is revered as a rabbi in Israel! Though he is a preacher to thousands, he is still in the dark unless the Spirit of God has shone upon his soul. See, then, how vital this question is! Both for life and for light we must have the Holy Spirit, or else we are dead and in the dark.

Furthermore, if we have believed in Christ aright, the Holy Spirit has come upon us to *transform* us altogether. By Divine Grace we are not now what we used to be—we have new thoughts, new wishes, new aspirations, new sorrows, new joys—and these are worked in us by the Spirit. A man's conversion is nothing. His believing is nothing. His profession is nothing unless he is made to be a new creature in Christ Jesus. But how can we be made new by any other power than the Holy Spirit? Only He that creates can new-create. "Except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." We cannot hate evil and love right of ourselves, for the whole bent and bias of our spirit since the Fall are toward evil, only evil, and that continually! Neither can we renew ourselves. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one! Can an unclean thing bring forth itself clean out of uncleanness? Between the ribs of death there cannot be spontaneously formed the seeds of life. The Holy Spirit must transform us by the renewing of our minds—we must be begotten again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, or else we are still in the flesh and cannot please God. If our faith has not brought with it the Holy Spirit. If, indeed, it is not the *fruit* of the Spirit and we are not changed in nature and in life, then our faith is presumption and our profession is a lie!

Furthermore, it is absolutely essential to all true religion that you and I should be *sanctified*. A faith which works not for purification will work for putrefaction. Unless our faith makes us pine after holiness and pant after conformity to God, it is no better than the faith of devils and, perhaps, it is not even as good as that! How can any man become holy except by the Spirit of Holiness? A holy man is the workmanship of the Holy Spirit! Through faith we are sanctified by the operation of the Holy Spirit so that we are delivered from the dominion of sin and set free to follow after that

which is good and pure and right in the sight of God. Faith which does not bring holiness with it is a dead faith which will never bring us into communion with the living God! Oh, the absolute necessity that the Holy Spirit should rest upon us when we believe in Christ!

Beside that, remember, dear Friends, there is one mark of God's people which, if it is lacking, is fatal—and that is *prayer*. “Behold, he prays,” is a true sign of the new birth! But can a man pray without the assistance of the Holy Spirit? Let him try to do so and, if he is honest and sincere, he will soon find the value of that text—“Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered.” Pray without the Spirit of God? Oh, Sir, it will be a mechanical performance—the statue of prayer—not the living, prevailing supplication of an heir of Heaven! You may go to your chamber and kneel down at that particular chair where you have so often enjoyed communion with God, but unless you invoke the Spirit of God, the posture shall be a weariness, the exercise shall be heartless and the result shall be worthless!

What is the incense without the burning coals? What is the Mercy Seat without the Shekinah light? Prayer without the Spirit is as a bird without wings, or an arrow without a bow! As well hope to see a dead man sit up in his coffin and plead a case in a court of law, as hope to see a man prevail in prayer who is a stranger to the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Grace and of supplications! You will leave your prayer closet unrefreshed if you have been in it without the Spirit. Even the *desire* to pray is not with us unless the Holy Spirit has worked it in the soul. No true word of supplication can arise from the heart unless the Spirit of God shall prompt it. Dear, dear Friends, you do see, do you not, how on all these points, contact with the Spirit of God becomes essential to our present spiritual life and to our eternal salvation? Look you to it; look you to it at once!

If all you have is what you have made yourself, you and your works must perish! If all your prayers have risen from no greater depth than your own heart and if they are the fruit of no better spirit than your own—they will never reach the ear of God, nor bring you blessings from the Throne of God. If there is not something supernatural about your religion, it will be a millstone about your neck to sink you into Hell! What comes from the dunghill and is of the dunghill will rot on the dunghill! That which comes from a man's heart, apart from the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, will rise no higher than his own depraved nature and leave Him unblessed! But that which comes from above will elevate him to its own element and cause him to dwell with Christ at the right hand of God!

But now, while this is a vital question, I beg to say further that *where it is not vital, it is, nevertheless, greatly important*. I do not think we ought always to be asking the question, “Is this essential?” meaning thereby, “Is it essential to our *salvation*?” Those are miserable souls who would be stingy in obedience and love so that they would labor and love no more than is absolutely necessary to get to Heaven! They would be saved in the cheapest possible way and they would be content to crawl over the

threshold of Glory, but not to go too far in! They want as much Grace as may be necessary to float them over the bar at the harbor's mouth, but they do not desire a grand entrance. O you miserly professors, stinting yourselves in the matter of the Grace of God—I have little to say to you!

But I turn to the children of God and joyfully remind them that there is, in the Holy Spirit, not only what they absolutely need to save them, but much more! Here is not only bread, but wine on the lees well refined. In the Holy Spirit there is comfort to gladden you, Grace to strengthen you, holiness to ennoble you and love to purify you. For, first, the Spirit of God is the *Comforter* and how important it is that you should be comforted! Why do you hang your heads? Why do you go mourning as if you were in the night and the dews were thick upon your eyelids? You are the children of the morning and the children of the day—rejoice in the Lord and walk in the light as He is in the light! “Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?” You whose brows are furrowed with care, whose hearts are distracted with anxiety, receive the Spirit of consolation and be glad in the Lord, for the joy of the Lord is your strength!

In the Holy Spirit there is also a spirit of *enlightening*. Do you read the Word of God understanding very little of it? Do you hear it as though you heard not? Why is this? Should you not seek more of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, that He may lead you into all Truths of God? How much happier you would be—and how much more useful—if you knew more of the things of God! The Holy Spirit can take of the things of Christ and can show them to you. Now you only see men as trees walking, but there is no need to be content with such dim vision, for the Comforter can anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see—He can open your eyes that you may behold wondrous things out of His Law! Why not seek to have the enlightening Spirit of God resting on you, to teach you in His Word and way?

The Spirit of God is, also, the Spirit of liberty, but some of God's children do not seem to have attained their freedom as yet. They have one fetter remaining on their feet and though they try to enter into the broad fields of heavenly enjoyment, they cannot escape from their prison. Of such we may well ask—Have you received the Spirit since you believed? If so, why are you the slaves of custom, the bandaged serfs of fashion? Why do you ask leave of your fellow men to breathe, or think? Why are you so cowardly that you dare not follow conscience, or speak of the things of God? The fear of man brings a snare to many and that snare is also a chain to their feet. It ought not be! Rather should they feel that, since the Son has made them free, they are free, indeed! The Holy Spirit is a free Spirit and makes men free—where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty! Glory be to You, O God, “I am Your servant; You have loosed my bonds.”

Many weak children of God have received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but they have not yet received the Spirit of adoption by which we cry, “Abba, Father.” Oh, the glory of the Spirit of God when He makes us feel that we are no more servants, but *sons*—not under the Law, but under *Grace*—not under wrath, but under *love*, not doomed to death, but en-

dowed with *life*! He has brought us forth from prison and broken all our bonds asunder! He has set our feet in a large room and made us to walk at liberty because we keep His statutes! Ours is the freedom of no mean city, for our citizenship is in Heaven and the Spirit of God enables us to enjoy the citizenship of the New Jerusalem! It is important that we should know what this heavenly freedom means.

Some of God's people need to feel the Spirit of God as a power *moving and impelling them to holy service*. Do you ever hear, behind you, a voice saying, "This is the way; walk you in it"? Have you ever known holy impulses bidding you do this and that—impulses which did not come from human nature, for they impelled you to something which you would naturally have avoided? And do you ever follow after things unseen, driven onward as by a powerful wind, not to be resisted? Have you been made willing in the day of God's power to do the Divine bidding? I would we had more of it, for then we should be more ready for service and should do greater things than these. That same Spirit who moves the saints to work, also *empowers* them to achieve the purpose which is put into their souls. By His aid you shall go forth in your feebleness and put to flight the armies of the aliens! You shall be, in God's hands, as a sharp threshing instrument having teeth and shall thresh mountains—and beat them small—yes, fan them and the wind shall carry them away!

Does any man know what the Spirit of God can make of him? I believe the greatest, ablest, most faithful, most holy man of God might have been greater, abler, more faithful and more holy if he had put himself more completely at the Spirit's disposal. Wherever God has done great things by a man, He has had power to do more had the man been fit for it. We are straitened in *ourselves*, not in God! O Brothers and Sisters, the Church is weak today because the Holy Spirit is not upon her members as we would desire Him to be! You and I are tottering along like feeble babes, whereas, had we more of the Spirit, we might walk without fainting, run without weariness and even mount up with wings as eagles! Oh, for more of the anointing of the Holy Spirit whom Christ is prepared to give immeasurably unto us if we will but receive Him! "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" Is there not much Divine Power which has not, as yet, been manifested in you?

"Oh," says one, "I feel so dull today!" Do you? Is not the Holy Spirit the power to refresh you and to rekindle in your soul the dying flame of spiritual fervor? Oh, if you did but receive His power today, you would not mind the heaviness of the atmosphere, nor any other deadening surroundings, for the Spirit would triumph over the flesh. Do you know the power of the Spirit? Did He ever make you like the chariots of Amminadib? Did He ever carry you away with His supreme power? Did you ever run like Elijah before Ahab's chariot and feel that it was a little thing to do? Can you not say, "O my Soul, you have trodden down strength! By my God have I leaped over a wall and broken thorough a troop: I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me"? These are the expressions of souls familiar with the Holy Spirit—when He inspires them, they are divinely strong, even to omnipotence! Brothers and Sisters, we *must* have

the Holy Spirit! Are you receiving His forces? Are you receiving His fullness even now?

Now I come to notice that *this question is assuredly answerable*. “Have you received the Holy Spirit?” The notion has sprung up that you cannot tell whether you have the Holy Spirit or not, but you can. Give a man an electric shock and I guarantee you he will know it! But if he has the Holy Spirit, he will know it much more. You may sometimes raise the question, “Did I ever feel the Holy Spirit in years gone by?” but you cannot ask the question, “Do I feel it now?” for if you feel it *now* you have the witness in yourself that the Lord is at work with you. You need not ask a question about present experience. If you do not feel the Holy Spirit at work distinctly and perceptibly, even now, then lift your heart to God for it and pray that you may now receive Him in all His fullness.

“Oh,” says one, “I thought we must always say, ‘I hope so. I trust so.’” I know that jargon, but men do not say, “I hope I have an estate,” or, “I trust I have 20 shillings in the pound,” or, “I think I have a wife and children.” Some of us are quite clear about these matters, one way or the other! We should not live on guess-work as to daily life, much less as to eternal things. O Souls, live daily on what God gives you and you cannot doubt! Live near to Christ and you cannot doubt whether you love Him! Live in the Holy Spirit, give yourselves up fully to His Divine anointing and bedewing, and you will not have to say, “I hardly know whether there is any Holy Spirit,” for He dwells with you and shall be in you!

Permit me to say here that there are many professors to whom *this question is inevitable*. I will pick out certain of them. There is the Brother with the long dreary face, the Knight of the Rueful Countenance. You know him and you pity him. His favorite hymn is—

**“Tis a point I long to know,  
Oft it causes anxious thought.”**

Is there anything dreary? He delights in it as much as he can delight in anything! He is sure of nothing but the horrible—everything that is pleasant he is afraid of. His life is one protracted groan. Come along, Brother, and shake hands as cheerfully as you can. Please tell me, have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed? How he hesitates! Poor Soul, he is perplexed. He is not well acquainted with the Comforter. Here is a hymn for him—let us sing it to a gladsome tune—

**“Why should the children of a King  
Go mourning all their days?  
Great Comforter, descend and bring  
Some tokens of Your Grace!  
Do You not dwell in all the saints  
And seal the heirs of Heaven?  
When will You banish my complaints,  
And show my sins forgiven?”**

Surely, if we have the earnest of the Spirit, the first fruits of Heaven, we ought to rejoice in the Lord always! Brother, you look comfortless—how can this be when the Comforter has come to you?

Another Brother is a member of the Church and a very unpleasant neighbor, for he picks holes in everybody and everything. He is a born

grumbler and since he has been new-born he has not given up the habit. When he goes home this morning, after dinner he will spend the afternoon in his growlery, complaining of the heat and, perhaps, of my sermon. Oh, my dear Brother, you who are so uneasy and unhappy—and so worrying and annoying to everybody—did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Are you still receiving the Holy Spirit? I have sometimes thought that certain unfriendly friends must have been baptized in vinegar instead of water, from the sharp acid of their temperament. Surely the Spirit of God is a dove, full of peace, love and kindness—not a bird of prey! Let me put my hand on that Brother's shoulder, if he will allow such a rudeness, and say, "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?"

Here comes another who flies out into great tempers and grows fiercely angry. A little thing puts him out—he finds fault readily enough and becomes excited in no time. He says that he is very sorry for it, afterwards, but this does not remove the wounds which he has inflicted. If you cut a person's head off, it is of small use to apologize to him afterwards. Many a man boils over with passion and scalds his friends and, then, in cooler moments expresses his regret. All very fine—but fine words cure no blisters! I would suggest to you, the next time you are in a great temper, that you ask yourself this question, "Have I received the Holy Spirit since I believed? Is He not the spirit of peace and gentleness?" I fancy anybody putting that question to you, when you are in an irritated state of mind, you would reply, "Pray do not mention such a subject here, for I am not acting as I ought to do." Then *do* act as you ought to do and ask for the Spirit of God to help you to be quiet, forgiving, humble and meek!

Here is a Brother who cannot be happy unless he indulges in worldly frivolities and useless amusements. When he gets into a grand frolic with worldly people, he finds himself at home—but the joys of godliness he despises! My Friend, the next time you are coming home from a party, I should like to meet you in the street and enquire, "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" You would think me almost blaspheming! Alas, the blasphemy is in *your heart*! You would feel awkward, would you not? Do not do things which make you feel awkward—keep out of those scenes which are unfit for a child of God! Do not play with the devil's children. Many people around this place are sore put to it to keep their children from bad company. There is no playground for their children but the streets—and it seems hard when they say that their children shall not associate with rude children in the road—yet they must do it. Our Lord does not love that His dear children should sport with heirs of wrath, or make them their intimates. Such evil communications will bring you misery sooner or later. You cannot expect the Holy Spirit to continue with you if you are joined with the adversaries of the Lord!

But there are certain persons who live solely to hoard and scrape and get money that they may grow rich and grind everybody else to pieces in the process. I would like, when the avaricious man is totaling up his gains, to put to him the question, "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" He would answer, "Don't, don't! It is terribly out of place to mention so serious a matter!" It is out of place, no doubt, for the man

himself is out of place! But ought a Believer to be in a position in which it shall be out of place for a friend to speak to him about his eternal interests?

I know *some to whom the question is needless*. You never did put it to them and you never will. You meet them in the morning, soaring aloft, like the lark, in the praises of God. See them in trouble? They are patient and resigned to their heavenly Father's will. Mark how they spend their lives in hallowed service, seeking always to win sinners to Christ! Their common talk is sweet with the honey of the Holy Land—you cannot be with them 10 minutes without discovering that they have leaned on Jesus' bosom! There is an aroma about them which tells you that they dwell in the garden of the Lord. When they tell you their experience, it is even as if an angel shook his wings! You do not ask them if they have received the Holy Spirit—you stand still and admire the work of the Spirit of God in them!

Now, Beloved, be such yourselves. If our Church is to be strong and if it is to make a lasting impression upon its age by bearing a telling testimony to the Truth of God, we must not only have the Spirit of God in His essential operations, but in His soul-enriching, heart-delighting, life-sanctifying power! Thus will He turn earth into Heaven and make us poor earth-born creatures meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. So much upon the question. I cannot send it home—I can only pray that God the Holy Spirit, whom I desire to honor, may apply these thoughts with power to your souls.

**II.** One or two LESSONS can be gathered upon the very surface of this question. "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" The first lesson is, *we are not to look for salvation to one single act of faith in the past*, but to Jesus, in whom we continue to believe. I have read, very much to my grief, an assertion that whatever we may be, today, we are safe, if years ago we exercised a single act of faith. There may be truth in the statement, but it is so badly stated and so wretchedly distorted, that it looks like a lie—that which saves is a faith which does *not* spend itself in a single act, but continues to work and operate throughout the whole of life! It is not a question for me, today, "Did I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in the year 1850, on a certain morning in the month of January?"

Oh, no—the question is, "Do I believe in the Lord Jesus at this hour?" For if my faith is "faith of the operation of God," it has continued to this hour and will continue to the end! All my troubles, all my temptations, all my sins have not killed my faith, but for every day, as the day has come, I have continued to receive the Holy Spirit's gracious aid since I believed and was brought into newness of life. "The just shall *live* by faith." It is a principle within, springing up unto everlasting life! It is a living well which never ceases to flow. It is not something I do in one five minutes and then have done with it—it is an holy act which I began to do at a certain time, but which I shall never leave off doing till there remains nothing more to be believed!

They say we do not believe in Heaven, but this is surely an error occasioned by lack of thought. Heaven is a fit sphere for faith, not faith for what we shall see there, but for things promised and not yet fulfilled. If I

were to go to Heaven to-day, I would believe in my staying there; I would believe in the Lord's continuing to love me; I would believe in all the prophecies yet unfulfilled—in the ingathering of the redeemed, the perfecting of the Church—and the second Advent of the Lord. I would look for the resurrection, the new heavens and the new earth, the millennial glory, the binding of Satan and the eternal glory of the Triune God. Faith may be altogether lost in sight so far as things realized are concerned, but it will be grandly exercised upon blessings yet to come. We must live by faith, but it is not only our starting point, but the road along which we are to travel.

The next lesson of the text is that *we must continue to live by receiving*. We received Christ Jesus the Lord at the first, and now we receive the Holy Spirit. These disciples were questioned about their *receiving* rather than their expending, for at bottom everything depends upon what we *receive*. Nothing can come out of us if it does not first go *into* us. We are always charity children. It is our blessed lot to live upon the alms of Divine bounty. The question may still be asked of us, "What have you which you have not received?" We are always filled out of the fullness of the Lord, for we are not fountains but reservoirs, not creators but receivers! What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards us? We can only keep on receiving—take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord!

Again, let us learn that *we may not despise the very lowest form of spiritual life*—no, not even those who have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit. Paul, when he met these half-instructed disciples, did not say, "You see the door. Be off! You have nothing to do with me, for you are so desperately ignorant." On the contrary, he sat down and taught them more and then baptized them! God has some children who are mere babes and sucklings—and it is a fact for their comfort that He does not judge of their being His children by measuring their height. Babes in Grace are as much His children as those who have reached perfect manhood! Weaklings are dear to God—let them be dear to us. When you are considering some poor child of God who has no education and cannot read the Bible, do not judge him by his knowledge. The question is not whether he knows, "A" from "B," for if he knows, "J" from "I," he knows enough—that is to say, if he knows Jesus from himself, he has grasped the essential point. If He trusts Christ and not himself, he knows enough to take him to Heaven, and enough for you to take him into your heart.

Another lesson is that *the Holy Spirit always keeps sweet company with Jesus Christ*. As long as these good people only knew John the Baptist, they might know water baptism, but they could not know the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. It was only when they came to know Jesus, that the Spirit of God came upon them and they began to work those mighty things which are the fruits of the Spirit. Learn, then, to keep close to Christ both in your lives and in your teaching. The Spirit of God will not set His seal to what I say or what you say, but He *will* confirm the testimony of Jesus Christ! The things of God concerning Christ Jesus our Lord shall never be without the attesting power of the Holy Spirit.

Once more, *the Holy Spirit can yet be more fully possessed by all Believers*. If there should be a Brother or Sister here who has a notion that he cannot have any more Grace, I am afraid he is specially in need of it. The perfect Brother I must leave to the angels—he is above my reach, for I am sent to fallible men! I conceive that when a man is so good in his own esteem that he cannot be better, he is even then no better than he should be and is either cracked in his head or his honesty! However, I leave him to his own master. But as for you and for me, let us be certain that if we have been taught of the Spirit, there is yet more light for the Spirit to give us! If we have been quickened of the Spirit, there is yet more life for the Spirit to impart to us! If we have been comforted, there are greater consolations yet which the Spirit of God can apply to our hearts! If we have been made strong, we can be stronger, yet, to do yet greater exploits! If we have had communion with Christ, we can have closer communion and enter more thoroughly into the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High! If it can be, then why should it not be?

Does not every man or woman here that is a Christian say, “I mean to realize all the possibilities of true religion”? Little religion is a miserable thing. He that has just enough to save him, at last, may not have enough to comfort him for the present. He that has much Grace and is filled with the Spirit of God, shall have two heavens—a Heaven here and a Heaven hereafter! I desire to make that true in my own case. I would find two heavens in Jesus; are there not many more? He who has the Spirit richly shall have the joy of the Lord, here, to be his strength, and the joy of the Lord hereafter to be his reward! Come, let us ask for all that God is willing to give! Does He not say, “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it”? Come, you little ones! Why remain little?

Our prayer for you is that you may be as David and David as the angel of the Lord. Come! You are living on crumbs—why not eat abundantly of the Bread of Heaven? Do not be content with pennies, for a king’s ransom is at your disposal! Poor Brother, rise out of your poverty! Sister, bowed down by reason of the little of the Spirit of God you have received, believe for more and pray upon a larger scale! May the Lord enlarge all our hearts and fill them! And then enlarge them again and fill them again—so that from day to day we may receive the Holy Spirit till, at the last, Jesus shall receive us into His Glory.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—**

***Acts 18:24-28; 19:1-20.***

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—57, 448, 464.**

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# THE POWERFUL TRUTH OF GOD

## NO. 3518

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY JUNE 29, 1916.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 11, 1872.

*“Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together and burned them before all men and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed.”*  
*Acts 19:19, 20.*

IT should be very encouraging to us to hear of the triumphs of the Gospel in the olden times. It is not only a matter of interest as to history, but it is a matter of practical consolation for the present day, for the Gospel is just the same today as it was 1,800 years ago! If we preach the Gospel at all, it is the very same Gospel which Paul delivered. We may not have all of Paul's gifts, or all of Apollo's eloquence, but for all practical matters, the same preaching is with us that was with Paul—and we may, therefore, expect to see the same results! It may be imagined, however, that perhaps the population may have changed in character, but, believe me, it is not so. The Gospel of Jesus Christ was not intended for one century or two, but for all time. After all, men's hearts have not altered. The population of London is not at all unlike that of Ephesus. They may dress very differently and their language is not the same, and their customs may outwardly differ, but as in water, face answers to face, so the heart of man to man! One man's heart is like another man's, and the sinners of 1,800 years ago are very much like the sinners of today. If a man should come into London with the same Gospel with which Paul went into Ephesus, he has a Gospel adapted to London as assuredly as the Gospel was adapted to Ephesus. More than that, we have the same spirit resting upon the Gospel, now, as then! The power which rendered the Gospel saving in the olden times was not Paul's logic, or Apollo's eloquence—the saving power lay in the Holy Spirit accompanying the Divine Truth. Now the Spirit of God is not straitened. He is Divine. His arm is not shortened that He cannot save. He is just as able to make the Word of God the power of God unto salvation, today, as He was then! Yes, and I bless His name, He is doing it! He has been doing it lately in Madagascar, as an instance in far-off lands, and we have seen Him do it in our

very midst. We have known and conversed with multitudes who have been turned from darkness to light, from the slavery of Satan into the liberty of Christ by the power of the Gospel which Paul preached, which we, also, preach! When Paul and his two or three companions came into Ephesus, they were not one whit different from two or three Christians going into any city in the world with the view of evangelizing it! Of course, they had the gift of miracles, but we have other appliances which they had not. We have books which we can scatter far and wide—and we have an amount of religious liberty in almost every place which they did not possess. I do not think they stood on any vantage ground beyond ourselves, or, if they did, we can reach that same vantage ground—and we may expect that the God of Paul will work in London and elsewhere as he worked at Ephesus—if we know how to be as obedient to His Divine will and as earnest in our service to Him, as was that mighty Apostle of the Gentiles!

Our text suggests to me to speak to you upon three matters. The first is—it is said the Word of God grew, so we will begin by noticing that *in Ephesus the Word of God was planted*. It could not have grown if it had not been planted. Secondly *the Word of God grew*—we will watch it. And then there was the *Word of God prevailing over sin*, for it made men burn their foolish books of magic. To begin then—

### I. THE WORD OF GOD WAS PLANTED.

It is interesting to notice how it was planted in Ephesus. I read to you all about it and you noticed that when Paul first came there, there were a few persons that received him gladly. I suppose the Apostle went down into the Jews' quarter, for in all these cities there was a Jews' quarter, and he began to enquire a little and look about him—and he soon found there were some followers of John the Baptist there—about twelve. So he began with them. They were prepared ground, well plowed, ready for the Seed—so he instructed them a little further in the faith and they believed in the Lord Jesus. And they were baptized and became the nucleus, the first 12 with which to form a Christian Church. Go, servant of Christ, go where God sends you! There are some prepared of God to receive you. In the most barren country there are some pieces of soil that, like oases, are abundantly fertile! In any company of the most depraved of men there are some hearts made willing by God who will receive the Gospel at once! We must never think if God sends us upon what looks like hard ground, that it is as hard as it looks! It is our unbelief that is hard. If we conquer that, we shall be surprised to find that God has cleared the way for us and, perhaps, where we looked to find no friend, there shall be a chosen 12 who will be glad to receive us! I speak to you who go about serving Christ—I beseech you to be of good courage, for your Lord has prepared

some and made them ready for you! I feel tonight, when I preach the Gospel, that there are some who will hear it and say, "Ah, that suits me! I am guilty and I need a Savior." They have heard the Baptist preach of repentance, but they do not know yet what simple faith in Jesus is, and I am hoping that when they hear, tonight, that there is life in one look at the Crucified Savior, and that whoever trusts in Jesus will be saved, they will accept the good news with great gladness and will soon be numbered among the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. God grant it may be so!

But the Apostle found that *there was a great deal of stony ground at Ephesus*. The people did not all receive him, though 12 men did, and I suppose some women with them. Generally, I find more women receiving the Gospel than men, so I suppose he gathered at least 24 who had known John the Baptist and his preachers. But the rest of the people were not after this fashion. Well, Brothers and Sisters, why should they be? Is the servant of Christ to expect to find all men willing to receive him? They rejected Christ—shall they receive us? If the work which our Master sent us upon were all easy, where were the honor of it? He gives easy work to those who are weak, but if he endows us with His own power, of course He will give us difficulties to overcome! We must not, therefore, flinch because we are rejected by many, but just buckle on our harness and ask fresh strength from God and give ourselves to the work! Paul went down to the synagogue and the Jews allowed him to speak. After he had spoken, they began to dispute. He answered their questions. He persuaded them and it appears that a great number of them, after hearing his answers to their difficulties, and listening to his solemn persuasive appeals, were led to believe that Jesus was the Christ, and to trust in Him—and so were saved! Well, blessed be God, when we go to plant the Gospel anywhere we may expect to find some whose difficulties will speedily yield to further light, who, though at present they are prejudiced, will give up their prejudices when they understand more completely the Gospel. There may be—probably there are—some here, tonight, who do not quite know what the Gospel is, about which we say so much. And when they understand that it is just this, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became Man and suffered in the place of all who trust Him, in order that they might not suffer for their sins—when they understand that Truth of God, it may be they will say, "Well, that is just what I need—someone to stand in my place. Someone to be a Savior to me. I believe in the Son of God!" The preacher shall be right happy if he meets with such. Even though he should have to meet many of their objections and answer them, one by one, if at last they will be led to believe in Jesus by the power of His Spirit, happy shall the preacher be!

But it appears that there was a third class among those to whom Paul ministered, who, after all that he could say, were hardened. He gave them clear proof that Jesus was the Christ and he urged them to repent of sin. He persuaded them to believe in Jesus, but they were hardened the more by it—and they proved their hardness by this—that they spoke evil concerning this Way. Mostly when men will not submit to Christ, they try to find some fault. Perhaps they will slander the preacher, or the people of God, or they will misrepresent the Gospel, or they will catch up certain phrases and words and twist them, misrepresent them. Common enough, we grieve to say, is this among graceless hearers. What they will not receive themselves, they rail at. They are like a dog in a manger—they cannot eat the hay, so they lie there and bark! They won't enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and those who would enter, they hinder them if they possibly can. Even when they see the power of the Gospel upon others, they will turn it to ridicule. They wonder at the change that is worked, but they are filled with wrath against it and will not submit to Christ. However, Brothers and Sisters, though there will always be such as these, we are not to be cast down about it, for if we are ever able to say, as Paul was, "I am clear from the blood of all men," it will be no small thing to be able to say it, even if great numbers should reject the teaching which we present to them. I have often prayed that I might be able to say what George Fox, the first Quaker, said when he came to die. He said, "I am clear, I am clear, I am clear of the blood of all men." Oh, if we can only get to that, though Israel is not gathered, yet shall Christ be glorious in His Father's eyes, and Christ's servants shall be accepted in Him, too! We must always reckon that after the most diligent ministry, some will believe the Gospel, and some will not believe it at all. However, the Apostle Paul, though he was beset by those who despised him and lay in wait for his life, did not hesitate to preach the Gospel to all men, for we are told that it was known to all in Asia, both Jews and Greeks! He went on scattering his Seed—whether it fell on stony ground or among the thistles and thorns—that was no business of his! It was his to scatter the seed—it was God's business to make it fall in the right place! He that sows is responsible for the sowing, not for the reaping! If he does what his Master bids him, it is his Master's work to take care of the precious Seed and make it spring up—not the servant's.

I would exhort all here who love the Lord Jesus Christ to try to do what the Apostle did—*try to break up fresh ground and get fresh hearers*. The Gospel succeeded all the better in Ephesus because it was a new thing there. I believe I should have a better hope of conversions, tonight, if I were speaking to people who had never heard the Gospel before. For after long hearing the Gospel, men get accustomed to it—the most star-

ting warnings do not alarm—and the most wooing invitations do not attract! I should not have such attention as you are kind enough to give me, but perhaps here and there, where attention was given, the barbed arrows of Divine Truth would stick fast in true hearts, whereas in some now present it is almost hopeless work to speak, for it is not to know the Gospel that is needed with them—it is to have a heart to yield to it, a soul to give it due attention and a reverent, believing reception! May God grant that you may yet be saved! But my hope lies in my Brothers and Sisters in Christ breaking up fresh ground. Open little rooms, dear Friends, wherever you can, in every part of London! I have a great belief in cottage meetings to get to the poor. We ought to have, if we are a truly living Church, we shall have—little preaching rooms in every court and alley! And if men can't come here, or won't come here—and really, I see not how they can, for I do not perceive that there is room for any more—we must go and take the Gospel to them! And if I must tarry here with the thousands, go, my Brothers, to the tens, and twenties, and the people of London shall hear the Gospel, somehow, and we shall each be able to say, "I am clear of the blood of all men." We need more of the work of the Apostle in breaking up fresh ground! God stir us up to it and send us success in it! Thus I have spoken of the planting. Now to our second point—

## II. THE WORD OF GOD GREW.

A man drops an acorn into the ground, goes his way and forgets it. When he comes back 20 years later, he finds a very respectable tree! And if he could live to come back in a century, he might find a tree that seemed to cover acres with its outspread branches—all from a single acorn! We never know what will come of an attempt to do good. Paul steps into Ephesus with a friend or two, and finds 12 that come at his call—but before he has left Ephesus, what a stir the man has made! There was never such a shake given to a city as Paul gave to it! By the Grace of God, the Gospel grew! Let us notice how it grew.

First, *there was a Church formed* in Ephesus, which appears to have been a strong Church. You notice that the Elders of the church came to Miletus to Paul. There were many elders and I suppose the elders were in proportion to the people, so that there was a very large Church gathered there. This is delightful fruit, to find men made Believers—willing to be baptized on profession of their faith and then formed into Christian Churches. Paul had not labored in vain, for he had lit such a lamp in Ephesus as should not soon be put out! In addition, however, to the Church, a great many people in Ephesus had been impressed—perhaps not savingly, but they had been impressed, for they became the friends of Paul. At your leisure, will you read the rest of the Chapter? You will find

that a great mob gathered in the theater on one occasion, excited to great wrath against Paul—and Paul, like the little hero that he was—wanted to go right into the great amphitheater to address them, but some of his friends said, “No, no! You mustn’t do that! They’ll tear you to pieces.” Our brave little man felt that he would like to go and preach to them. He wanted to get a chance, if he could, of speaking the Word of God. There they were, all on stone seats, tier on tier—a great mass—much, I suppose, like the Coliseum at Rome, and he thought he must go in and talk to them! But it is said that “certain of the chief of Asia which were his friends” prevented his going in. The disciples would not, perhaps, have had influence with him, but these were men of rank and ability, who said, “We are not Christians, but we respect you, and we don’t want to see you torn to pieces by that wild rabble. Don’t go in”—and Paul did not go in. Now, where souls are saved, if the Gospel is truly preached, it will always have a great many friends, and these will, perhaps, serve a great turn at a pinch and in times of difficulty. And I am not sure but what these “chief of Asia” may, after all, some of them, have become Christians, for if a man does not want to be a Christian, it is a very dangerous thing to be friendly to Christ! When you come to mix up with God’s people and help them, and befriend them, it often happens that the Lord, in return for a cup of cold water that is given to a Prophet in the name of the Lord, gives the promised reward—and he who was but a friend becomes, at last, kith and kin with us and joins us! I am thankful to know there are those in this place who love the Gospel in a way, and would stand up for it and defend it—and delight to hear it preached—and though they are not yet saved, the Gospel is growing, for it has some effect on them! And they shall have our earnest prayers that they may not be outside buttresses of the Church, but may be built into the walls of it!

We love some of you because you are always ready to help and defend the faith after your way. Cast in your lot wholly with us, I pray you! Take for yourselves the precious privileges of the Gospel! May the Lord enable you! When we think of you, we feel like the Savior when He looked at the young man who had great possessions—it is said He loved him. But alas, the Savior also sorrowed for him when he went away! May we not have reason to sorrow for you who are so near to God, but lack the one thing necessary? May you find it and may you yet be brought in! That it grew, there was another proof, for even *the vilest and most wicked people in Ephesus knew about Jesus Christ*. How do I know that? Why, there were certain tramping vagabonds who came into Ephesus trying to deceive the people, pretending to heal by magic, and they knew about the Gospel. How? I am sure they did, because they said, “This name of Jesus is a very great name, and seems to have great power! We will try and sum-

mon spirits by it.” This was a villainous thing to do, yet it showed that the Gospel had got at them and reached them! I like to hear little children in the street singing delightful hymns about Jesus Christ, for it shows me that the Gospel has got at the very lowest strata of society—and those little children don’t hold their tongues when they are at home, depend upon it! It is very hard to make them hold their tongues anywhere. They have made father hear about “Jesus, meek and mild,” and I should not wonder if the consciences of some of the ungodly men of London were touched by the words of their little children! I heard Lord Shaftesbury say a very good thing the other day, and I agreed with him. He said that the little children of London were very weighty ones, and where a missionary could not go, the little children could and, clambering on their father’s knee, could sing the Gospel! And thus in many a house where there is a man who scorns to go to a Church or Chapel to hear the Gospel, a little child, who has just given his father a kiss, is singing to him—

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

Lord, bless the little preacher, and save the father’s soul! Who knows how many may be brought to Jesus so? It shows that the Gospel spreads when even the worst of men know something about Christ. Even though they use the Word to swear by, yet I am glad they know it. Though they put it to such a use as to try to be the devil’s servants, with Christ’s name on their lips, yet am I glad that the Kingdom of Heaven has come near unto them!

One other proof that the Gospel had come to Ephesus was this, that *it affected their trade*. A thing is pretty powerful when it begins to affect the trade of a town. Now in Ephesus there was a goddess called Diana. I have seen the thing at Rome. It is ugly enough, certainly, for anybody to worship. It is a female figure with a countless number of breasts, intended to signify the bounties of nature which she supplies to multitudes of men and beasts. Ugly and ill-formed, it was, nevertheless, greatly worshipped at Ephesus. It was set in a niche in a temple and generally covered with a curtain. This was drawn aside for worshippers and on particular festival days people came to Ephesus from all parts of the world, and very seldom did one of them go home without taking with him a small image of Diana. Some of them were made of wood for the poorer sort, but many were made of metal—copper, brass, silver and gold. Well, when Paul was preaching there during the third year, there was a time when the great festivals were held. Ephesus was not anything like so full as it had been—it might have been almost as full, but there were not so

many at the temple and, somehow, the shops hadn't sold the shrines so readily—had not sold anything like the usual quantity! And one great man had a factory and made many shrines, and he called his workpeople together and said, "Do you know, this year we have not sold as much as we did last year by 50 per cent? The fact is, you'll all be out of work. I can't keep you on full time. I can't sell the goods. Our trade is going to the dogs and it is all because of that fellow, Paul! He has been here three years, now, and he has turned the people to worship the Invisible God and they won't worship Diana." Well, these workpeople did not consider whether it was right or wrong, but it touched their pockets—and that is often a very powerful place in which to touch a man! They thought they might not have such good wages, by-and-by, so they rushed home and told other workmen that belonged to kindred trades. And then Demetrius came in and told them that Diana was being put aside by this Paul, who preached and turned away many people! And there was a great row and they rushed to the theater, but the Recorder of the city addressed them very wisely, and they dispersed. This showed the power of the Gospel—it began to affect trade.

I wish the Gospel would affect the trade of London! I wish it might. There are some trades that need affecting, need to be cut a little shorter. Oh, that God would so influence men that they were not given to bestial drunkenness as they are! That the money, which ought to go to their wives and children, might no longer be squandered in evil spirits that make *them* evil spirits! Would God that the New Cut would become a place where men might walk on Sunday. But not by an Act of Parliament! Let Acts of Parliament leave us alone! We can fight that battle alone. May it come to an end by the spread of the Gospel! We do not wish to see any break the Gospel Sabbath—it is a day of rest and worship—and we love to have it so. I have no faith in any reformation that does not come through men's hearts being changed. You may make them hypocrites, but you cannot make them right except by the Gospel coming into their very souls and taking possession of them! Plant it everywhere all over London, north and south, east and west, in every court, and street, and lane and, by the Grace of God, yet shall souls be saved and Churches formed, the wicked instructed and even trade, itself, will have to take its shape! A better shape than it now has—under the molding hand of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

But now I must go on to another point, and that is this. While the Word of God thus spreads, we ought to consider how it was. This great spread of the Gospel *was due to the work of the Holy Spirit*. Yes, that is quite correct! Let me say something else. This great spread of the Gospel *was due to the work of the Apostle Paul*. I know the Holy Spirit works, but

when He works, He makes us work! Find me one instance in Scripture where the Holy Spirit ever moved a city like Ephesus by a lazy, idle minister that read other people's sermons on Sunday—and did not care about the conversion of souls! I would like to meet with something of that kind, but I know I never shall. Where God works, He works with men that work! Notice those churches where the preacher says, "It is the Holy Spirit's work to seek souls, and God will have His own elect." Very true Doctrine! But mark those places where there is nothing on a Sunday but four or five Doctrines ground out as on a barrel organ, and the preacher does not care whether the people are lost or saved. Notice the people who seem to be fatalists, asleep in the belief that things are to be—where there is no Sunday school, no street preaching, no doing anything, no seeing whether God brings multitudes of souls to Him and whether He makes the population in their district tremble before His power! They get to be a miserable few, and they get some little Rehoboth (which they call Rehoboth), that is to say, a room—and it is a very little room, indeed—and they gradually decay and die out! And so it must be. We cannot save a soul and are powerless apart from the Spirit of God, yet wherever the Spirit of God is, He fills men with energy! He makes them earnest and intensely earnest!

I read to you about Paul. There was that dear good man working all the week, making tents in order that nobody might say he preached for what he could get. There he was making tents and he says yet every day he preached from house to house, and in the big schoolroom of one Tyrannus, and everywhere else night and day, and he wept over them, he says, "night and day with tears," and he prayed over them, and would not give them any rest unless they came to Christ! The man was always at it—he threw his whole soul into it—and a big soul it was, too! Oh, Beloved, if we are ever to see the Word blessed, and this great city saved, it will be by everyone of us being thoroughly awake in our Master's service! Oh, that the Lord would stir up all the ministers in London! I think that we have enough in number—if we had God's power resting upon all. Oh, for God's Jonah, who would, from end to end, proclaim a warning through the city! Oh, for one John the Baptist, who would preach, "Repent! for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." What if I said, Oh, for one Martin Luther, whose thundering voice should make men hear? Oh, for one George Whitefield, who, with uplifted hands, would cry, "The life to come! The life to come!" and make masses gather to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Pray for it, dear Friends. God won't save the world without men—He will use instruments until Christ comes! And while you pray for it, pray for yourselves, that each one of you may be in earnest, for, other things being equal, God will bless that people most who work most for

Him, pray most to Him, give most to Him, sacrifice most and are most obedient to His commands. God make us such!

Now the last point is this. The Gospel not only grew, but we are told in the text—

### III. THE WORD OF GOD PREVAILED OVER SIN.

We have an instance given of how it prevailed, to which I call your particular attention. Paul, in his preaching, it appears, was not at all like some who think they are very faithful when they abuse people. I daresay Paul, in his preaching, made the remark that God was not like unto images of silver and gold of man's making—but Paul never abused Diana. How do I know that? He never did, for the Town Clerk in the theater said, "These men are not robbers of churches, neither are they blasphemers of your goddess." Paul had just uttered the general Doctrine that idolatry was a great sin—he had not poured out a great torrent of abuse on Diana and all the rest! In the course of his preaching I daresay he had remarked that magic and sorcery were abominations, but Ephesus was very much given to sorcery. There were certain things called Ephesian letters, supposed to possess great magical power, sold at Ephesus. There are many stories which every reader of classic history knows, such as that of a wrestler who always used to win the day because he wore round his neck one of these charms—all lying stories—but they were freely believed! Most of the Ephesians believed that the letters written round the base of Diana possessed potent charms. Now Paul, though he was not preaching about this, was preaching the Gospel—yet the Gospel found out this particular sin and hit the nail on the head—and God worked with the Gospel, for when the seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, tried to practice magic and used the name of Christ, the evil spirit leaped on them and overcame them and would have slain them—and they were held up to ridicule. Now there is one thing about the Gospel in every place—it finds out the particular sin of that place and it is quite sure to expose it. I have frequently, in this congregation, made remarks without knowing anything about the persons present, and they have come and asked me who told me about them. It has happened scores of times that the Word has so minutely described the case of a hearer that he has felt convinced that the preacher must have been instructed about his case and told what to say—though in truth the preacher knew nothing about it, only the preacher's Master made his tongue to speak the Word so as to fit the case!

Now by Paul's preaching, and through the Providence of God, the people at Ephesus began to be convinced that the use of magic was a wicked and disgraceful thing—and many of them came forward and confessed that they had been guilty of it. They confessed it to the preacher.

They confessed it to the Church. They confessed it to the hearers. And when they had done this, they proved the honesty of their confession, for they brought out all their charms and magic books, and made a great fire of them all! Why didn't they sell them to somebody? They were worth so much money. Yes, but if they sold them, they would have done mischief to somebody else—the best thing was to destroy these vipers by burning them in the fire! Moreover, they showed their hatred of sin by burning the books, as they could not have done in any other way. And yet again, the burning of these books was a mighty sermon to everybody who saw it! “What is this you are burning? Why, that book is worth fifty pounds!” “Oh, it is a magic book and we have done with it. The child of God has nothing to do with such things, so we have burnt them.” That was a better sermon than even Paul, himself, could have preached upon this subject! Look at the loss the people sustained. I daresay many of them were poor. Two thousand pounds in those days was a much larger sum than it is now, but they lost it all cheerfully to get rid of the obnoxious books which once they had treasured in their houses! This is a triumph of the Gospel when men give up what they prize, and when they are willing to suffer great loss in order to get rid of great sin!

Now I want the Gospel to prevail like that in this congregation and all around. I don't suppose you are, any of you, so silly and foolish—I don't imagine there is anybody here so insane as to believe in any magic or fortunetelling, or anything of that sort. If you did, I might speak upon the subject and show how detestable such a superstition is! But I do not suppose there is any such person here. But perhaps you have got something else. Mark you, if you have got anything wrong, if the Gospel saves your soul, you will give it up! I remember a good woman who heard her minister preach a Gospel sermon in which he was showing how the Gospel made men give up their sin. When he saw her a week after, he said, “Well, I saw you at the sermon. What did you remember of it?” She said, “I had got a bushel at home that was not of fair size, and I remembered to burn it when I got home.” The best thing she could remember! And under William Dawson's sermon, a certain travelling peddler heard about being “weighed in the balances and found wanting,” and he took his yard stick and snapped it, and said, “I have done with it.” Oh, that everybody in trade might do that, and burn the unjust thing and have done with it! But have you been accustomed to the lascivious song, or those three-volume beasts that come out every now and then—I cannot call them by any other name—which some people delight to read? Have done with them! Put them away! What have you to do with them? You will have enough of temptation in your own mind without going after these things! Is there any habit, any practice, that you have got that defiles your soul?

If Christ loves you, and you come and trust in Him, you will make short work of it. Have done with it and have done with it forever!

Perhaps it is some bad practice by which you get your living. Is it the Sunday morning trade? Then, Sir, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and hope to be saved by Him, let those shutters never come down on another Sabbath! Say you, as those Ephesians did, “Cost us what it may, we will have nothing that grieves God. We will have nothing, however precious in money, that would damage our soul,” for, “what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?” I have often looked at that question, and I have thought it might be cut down a good deal. What? Shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world? Why, you won’t gain that! What would it profit you if you did, and lost your soul? But there are some people who gain only eighteen-pence on a Sunday! What shall it profit them if they gain eighteen-pence and lose their soul? It is miserable to think how cheap souls are! The devil buys souls in the gross, and can pay for them in coppers—men are so miserably ruined by small gains and small pleasures. Time was when he had to bait his trap with the world—now he can bait it with the smallest things. A smile, from some eyes will make men sell their souls, and a flattering word from some lips will make men cast away eternal blessedness! I pray God that you may be led to trust in Jesus Christ, alone, and find Him a Savior! And if you do, the next thing you will do will be to take a great broom and sweep out of your house all the obnoxious things that God hates, and you will say—

***“The dearest idol I have known,  
Whatever that idol be,  
Help me to tear it frown its throne,  
And worship only Thee.”***

You will say, “I am a Christian, and I will have done with these things.” God grant it may be so with many! No, with all of us, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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

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

# HUMILITY

## NO. 365

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 17, 1861.  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“Serving the Lord with all humility of mind.”  
Acts 20:19.***

IT is not often that a man may safely speak about his own humility. Humble men are mostly conscious of great pride while those who are boastful of humility have nothing but false pretense and really lack and want it. I question whether any of us are at all judges as to our pride or humility. Verily, pride so often assumes the shape of lowliness when it has its own end to serve and lowliness on the other hand is so perfectly compatible with a heavenly dignity of decision, that it is not easy at all times to discover which is the counterfeit and which is the precious and genuine coin.

You will remember that in the case in our text Paul speaks by inspiration. If it were not for this fact, I would not have believed even Paul himself when he spoke of his own humility. So distrustful do I feel of our judgment upon this point that if he had not spoken under the infallible witness and guidance of the Holy Spirit, I should have said that the text was not true. When a *man* says he serves God with humbleness of mind, speaking merely from his own judgment, there is clear proof before you that he is a proud man.

But Paul speaks not to his own commendation, but with the sole motive of clearing his hands of the blood of all men. Led, no doubt, by the Holy Spirit thus to speak—that he might be an example to all coming ages—he becomes the mirror to all the ministers of Christ that we, too, each of us in our degree serving the Lord—may without degree be filled with humility, taking the lowest seat, not esteeming ourselves beyond what we ought to think. We must submit ourselves to men of low estate—emptying out ourselves as He did who emptied Himself of all His glory, when He came to save our souls.

I shall take the text this morning and shall speak of it as the Lord shall please to help me in my weakness. First, I shall speak *of the comprehensiveness of humility*. You notice the text says, “Serving the Lord with *all* humility.” Secondly, I shall speak *upon the trials to which our humility will be subjected*. And thirdly, *upon the arguments by which we ought to support it*, to generate it and to sustain it in our souls. And then, fourthly, I shall show forth *some practical effects of humility*, and urge you to show them forth with me in our daily lives.

**I. First then, the COMPREHENSIVENESS OF HUMILITY.**

It is a somewhat striking expression. It is not merely serving the Lord with humility but serving the Lord with *all* humility. There are many sorts of pride. Perhaps while I am running over the list, you will be able, by looking at the contrast, to see that there must be also many kinds of humility.

There is the pride of the *heretic* who will utter false doctrines because he thinks his own judgment to be better than the Word of God. Never content to sit like a child to believe what he is told, he is a disputant but not a disciple. He will insist upon it that his own reason is to be the well-spring of his own beliefs and he will receive nothing beyond his own reach. Now Paul never had the heretic's pride. He could say, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." No, so willing was he to sit at the feet of Jesus that he counted all the learning which he had received before he sat at the feet of Jesus to be of no value. He spoke not with the wisdom of chords nor with human learning, but with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power.

There is next the pride of the *Roman Catholic*, who attaches merit to his own works and hopes to win Heaven as the reward of his own doings. From this Paul was totally free. He had humility which is the very contrast of it. Often did he say, when speaking of himself, "yet not I, but Christ." He learnt to count his righteousness as filthy rags and all his former doings were to him but dross and dung that he might win Christ and be found in Him.

Next there is the pride of the *curious*. The man who is not content with simplicities but must pry into mysteries. He would, if he could, climb to the Eternal Throne and read between those folded leaves and break the seven seals of the mysterious book of destiny. You know well our Apostle has many things in his writings which are hard to be understood yet he uttered them because of the Spirit. You never meet with any attempt in the Apostle's writing—as you do in the preaching of some ministers and as you do in the conversation of some professors—to reconcile predestination with free will.

He was quite content to preach to men as free agents and exhort them to repent—quite willing to speak of God as working in us to will and do of His good pleasure, while we also work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Paul was never curious to find out where the lines of Truth met. He was perfectly content to take his doctrine from his Master's spirit and leave the old wives' fables and endless genealogies and disputes and question, to those who had no better guests to entertain.

Again—there is the pride of the *persecutor*. The man who is not content with his own notions but would hunt to death another. The pride which suggests that I am infallible and that if any man should differ from me—the stake and the rack would be the due deserts of so great a sin against so great a person as myself. Now the Apostle acted towards those who differed with him with the greatest wisdom and kindness. And though full often he was beaten with rods, or subjected to false brethren and hauled before the magistrates, I think he had none of the spirit of Elijah that would

bring down fire from Heaven upon any man. He was kind and had that charity which suffers long and hopes all things and endures all things and believes all things. In this, too, you have an instance of *all* humility. He had the humility of a man of generous spirit.

And there is the pride of the *impenitent* man who will not yield to God. He says, "I am free. I was never under dominion to any. My neck has never felt the rein, my jaw has never felt the bit." Not so our Apostle. He was ever humble, teachable and filled even to sorrowfulness with a sense of his own unworthiness. "Oh, wretched man that I am," said he, "who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Far enough was he from rebellion against the Most High God—he would sit at the feet of Christ and learn, yes, and he would lie at the foot of the Throne in dust and ashes and confess himself to be the very chief of sinners and less than the least of all the saints.

I think you will very soon learn from the contrast I have presented to you what the Apostle meant when he said, "in *all* humility." There are many sorts of pride. There are many sorts of humility, too. The Apostle had them all, or rather they were blended together in a sweet mixture in his daily preaching and conversation. I hope this morning to give you a clearer view of the comprehensiveness of humility and so I will put it to you in another shape.

Some of the old writers, who like to use terms to sound very much alike, say, There is a *proposed* humility, or humility before the service of God. There is an *opposed* humility, or humility during the service of God which continues under trial. And there is, thirdly, an *imposed* humility, when the soul, conscious of sin during the act, imposes upon itself the task of bending before God and offering repentance for its sin. Not caring much for these terms, because I think that old writers went out of their way to make them, I will be content with the substance.

There is humility *before* serving God. When a man lacks this he proposes to himself his own honor and his own esteem in serving God. How easy is it for us to preach a sermon, having our eye upon our hearers, hoping that they will be satisfied with us and will say, "He spoke right well—the man is an orator: he is eloquent." Yes and how easy it is to propose to please yourself so that you may be able to say as you come down from the rostrum, "I have not failed today in my own judgment and I am satisfied with myself."

This is pride before service and it will mar everything. If we do not come to God's altar humbly, we cannot come acceptably. Whether we preach or pray, or give alms, or whatsoever we do, it is needful that we bend exceedingly low before we enter upon the work. For if not, self-seeking and self-glorifying will lie at the bottom of all and God neither can nor will accept us.

Look at too many Christians! How little of that *humility before service* they have. They will pick that position in the Church which will give them most honor and if there is work to do which will confer no position upon them, they leave that to others. If you require a man to occupy an honor-

able position in the Church, you can find scores. But if you need one who shall be a menial in the house of God, who shall be the least in God's heritage, how difficult to find one!

We are so pleased with the glitter of publicity and the glory of man's esteem that I doubt not that in us all there is time of choosing our position for the honor's sake, rather than for God's sake. But it never was so with the Apostle Paul. I think I see him now, working long past midnight making his tents, taking stitch after stitch with his needle through the hard canvas, working away to provide for his own individual needs, because an ungracious people held back the laborer's reward. Then I see that tent maker going into the pulpit with his hands all blistered with his hard work, as rough as a laborer's hands.

You would say of him at once, in getting up to speak, *that* man never proposes to himself the praises of his hearers. He is not like the Grecian orator who will go anywhere to get applause, turn aside to tell any tale, or to preach anything if he can but excite his audience to say, "He is an orator. Let us write him down among the great names, let us put the crown upon his head and celebrate him through the midst of Greece as being the golden-mouthed man who can speak right mightily, as if the bees of Hybla had hived their honey upon his lips." Never could you see that in Paul. You could discover at once that his solitary aim was to win souls and so to glorify Christ. Let us labor after this as a part of *all* humility.

But again—there is in the next place *humility during the act*. When a man finds that God is with him, he may be base enough to glorify himself. He may have been very humble, indeed, when he began the battle but there is one enemy there at his feet and another has just been dashed down by a blow from his right hand. The Evil One whispers in his ear, "You have done well. You are doing well." And then pride comes in and spoils all. That is a splendid Psalm which begins, "Not unto us." David thought it needful to say it twice. "Not unto us, O Lord! Not unto us." Then he deals the deathblow with the other sentence, "but unto Your name be all the glory."

To sing that song when you are trampling on your foes—to sing that song when you are reaping the great harvest. To sing that song when God's people are fed under your ministry. To sing that when you are going on from strength to strength, conquering and to conquer, will prove a healthy state of heart. Nothing but the most extraordinary grace can keep us in our right position while we are serving God and God is honoring us. We are so inclined to steal His jewels from the crown to put them on our own breasts if we would not steal the diadem itself. Yet we look with longing eyes upon it as if we would like to wear it if but a single moment.

I have thought, sometimes, how many Christians are like the son of Henry the Fourth who when his father lies asleep puts the crown on his head. You and I have done the same—we have forgotten God—He was to us as one that sleeps and we began to put the crown on our own head. Oh, fools that we were! Our time for crown-wearing has not come. We do but anger our Father and bring grief into our spirits when we think of

crowning ourselves instead of crowning Him or worshipping our own image instead of bending before the Lord God Jehovah.

Christian men and women and especially you, O my own Soul, let us take heed that while serving God we serve Him as the angels do who cover their faces and cover their feet while they fly upon His errands.

Then there is another kind of humility to make up all—*humility after the service is done*. In looking back upon success achieved, upon heights attained, upon efforts which have been blest, it is so easy to say, “My right hand and my mighty arm have gotten me the victory.” Men generally allow their fellow-creatures some little congratulation. Can a man congratulate you without admitting that you may congratulate yourself?

Now there is respect and honor to be given to the man of God who has served his race and his Master. By all manner of means let the names of Luther and Calvin and Zwingli be held in honor. Has not God Himself said it?—“The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.” It were wrong in us if we did not honor God’s servants, for it would seem as if we dishonored the Master. But it will never do for the servant of God to honor himself.

After his work is done he must lay his head upon his death-pillow, saying, “I am not worthy of the least of all Your mercies! What am I and what is my father’s house that You have brought me here? I am, having done all, but an unprofitable servant. I have not even done so much as it was my duty to have done.” Sabbath-School teachers, tract distributors, visitors of the sick, you that feed the hungry and clothe the naked—specially you deacons and elders, ministers of the church—see to it that never when your work is done you speak of yourselves or of your work. No. Your brethren, even if you speak in apparently humble terms, will soon find when you talk much of what you do that you are proud of it.

You may think that you have misled them, but you certainly have not, much less have you deceived your God. Take care that you put your finger on your own beauty. When you are painting another man, imitate Apelles who drew Alexander with his finger upon the sear. But when you are painting *yourself*, put your finger over your choice beauty—for depend upon it that the hiding finger of your modesty will be more beautiful than the beauty you conceal. Labor, then, for God’s sake, for the Church’s sake, for your own sake to serve the Lord with all humility—humility before the act, humility during the service and humility when all is done—“Serving the Lord with all humility of mind.”

**II.** But, secondly, the TRIALS OF HUMILITY, or the dangers through which humility has to pass.

And first and foremost one of the trials to which humility will be exposed is the possession of great ability. When a man has seven talents he must recollect that he has seven burdens and he that has ten, if he has more than others, should feel that he has ten times any other man’s burden of responsibility and therefore he should be bowed down. Let a man feel that he possesses more power than another, more eloquence, more

mental acumen, more learning, more imagination and he is so apt to sit down and say, "I am something. I am somebody in the Church."

Yes, one may speak indeed with solemnity here. It is so ridiculous for us ever to boast of any talents which God has given us. It is as though the debtor in the jail should say, "I am a better man than you for I am in debt ten thousand pounds and you only a hundred." The more we *have* the more we *owe* and how can there be any ground for boasting there? A man might as well be proud because he is six feet high, while another is only five feet six inches, as be proud that he has ten talents while another has only five. We are what God has made us, so far as gifts are concerned.

If the Lord said to Moses, "Who has made man's mouth?" because Moses said he was of stammering speech, you may say that to yourselves if you can speak well. Or if you act well, "Who has made man's arm?" Or if you think well, "Who has made man's brain?" The honor never can be to the *thing* itself, but to that Mighty One *who made it* what it is. Great talents make it hard for a man to maintain humility. Shall I surprise you when I say that little talents have precisely the same effect? I have seen in my short time some of the biggest men I ever set my eyes upon who were the smallest insects that were ever subjected to the microscope.

Some great men in the pulpit, too—stately, dignified, magnificent, majestic—men of whom a fortune could have been made outright if you could but have bought them at their proper value and sold them out at what in their opinion they were worth. Men who were only fit to be bishops—they never could have been the inferior clergy—a curate's place would have been utterly insignificant. To have been a tent-maker or an ordinary preacher like Paul would have been far beneath their level. They always have the idea that they were born on a very fortunate day and that the world owes them the utmost consideration and respect merely for their doing human beings the honor of living in the midst of them, though there is nothing very much they have ever done.

Now little talents often make a man proud. "There," says he, "I have but a trifle in the world, I must make a flare with it. I have but one ring and I will always put the finger that wears that outwards so that it may be seen." It is a very common habit of all people who wear rings to keep the fingers on which they wear them always exposed to view, especially if they have only one ring. If a man has no gold in his pocket he is sure to put on gold shirt-studs. And if a man has scarce any wealth at all, he is sure to put it on his back, because he must keep up a position and that position never having been his rightful position, he is obliged to maintain at great cost.

Now if you have little talents and feel you have, do not swell and burst with envy. The frog was never contemptible as a frog, but when he tried to blow himself out to the size of the bullock in the meadow, then he was contemptible, indeed. I have frequently had this observation made to me in the most pompous manner by some little minister, "Oh, Sir, I feel the danger of your position and I always make it a matter of prayer to God that you may be kept humble." I am exceedingly obliged to the gentleman,

but I am sure I could make it a matter of prayer for him that he might be made humble once in his life by way of a change—for he has never yet known what humility is so far as he was personally concerned.

Now you know very well that it is just as easy for a man to be proud in his rags as my lord mayor in his gold chain. There is many a proud one riding in his little cart quite as vain as my lord who rides in a gilded coach. Indeed, I dare say he, the last one, feels very little pride, but very great shame at having to make himself so ridiculous. You may be a king and yet be humble. You may be a beggar and yet be proud. You may be great and yet little in your own esteem. You may be little and yet you may be greater in your estimation than those who are the greatest. See to it, then, that your low estate does not make you proud any more than your high estate.

Again—success often has a very sorry influence upon humility. The man was humble before his God till God had given him the great victory over the Moabites. But then his heart was lifted up within him and the Lord forsook him. When he was little in Israel, he bowed before the Most High. When he became great, he exalted himself. Great success is like a full cup, it is hard to hold it with a steady hand. As his swimming in deep waters—there is always a fear of being drowned. It is standing on the top of the pinnacle of the temple and Satan often says, “Cast yourself down.”

But on the other hand, want of success has just the same tendency. Have you not seen the man who could not get a congregation and who insisted that it was because he was a better preacher than the man who did? I read sometimes a magazine, the doctrine of which is this—if you want to be a good preacher, you must preach according to the outlines which are given you in this magazine. There are some who do this, but still find their chapels empty. Then says the magazine with all complacency—“The men that get the congregations are always the weakest men. They are always the men that have the least mental power, while we who have but a few, a mere handful—we are the intellectual people.”

“The mob always will,” they say, “run after the foolish men.” So that the brother who gets no success, comforts himself with this thought—that Providence is quite wrong and that the Christian public are quite mistaken that *he* ought to be, if things had been right, the most popular man living and that it is quite a mistake he is not. Now, want of success has a very great influence on some men to make them feel, “Well, if I cannot succeed in getting other people to think me somebody, I will think everybody else nobody and I will elevate myself above them all in my own opinion.”

Now, I am speaking some home-truths. I have received a deal of advice myself and I think I may sometimes take the liberty of giving it to others. I hope that those who are always thinking of success as certainly involving pride may also take to themselves the comfortable reflection that their non-success suggesting as it may very bitter thoughts about their Brethren, may also be pride only in another direction.

But then, again—long enjoyment of the Master’s presence has a tendency to make us proud. To walk all day in the sunlight brings us in danger of a sun-stroke. Better not sit too near the fire or one may get scorched. If we have nothing but full assurance, we may come to be presumptuous. There is nothing like the heat of summer to breed putrefaction. When you have long-continued joys, fear and tremble for all the goodness of God. But on the other hand, long-continued doubts will breed pride. When a man has long been doubting his God and mistrusting His promise, what is that but pride? He wants to be somebody and something. He is not willing to believe his God in the dark—he thinks, in fact, that God deals harshly with him, in allowing him to be in despondency at all.

He thinks he always ought to have joy and satisfaction and so it comes to pass that his doubts and fears are as ready parents of pride as assurance could have been. In fact, to cut short a very long story, for I might go on with these two sides of the question all the morning, there is not a position in the world where a man cannot be humble if he has *grace*. There is not a station under Heaven where a man will not be proud if left to *himself*. I pray you, never think that leaving one station and getting into another will be any help to your humility. ‘Tis true the peasant boy in the valley of humiliation sang—

**“He that is down need fear no fall  
He that is low no pride,  
He that is humble ever shall  
Have God to be his guide.”**

But I dare say that very same boy was sometimes singing in that very valley songs of despondency, Psalms of pride and wicked rebellion against his God. It is not the *place*, it is the *heart*. It is not the *position*, but the *grace*. That man is as safe on a pinnacle as on level ground, if God holds him up and he is as much in danger in the valley as he is upon the high place if God is not with him. If the Lord forsakes him he will fall in either place. If the Lord is with him, he will stand in every position. I have thus hinted at some of the dangers to which humility is exposed.

**III.** And now, thirdly, SOME OF THE ARGUMENTS BY WHICH WE OUGHT TO BE PROVOKED TO HUMILITY OF SPIRIT.

First, let us draw some arguments *from ourselves*. What am I that I should be proud? I am a man, that is to say, a worm. A thing that is and is not. An angel—how much he surpasses me and yet the Lord charged His angels with folly and the heavens were not pure in His sight. How much less, then, should the son of man, a creature full of sin, lift himself up and exalt himself as though he were something? Verily, man at his best estate is altogether vanity, his life a dream, an empty show. Oh, vain man, why should *you* be proud?

Think of our mortality. In a few more years we shall be worm’s meat. Caesar’s dust shall be eaten, eaten by the most base of creatures. Take up the skull of some departed one in your hand and say, “What had this man to be proud of?” Go to some charnel house and mark the corruption. Look on some body which has been buried but a little while—what a heap of

loathsomeness! And yet you and I carry about with us the elements of all that putridity—the food of all that rottenness. How then dare we be proud?

I have at home a picture which is so admirably managed that when you look closely at it you see two little children in the bloom of youth at play, enjoying each other's company. If you go some distance from the picture, the outlines get more and more indistinct and standing some few yards away from it, it turns into death's head, with vacant, empty eyes and the bones of the skull and the jaws—a perfect death's head.

Now this is just ourselves. When we are looking with our poor short-sight of time we look like fair beings that are full of life. But stand at a Scriptural distance and view these things and you soon perceive that we are nothing, after all, but death's heads. What right, then, have we to be proud? Begin not to be proud, Man, till your life is secure and you know that will never be. You bubble, boast not of the many colors you have—you shall burst directly. You glorious rainbow, exalt not yourself because of your varied hues. When the sun withdraws his light or the cloud removes, you are gone.

Oh, you fleecy cloud that are so soon to burst on the earth and be dissipated forever—think not of yourself and your fleecy glories—for you shall soon depart and be gone. Every time your humility gives way and your pride lifts up its head, remember that you are mortal and the skeleton may teach you humility.

But there is yet a stronger argument than this. What are you but depraved creatures? When the child of God is at his best he is no better than a sinner at his worst, except so far as God has made him to differ. "There goes John Bradford—but for the grace of God." No, there goes Paul to curse—if *not* for the grace of God. There goes Peter to be a Judas—unless Christ shall pray for him that his faith fail not. A sinner saved by grace and yet proud! Out on such impudence! God pardon us and deliver us from that evil.

But, then, let us remember we are not only depraved so that we are *inclined* to sin but we *have sinned* and how can we then be proud? Sinners whose highest deservings are the wrath of God and the hot flames of Hell—how can we venture for a single moment to stand as those who had done anything meritorious or could claim anything of our God? Verily, you and I may stand up today and say, "What is man that You should be mindful of him, or the son of man that You visit him?" The more we think of ourselves, if guided by God's Spirit, the more reasons we shall find for "Serving God with all humility."

**2.** But there are not only reasons in ourselves, there are reasons *in Christ*. Our Master was never exalted above measure. You never detect in Him one proud or scornful glance upon the meanest of the mean or the vilest of the vile. He condescended to men of low estate, but it did not look like condescension in Him. He did it in such a way that there was not the appearance of stooping. He was always on their level in His heart. He ate

and drank and sat with publicans and sinners and all in such an easy, happy spirit, that no man said of him, “See how he stoops.”

Everyone felt that stooping was His natural attitude. That He could not stand up and be proud. It would be unbecoming in Him. “And shall the servant be above his Master, or the disciple above his Lord?” You that are purse-proud, or talent-proud, or beauty-proud, I beseech you, think how unlike you are to the Master. There was nothing in Him that would keep man back *from* Him, but everything that would draw them *to* Him. “He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a servant and being in fashion as a man, He became obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross.”

Look at that strange sight and never be proud again. There is the God of Heaven and with the basin in His hand and the towel on His arms—He is washing His disciple’s feet. And here are you and I, instead of washing other men’s feet, we want them to anoint our heads and pour on the balmy cordial of a flattering unction. All so that we may say of ourselves, “I am rich and increased in goods.” Whereas by that very desire we prove ourselves to be naked and poor and miserable. By the love of Christ, then, let us seek to be humble.

**3.** There is yet one other source for arguments, though of course there are so many that I could not mention them all and that is God’s goodness towards us, which should make us exceedingly humble. You remember that text which says, “Put on therefore as the elect of God, hearts of compassion and humbleness of mind.” Now I have known some who believing that they were the elect of God have put on haughtiness of looks. You know the school I allude to. Certain gentlemen who are the elect and nobody can ever come near to them. All other Christian people, if saved, which is a great question with them, will at least be saved so as by fire.

Verily they appear to read the text thus—“Put on as the elect of God, pride and self-conceit.” Like another text which says, “See that you love one another with a pure heart *fervently*,” which I think some people read the wrong way upwards and they make it out, “See that you *hate* one another with a pure heart *fervently*.” And oh, how fervently they have done it! How fervently they have hated one another! Now the mercy of God in having elected us—the mercy of God in having bought us with the precious blood of Jesus Christ—should tend to keep us very low in the dust of self-abasement.—

**“What was there in you that could merit esteem,  
Or give the Creator delight?”**

What was there in you that Christ should buy you with His precious blood? What in you that you should be made the temple of the Holy Spirit! What is there in you that you should be brought to Heaven? That you should be made to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob at the right hand of God? What if you have been grafted into the good olive tree? Remember you were once branches of the wild olive and you are now nothing but grafts. What if your branch hangs down with the weight of its produce? There was a time when it brought forth nothing but the apples

of Sodom and the grapes of Gomorrah! Bless God and thank Him that the root bears you, but you bear not the root.

What have you that you have not received? Who made you to differ? Your very gifts are given you by electing love. God gave them not because you deserved them, but because He chose to do so. He has made you a vessel unto honor, chastened you and made you in a fair and goodly mold—made you a fair vase—showing forth the skill of the Master. But who made you, who made you? Look back to that clay pit. Look back to the potter's house, to the fashioning fingers and the revolving wheel and surely you will say, "My God, unto You be the praise for what I am, but of myself I am less than nothing. I am worthless and useless. Unto You be all the glory."

**IV.** I shall now come to my last point, upon which, with excessive brevity, I would speak to myself. Indeed, I have been all the morning speaking to myself as much as to you.

I have now a story suggested to me. There was an excellent lady who accosted me one day and told me that she had always prayed that I might be kept humble. Of course I was excessively grateful to her, although it was a very usual thing, so I said to her, "But do you not need to pray the same prayer for yourself?" "Oh, no," she said, "there is no necessity. I do not think there is any tendency in me to be proud." Well, I assured the good lady that I thought it was necessary for her to pray always, for as sure as ever she thought she had no tendency to be proud, that proved at once that she was proud already. We are never, never so much in danger of being proud as when we think we are humble.

Well, now, let us turn to practical account what I have said. You and I have a great work before us. I speak now specially to my Church and congregation. We are about to enter into a large edifice, having large designs in our hearts and hoping that God will give us large success. Let us have humble motives in all this. I hope we have not built that house that we may say with Nebuchadnezzar, "Behold this great Babylon which I have built." We must not go to our pulpit and to our pews with this soft note ringing in our ears. "Here will I make unto myself my nest and gain a great name." "Here will be members of the largest Baptist church to receive a part of the honor which is bestowed upon the success of the ministry."

No. Let us go into that house wondering at what God has done for us. Marveling that God should give such grace to such a church and that it should have such innumerable conversions in its midst. Then, when we have settled upon our work, when we see that God is blessing us, let us still keep very low before Him. If we want to lose God's Presence it can soon be done. Pride can shut the door in the face of Christ. Only let us take out our tablets and write down, "God is for me, therefore let me be proud"—only let us say with Jehu—"Come and I will show you my zeal for the Lord of Hosts," and God's presence will soon depart from us and Ichabod be written on the fore-front of the habitation.

And let me say to those of you who have already done much for Christ as Evangelists, ministers, teachers, or what not—do not sit down and congratulate yourselves. Let us go home and think of all the mistakes we have made, all the errors we have committed and all the follies into which we have been betrayed and I think instead of self-congratulations we shall say, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes sees You, therefore do I abhor myself in dust and ashes.”

Let us humble ourselves before God. You know there is a deal of difference between being humble and being humbled. He that will not be humble shall be humbled. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God and He shall lift you up, lest He leave you because you hold your head so high. And should I be addressing any here this morning who are very much exalted by the nobility of rank, who have what the poet calls—

***“The pride of heraldry,  
The pomp of power,”***

be humble, I pray you. If any man would have friends, let him be humble. Humility never did any man any hurt. If you stoop down when you pass through a doorway, if it should be a high one, you will not be hurt by stooping. You might have knocked your head if you had held it up.

He who is willing to be nothing will soon find someone who will make him something, but if he will be something he shall be nothing and all men will try to make him less than nothing. Go then, I pray you, as Christian men and women, speak with the poor and needy. Be kind and affectionate towards all men. Let your Christian life suggest Christian courtesy and Christian charity.

As for you who have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is useless to recommend you to humility, for how can you get the flower till you have the root? Begin, I pray you, with the root. This is the root of every Christian grace—faith in Christ. Come to Jesus today as you are. Trust Him with your poor, guilty soul. Believe Him to be both willing and able to save you. Repose your confidence in Him alone. You will then be saved and being saved with such a salvation, you will bring forth humility as one of the sweet fruits of the Spirit of God and your end shall be everlasting life, by the grace of God.

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

# **TWO ESSENTIAL THINGS**

## **NO. 2073**

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MARCH 3, 1889,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON**

***“Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God,  
and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”  
Acts 20:21.***

THIS was the practical drift of Paul's teaching at Ephesus and everywhere else. He kept back nothing which was profitable to them. And the main profit he expected them to derive from his teaching the whole counsel of God was this—that they should have “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” This was the great aim of the Apostle. I pray that it may be so with all of us who are teachers of the Word—may we never be satisfied if we only interest, please, or dazzle. But may we long for the immediate production by the Spirit of God, of true repentance and faith.

Old Mr. Dodd, one of the quaintest of the Puritans, was called by some people, “Old Mr. Faith and Repentance,” because he was always insisting upon these two things. Philip Henry, remarking upon his name, writes somewhat to this effect—“As for Mr. Dodd's abundant preaching repentance and faith, I admire him for it. For if I die in the pulpit, I desire to die preaching repentance and faith. And if I die out of the pulpit, I desire to die practicing repentance and faith.” Someone remarked to Mr. Richard Cecil that he had preached very largely upon faith. But that good clergyman assured him that if he could rise from his dying bed and preach again, he would dwell still more upon that subject. No themes can exceed in importance repentance and faith and these need to be brought very frequently before the minds of our congregations.

Paul testified concerning “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,” by which I understand that as an ambassador for Christ, he assured the people that through repentance and faith they would receive salvation. He taught in God's name mercy through the atoning sacrifice to all who would quit their sin and follow the Lord Jesus. With many tears he added his own personal testimony to his official statement. He could truly say, “I have repented and I do repent.” And he could add, “but I believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior. I am resting upon the one foundation, trusting alone in the Crucified.”

His official testimony, with its solemnity and his personal testimony, with its pathetic earnestness, made up a very weighty witness-bearing on the behalf of these two points—repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved Friends, we cannot at this time do without either of these any more than could the Greeks and Jews. They are essen-

tial to salvation. Some things *may* be, but these *must* be. Certain things are needful to the well-being of a Christian but these things are essential to the very being of a Christian.

If you have not repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, you have no part nor lot in this matter. Repentance and faith must go together to complete each other. I compare them to a door and its post. Repentance is the door which shuts out sin, but faith is the post upon which its hinges are fixed. A door without a doorpost to hang upon is not a door at all—while a doorpost without the door hanging to it is of no value whatever. What God has joined together let no man put asunder. And these two He has made inseparable—repentance and faith.

I desire to preach in such a way that you shall see and feel that repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ are the two things which you must have. But even then I fail unless you obtain them. May the Holy Spirit plant both these precious things in our hearts. And if they are already planted there, may He nourish them and bring them to much greater perfection.

**I.** Let me observe, in the first place, that THERE IS A REPENTANCE WHICH IS NOT TOWARD GOD. Discriminate this morning. Paul did not merely preach repentance but repentance toward God. And there is a repentance which is fatally faulty, because it is not toward God.

In some there is a repentance of sin which is produced by a sense of shame. The evildoers are found out and indignant words are spoken about them—they are ashamed and they are repentant, because they have dishonored themselves. If they had not been found out, in all probability they would have continued comfortably in the sin and even have gone further on in it. They are grieved at having been discovered. And they are sorry, very sorry, because they are judged and condemned by their fellows. It is not the evil which troubles them, but the dragging of it to light. It is said that among Orientals it is not considered wrong to lie but it is considered a very great fault to lie so blunderingly as to be caught at it.

Many who profess regret for having done wrong are not sorry for the sin itself, but they are affected by the opinion of their fellow men and by the remarks that are made concerning their offense, and so they hang their heads. Truly, it is something in their favor that they can blush. It is a mercy that they have so much sense left as to be afraid of the observation of their fellows. For some have lost even this sense of shame. But shame is *not* evangelical repentance. And a man may go to Hell with a blush on his face as surely as if he had the brazen forehead of a shameless woman. Do not mistake a little natural fluttering of the heart and blushing of the face on account of being found out in sin for true repentance.

Some, again, have a repentance which consists in grief because of the painful consequences of sin. The man who has been a spendthrift, a gambler, a profligate—and his money is gone—repents that he has played the fool. Another has been indulging the passions of his corrupt nature and he finds himself suffering for it—therefore he repents of his wickedness. There are many cases that I need not mention here in which sin comes

home very quickly to men. Certain sins bear fruit speedily—their harvest is reaped soon after the seed is sown. Then a man says he is sorry and he gives up the sin for a time. Not because he dislikes it, but because he sees that it is ruining him—as sailors in a storm cast overboard the cargo of the ship—not because they are weary of it but because the vessel will go to the bottom if they retain it. This is regret for consequences, not sorrow for sin.

Ah, look at the drunkard, how penitent he is in the morning! “Who has woe? Who has redness of the eyes?” But he will get a hair of the dog’s tail that bit him—he will be at his cups again before long. He repents of the headache and not of the drink. The dog will return to his vomit. There is no repentance which only consists of being sorry because one is smarting under the consequences of sin. Every murderer regrets his crime when he hears the hammers going that knock the scaffold together for his hanging. This is not the repentance which the Spirit of God works in a soul. It is only such a repentance as a dog may have when he has stolen meat and is whipped for his pains. It is repentance of so low a sort that it can never be acceptable in the sight of God.

Some, again, exhibit a repentance which consists entirely of horror at the future punishment of sin. This fear is healthful in many ways and we can by no means dispense with it. I do not wonder that a man who has lived as a liar, a forger or a perjurer, should, in the hour of his discovery, put an end to his life. If he accepts modern theology, he has escaped, by this means, from the hand of justice—the little pretense of punishment which deceivers predict for the next world no man need be afraid to risk rather than subject himself to a felon’s fate. According to current teaching, it will be all the same with all men in the long run, for there is to be a universal restitution.

And therefore the suicide does but rationally leap from pursuit and punishment into a state where all will be made happy for him by-and-by, even if he does not find it altogether Heaven at first. He escapes from punishment in this life and whatever inconvenience there may be for him in the next life he will soon get over it—for it is said to be so trivial that those who keep to Scripture lines and speak the dread Truth of God therein revealed—are barbarians or fools. Many men do, no doubt, repent truly through being aroused by fear of death and judgment and the wrath to come. But if this fear goes no further than a selfish desire to escape punishment, no reliance can be placed upon its moral effect. If they could be assured that no punishment would follow, such persons would continue in sin and not only be content to live in it but be delighted to have it so.

Beloved, true repentance is sorrow for the sin itself—it has not only a dread of the death which is the wages of sin but of the *sin* which earns the wages. If you have no repentance for the sin itself, it is in vain that you should stand and tremble because of judgment to come. If judgment to come drives you by its terrors, to escape from sin, you will have to bless God that you ever heard of those terrors and that there were men found honest enough to speak plainly of them. But, I pray you, do not be satis-

fied with the mere *fear* of punishment for it is of little worth. The *evil itself* you must lament and your daily cry must be, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin."

Another kind of repentance may be rather better than any we have spoken of, but still it is not repentance toward God. It is a very good counterfeit, but it is not the genuine article. I refer to a sense of the unworthiness of an ill life. I have known persons, upon a review of their past, rise above the groveling level of absolute carelessness and they have begun to enjoy some apprehension of the beauty of virtue, the nobleness of usefulness, and the meanness of a life of selfish pleasure. A few of those who have no spiritual life, have, nevertheless, keen moral perceptions and they are repentant when they see that they have lost the opportunity of distinguishing themselves by noble lives.

They regret that their story will never be quoted among the examples of good men who have left "footprints on the sands of time." Musing upon their position in reference to society and history, they wish that they could blot out the past and write more worthy lines upon the page of life. Now, this is *hopeful*. But it is *not* sufficient. We are glad when men are under influences which promise amendment. But if a man stops at a mere apprehension of the beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice, what is there in it? This is not repentance toward God. It may not be repentance at all in any practical sense. Men have been known to practice the vices they denounced and avoid the virtues they admired—human sentiment has not force enough to break the fetters of evil.

Repentance toward God is the only thing which can effectually cut the cable which holds a man to the fatal shores of evil. Once more—there is a repentance which is partial. Men sometimes wake up to the notice of certain great blots in their lives. They cannot forget that black night—they dare not tell what was done then. They cannot forget the villainous act which ruined another, nor that base lie which blasted a reputation. They recall the hour when the inward fires of passion, like those of a volcano, poured the lava of sin down their lives. At the remembrance of one gross iniquity they feel a measure of regret when their better selves are to the front.

But repentance toward God is repentance of sin as sin and of rebellion against Law as rebellion against God. The man who only repents of this and that glaring offense has not repented of sin at all. I remember the story of Thomas Olivers, the famous cobbler convert, who was a loose-living man till he was renewed by Divine Grace through the preaching of Mr. Wesley and became a mighty preacher and the author of that glorious hymn, "The God of Abraham Praise." This man, before conversion, was much in the habit of contracting debts but could not be brought to pay them. When he received Divine Grace, he was convinced that he had no right to remain in debt.

He says, "I felt a great sorrow and confusion as if I had stolen every sum I owed." Now, he was not repentant for this one debt, or that other debt but for being in debt at all and therefore, having a little coming to

him from the estate of a relative, he bought a horse and rode from town to town, paying everybody to whom he was indebted. Before he had finished his pilgrimage, he had paid seventy debts, principal and interest and had been compelled to sell his horse, saddle and bridle, to do it. During this eventful journey he rode many miles to pay a single sixpence—it was only a sixpence but the principle was the same, whether the debt was sixpence or a hundred pounds.

Now, as he that hates debt will try to clear himself of every sixpence, so he that repents of sin, repents of it in every shape. No sin is spared by the true penitent. He abhors all sin. Brethren, we must not imitate Saul, who spared Agag and the best of the sheep. He had been told to destroy all, but he spared some. Agag must be hewn in pieces and the least objectionable of sin, if such there be, must be at once destroyed. Grace spares no sin. “Oh,” says one man, “I can give up every sin except one pleasure. This I reserve—is it not a little one?” No, no. In the name of the Truth of God and sincerity, make no reserve. Repentance is a broom which sweeps the house from attic to cellar.

Though no man is free from the commission of sin, yet every converted man is free from the *love* of sin. Every renewed heart is anxious to be free from even a speck of evil. When sin’s power is felt within, we do not welcome it but we cry out against it as Paul did when he said, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” We cannot bear sin—when it is near us, we feel like a wretch chained to a rotting carcass. We groan to be free from the hateful thing. Yes, repentance vows that the enemy shall be turned out, bag and baggage—and neither Sanballat, nor any of his trumpery—shall have a chamber or a closet within the heart which has become the temple of God.

**II.** I have said enough to show that there is a repentance which is not toward God. And now, secondly, let us observe that **EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE IS REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD.**

Lay stress on the words, “toward God.” True repentance looks toward God. When the prodigal son went back to his home, he did not say, “I will arise and go to my brother, for I have grieved my brother by leaving him to serve alone.” Neither did he say, “I will arise and go to the servants, for they were very kind to me. The dear old nurse that brought me up is broken-hearted at my conduct.” No, he said, “I will arise and go to my father and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you and am no more worthy to be called your son.”

Our Lord’s picture of a returning sinner is thus drawn in very clear colors, as a return to the *Father*, a repentance toward God. You are bound to make humble apology and ample compensation to everybody you have wronged. You are bound to make every acknowledgment and confession to all whom you have slandered or misrepresented—this is right and just and must not be forgotten. Still, the essence of your repentance must be “toward God.” For the essence of your wrong is toward God. I will endeavor to show you this.

A boy is rebellious against his father. The father has told him such a thing is to be done and he determines that he will not do it. His father has forbidden him certain things and he therefore defiantly does them. His father is much grieved, talks with him and endeavors to bring him to repentance. Suppose the boy were to reply, "Father, I feel sorry for what I have done, because it has vexed my brother." Such a speech would be impertinence and not penitence. Suppose he said, "Father, I will also confess that I am sorry for what I have done, because it has deprived me of a good deal of pleasure."

That also would be a selfish and impudent speech and show great contempt for his father's authority. Before he can be forgiven and restored to favor, he must confess the wrong done in disobeying his father's rules. He must lament that he has broken the rule of the household. And he must promise to do so no more. There can be no restoration of that child to his proper place in the family till he has said, "Father, I have sinned." He is stubborn, proud and rebellious till he comes to that point. All the repentance that he feels about the matter which does not go toward his father, misses the mark—in fact, it may even be an impudent aggravation of his rebellion against his father's rule that he is willing to own his wrong toward others, but will not confess the wrong he has done to the one chiefly concerned.

O Sinner, you must repent before God, or you do not repent at all. For here is the essence of repentance. The man repenting sees that he has neglected God. What? Though I have never been a thief nor an adulterer, yet God made me, and I am His creature. And if throughout twenty, thirty, or forty years I have never served Him, I have all that while robbed Him of what He had a right to expect from me. Did God make you and has He kept the breath in your nostrils and has He kindly supplied your wants till now, and all these years has He had nothing from you? Would you have kept a horse or a cow all this time and have had nothing from it? Would you keep a dog if it had never pleased you? Never noticed your call? Yet all these years God has thus preserved you in being and blessed you with great mercies and you have made no response. Hear how the Lord cries, "I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me!" This is where the sin lies.

Further than that, the true penitent sees that he has misrepresented God. When he has suffered a little affliction, he has thought God was cruel and unjust. The heathen misrepresent God by worshipping idols—we misrepresent God by our murmuring, our complaining, and our thought that there is pleasure in sin and weariness in the Divine service. Have you not spoken of God as if He were the cause of your misery, when you have brought it all upon yourself? You talk about Him as if He were unjust, when it is you that are unjust and evil.

The penitent man sees that the greatest offense of all his offenses is that he has offended God. Many of you think nothing of merely offending God—you think much more of offending man. If I call you "sinners" you do not rebel the charge. But if I called you "criminals" you would rise in

indignation and deny the accusation. A criminal, in the usual sense of the term, is one who has offended his fellow man—a sinner is one who has wronged his God. You do not mind being called sinners, because you think little of grieving God. But to be called criminals, or offenders against the laws of man, annoys you. For you think far more of man than of God.

Yet, in honest judgment, it were better, infinitely better, to break every human law, if this could be done without breaking the Divine Law, than to disobey the least of the commands of God. Know you not, O Man, that you have lived in rebellion against God? You have done the things He bids you not to do and you have left undone the things which He commands you to do. This is what you have to feel and to confess with sorrow. And without this, there can be no repentance.

Near the vital heart of repentance, right in its core, is a sense of the meanness of our conduct toward God. Especially our ingratitude to Him, after all His favor and mercy. This it is that troubles the truly penitent heart most—that God should love so much and should have such a wretched return. Ingratitude, the worst of ills, makes sin exceeding sinful. Sorrow for having so ill requited the Lord is a Divine Grace. A tear of such repentance is a diamond of the first water, precious in the sight of the Lord.

True repentance is also toward God in this respect—that it judges itself by God. We do not repent because we are not so good as a friend whom we admire but because we are not holy as the Lord. God's perfect Law is the transcript of His own perfect Character and sin is any want of conformity to the Law and to the Character of God. Judge yourselves by your fellow men, and you may be self-content. But measure yourselves by the perfect holiness of the Lord God and oh, how you must despise yourself! There is no deep repentance until our standard is the standard of perfect rectitude, till our judgment of self is formed by a comparison with the Divine Character. When we behold the perfection of the thrice holy Jehovah and then look at ourselves, we cry with Job, "Mine eyes sees You. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

To sum up—evangelical repentance is repentance of sin as *sin*—not of this sin, nor of that, but of the whole mass. We repent of the sin of our nature as well as of the sin of our practice. We bemoan sin within us and without us. We repent of sin itself as being an insult to God. Anything short of this is a mere surface repentance and not a repentance which reaches to the bottom of the mischief. Repentance of the evil act and not of the evil heart is like men pumping water out of a leaky vessel but forgetting to stop the leak. Some would dam up the stream but leave the fountain still flowing. They would remove the eruption from the skin but leave the disease in the flesh.

All that is done by way of amendment without a bemoaning of sin because of its being rebellion against God will fall short of the mark. When you repent of sin as against God, you have laid the axe at the root of the tree. He that repents of sin as sin against God, is no longer sporting with the evil but has come to grips with it. Now he will be led to change his life

and to be a new man—now, also, will he be driven to cry to God for mercy and in consequence he will be drawn to trust in Jesus. He will now feel that he cannot help himself and he will look to the strong for strength.

I can help myself toward my fellow man and I can improve myself up to his standard. But I cannot help myself toward God and cannot wash myself clean before His eyes. Therefore I fly to Him to purge me with hyssop and make me whiter than snow. O gracious Spirit, turn our eyes Godwards and then fill them with penitential tears!

**III.** Thirdly, I am going to throw in a bit of my own. I confess that it does not rise to the glorious fullness of the text, but I use it as a stepping stone for feeble footsteps. I thus apologize as I say—**THOSE WHO HAVE EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE ARE PERMITTED TO BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST.**

Paul says that he testified of “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” And, therefore, where there is repentance, faith is allowable. O penitent Sinner, you may believe in the Savior! While you are laboring under your present sense of guilt, while you are loathing and abhorring yourself, while you are burdened and heavy laden with fears, while you are crushed with sorrow as you lie before the Lord, you may now trust the Lord Jesus Christ! Before you have any quiet of conscience, before any relief comes to your heart, before hope shines in your spirit—*now* in your direct distress, when you are ready to perish—you may at once exercise faith in Him who came to seek and to save that which was lost.

There is no Law against faith. No decree of Heaven forbids a sinner to believe and live. You may pluck up courage to believe when you remember this—first, that though you have offended God (and this is the great point that troubles you)—God, whom you have offended, has Himself provided an atonement. The sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ is practically a substitution presented by God Himself.

The Offended dies to set the offender free. God Himself suffers the penalty of His Law, that He may justly forgive. And that, though Judge of all, He may yet righteously exercise His fatherly love in the putting away of sin. When you are looking to God with tears in your eyes, remember it is the same God who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and this offended God, “so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Remember, also, that this atonement was presented for the guilty—in fact, there could be no atonement where there was no guilt. It would be superfluous to make expiation where there had been no fault. For man, as a sinner, Christ died. “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” I pray you, then, the more deeply you feel your sinnership, the more clearly perceive that the sacrifice of Calvary was for you. For sinners the Cross was lifted high. For sinners the eternal Son of God poured out His soul unto death.

Oh that my Hearers, who mourn over sin, could see this and rejoice in the Divine method of putting sin out of the way!

But, remember, you must, with your repentance, come to God with faith in His dear Son. I have said that you may do so. But I apologize for so saying, for it is only half the Truth. God *commands* you to believe. The same God that says, "You shall not steal," is that God who says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." This is His Commandment—that you believe on Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. Faith is not left to your option, you are *commanded* to accept the witness of God. "Believe and live," has all the force of a Divine statute. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Therefore, if you are already a rebel, do not go on rebelling by refusing to believe in the Lord's own testimony.

Remember that there can be no reconciliation made between you and God unless you believe in Jesus Christ, whom He has given as a Savior and commissioned to that end. Not believing in Jesus is quibbling at God's way of salvation, quarrelling with His message of love. Will you do this? You have done wrong enough by fighting against Jehovah's Law—are you going to fight against His Gospel? Without faith it is impossible to please Him—will you continue to displease Him? Disbelief in Christ is on your part casting a new dishonor upon God, and thus it is a perseverance in rebellion of the most aggravated form. By refusing His unspeakable gift, you do, as it were, put your finger into the very eye of God. To refuse the Son is to blaspheme the Father. "He that believes not God has made Him a liar. Because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son."

Come, poor Soul, be encouraged. Clearly, if you have repentance toward God, you are allowed to believe in Jesus. Upon the drops of your repentance the sun of mercy is shining. What a rainbow of hope is thus made! Do not hesitate. You would gladly be washed, for you mourn your defilement—yonder is the cleansing fount! You are pained with the malady of sin. There stands the healing Savior—cast yourself at His feet! No embargo is laid upon your believing. God has not even in secret said to you, "Seek My face in vain." Come, I pray you, and fear not. We testify to you "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." But that faith must be toward the Lord Jesus Christ. You must look to Jesus, to the Substitute, to the Sacrifice, to the Mediator, to the Son of God. "No man comes unto the Father," says Jesus, "but by Me."

No faith in God will save the sinner except it is faith in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. To attempt to come to God without the appointed Mediator is again to insult Him by refusing His method of reconciliation. Do not do so but let your repentance toward God be accompanied with faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. You are warranted in thus believing.

**IV.** And now I come to my last point. Oh, that I might be helped by the Holy Spirit! Here I come back to the text and get on sure ground. EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE IS LINKED TO FAITH AND FAITH IS LINKED TO REPENTANCE. We testify not only of repentance toward God but of faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance and faith are born of the same Spirit of God. I do not know which comes first. But I fall back on my well-worn image of a wheel—when the cart starts, which spoke of the wheel moves first? I do not know. Repentance and faith come together. Perhaps I may say that repentance is like Leah, for it is “tender eyed.” And faith is like Rachel, fairer to look upon. But you cannot take Rachel to yourself unless you will have Leah also. For it is according to the rule of the Gospel that so it should be. The Old Testament, with its Law of repentance, must be bound up in one volume with the New Testament of the Gospel of faith.

These two, like Naomi and Ruth, say to each other, “Where you dwell I will dwell.” There are two stars called the Gemini, which are always together—faith and repentance are the twins of the spiritual heavens. What if I liken them to the two valves of the heart? They must be both in action, or the soul cannot live. They are born together and they must live together.

Repentance is the result of an *unperceived faith*. When a man repents of sin, he does inwardly believe, in a measure, although he may not think so. There is such a thing as latent faith—although it yields the man no conscious comfort, it may be doing something even better for him. For it may be working in him truthfulness of heart, purity of spirit, and abhorrence of evil. No true repentance is quite apart from faith. The solid of faith is held in solution in the liquid of repentance. It is clear that no man can repent toward God unless he believes in God. He could never feel grief at having offended God, if he did not believe that God is good.

To the dark cloud of repentance there is a silver lining of faith. Yet, at the first, the awakened soul does not know this, and therefore laments that he cannot believe! But his very repentance is grounded upon a measure of faith. Repentance is also greatly increased as faith grows. I fear that some people fancy that they repented when they were first converted and therefore, they have done with repentance. But it is not so—the higher the faith, the deeper the repentance. The saint most ripe for Heaven is the most aware of his own shortcomings. As long as we are here and Divine Grace is an active exercise, our consciousness of our unworthiness will grow upon us.

When you have grown too big for repentance, depend upon it you have grown too proud for faith. They that say they have ceased to repent confess that they have departed from Christ. Repentance and faith will grow each one as the other grows—the more you know the weight of sin, the more will you lean upon Jesus and the more will you know His power to uphold. When repentance measures a cubit, faith will measure a cubit, also. Repentance also increases faith. Beloved, we never believe in Christ to the full till we get a clear view of our need of Him. And that is the fruit of repentance. When we hate sin more, we shall love Christ more, and trust Him more. The more self sinks, the more Christ rises—like the two scales of balance, one must go down that the other may go up—self must sink in repentance that Christ may rise by faith.

Moreover, repentance salts faith and sweetens it and faith does the same to repentance. Faith, if there could be true faith without repentance, would be like the flowers without the dew, like the sunshine without shade, and like hills without valleys. If faith is the cluster, repentance is the juice of the grape. Faith is dry, like the fleece on the threshing floor, receptive and retentive. But when Heaven visits it with fullness, it drips with repentance. If a man professes faith and has no sense of personal unworthiness and no grief for sin, he becomes a man of the letter—sound in the head and very apt to prove his doctrine orthodox by apostolic blows and knocks.

But when you add to this the mollifying effects of true repentance, he becomes lowly and humble and easily to be entreated. When a man repents as much as he believes, he is as patient in his own quarrel as he is valiant in “the quarrel of the Covenant.” He holds his own sinnership as firmly as he holds the Lord Jesus as Savior and he frequents the Valley of Humiliation as much as the hills of Assurance.

If there could be such a thing as a man who was a Believer without repentance he would be much too big for his boots and there would be no bearing him. If he were always saying, “Yes, I know I am saved. I have a full assurance that I am saved.” And yet had no sense of personal sin, how loudly he would crow! But, O dear Friends, while we mourn our sins, we are not puffed up by the privileges which faith receives. An old Puritan says that when a saint is made beautiful with rich Graces, as the peacock with many-colored feathers, let him not be vain but let him remember the black feet of his inbred sin and the harsh voice of his many shortcomings.

Repentance will never allow faith to strut, even if it had a mind to do so. Faith cheers repentance and repentance sobers faith. The two go well together. Faith looks to the Throne and repentance loves the Cross. When faith looks most rightly to the Second Advent, repentance forbids its forgetting the First Advent. When faith is tempted to climb into presumption, repentance calls it back to sit at Jesus’ feet. Never try to separate these dear companions which minister more sweetly to one another than I have time to tell. That conversion which is all joy and lacks sorrow for sin, is very questionable. I will not believe in that faith which has no repentance with it any more than I would believe in that repentance which left a man without faith in Jesus. Like the two cherubs which stood gazing down upon the Mercy Seat, so stand these two inseparable Graces, and none must dare to remove the one or the other.

I have almost done. But the thought strikes me, Will these good people go home and remember about repentance and faith? Have I so talked that they will think of me rather than of the points in hand? I hope it is not so. I do pray you, throw away all that I may have said apart from the subject—cast it off as so much chaff and keep only the wheat. Remember, “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Let each one ask himself, Have I a repentance which leads to faith? Have I a faith which joins hands with repentance?

This is the way to weave an ark of bulrushes for your infant assurance—twist these two together—repentance and faith. Yet trust neither repentance nor faith. But repent toward God and have faith toward the Lord Jesus. Mind you, do this. For there is a sad aptitude in many hearers to forget the essential point and think of our stories and illustrations rather than of the practical duty which we would enforce. A celebrated minister, who has long ago gone Home, was once taken ill and his wife requested him to go and consult an eminent physician. He went to this physician, who welcomed him very heartily. “I am right glad to see you, Sir,” said he, “I have heard you preach and have been greatly profited by you, and therefore I have often wished to have half an hour’s chat with you. If I can do anything for you, I am sure I will.”

The minister stated his case. The doctor said, “Oh, it is a very simple matter, you have only to take such and such a drug and you will soon be right.” The patient was about to go, thinking that he must not occupy the physician’s time. But he pressed him to stay and they entered into pleasant conversation. The minister went home to his wife and told her with joy what a delightful man the doctor had proved to be. He said, “I do not know that I ever had a more delightful talk. The good man is eloquent and witty and gracious.” The wife replied, “But what remedy did he prescribe?” “Oh dear!” said the minister, “I quite forget what he told me on that point.” “What?” she said, “did you go to a physician for advice and have you come away without a remedy?” “It quite slipped my mind,” he said, “the doctor talked so pleasantly that his prescription has quite gone out of my head.”

Now, if I have talked to you so that this will happen, I shall be very sorry. Come, let my last word be a repetition of the Gospel remedy for sin. Here it is. Trust in the precious blood of Christ and make full confession of your sin, heartily forsaking it. You must receive Christ by faith and you must loathe every evil way. Repentance and faith must look to the water and the blood from the side of Jesus for cleansing from the power and guilt of sin. Pray God that you may, by both these priceless Graces, receive at once the merit of your Savior unto eternal salvation. Amen.

***Portions Of Scripture Read Before Sermon—Acts 20:17-27; Psalm 51.***  
**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—34 (V. 1), 579, 51 (V. 2)**

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# A GOSPEL WORTH DYING FOR NO. 1734

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 12, 1883,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT EXETER HALL.**

***“To testify the Gospel of the Grace of God.”  
Acts 20:24.***

PAUL says that in comparison with his great objective of preaching the Gospel, he did not count even his life to be dear to himself; yet we are sure Paul highly valued life. He had the same love of life as other men and he knew that his own life was of great consequence to the Churches and to the cause of Christ. In another place he said, “To abide in the flesh is more necessary for you.” He was not weary of life, nor was he a vain person who could treat life as though it were a thing to fling away in sport. He valued life, for he prized time, which is the stuff that life is made of, and he turned to practical account, each day and hour, “redeeming the time because the days are evil.” Yet he soberly said to the elders of the Church at Ephesus that he did not regard his life as a dear thing in comparison with bearing testimony to the Gospel of the Grace of God.

According to the verse before us, the Apostle regarded life as a race which he had to run. Now, the more quickly a race is run, the better—certainly, *length* is not the object or desire. The one thought of a runner is how he can most speedily reach the winning post. He spurns the ground beneath him; he cares not for the course he traverses except so far as it is the way over which he must run to reach his desired end. Such was life to Paul—all the energies of his spirit were consecrated to the pursuit of one objective—namely, that he might, everywhere, bear testimony to the Gospel of the Grace of God—and the life which he lived here below was only valued by him as a means to that end. He also regarded the Gospel and His ministry in witnessing to it, as a sacred deposit which had been committed to him by the Lord, Himself. He looked upon himself “as put in trust with the Gospel” and he resolved to be faithful though it should cost him his life.

He says he “desired to fulfill the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Before his mind’s eye he saw the Savior taking into His pierced hands the priceless case which contains the celestial jewel of the Grace of God and saying to him—“I have redeemed you with My blood and I have called you by My name—and now I commit this precious thing into your hands, that you may take care of it and guard it with your heart’s blood. I commission you to go everywhere in My place and to make known to every people under Heaven the Gospel of the Grace of God.” All Believers occupy a somewhat similar place. We are, none of us, called to the Apostleship—and we may not all have been called to the public preaching of the Word of God—but we are all charged to be valiant for the Truth of God upon the earth and to contend earnestly for the faith once

delivered to the saints. Oh, to do this in the spirit of the Apostle of the Gentiles!

As Believers, we are all called to some form of ministry, and this ought to make our life a race and cause us to regard ourselves as the guardians of the Gospel, even as he that bears the colors of a regiment regards himself as bound to sacrifice everything for their preservation. Paul was a true hero—a hero of even a nobler stamp than those brave Greeks whose stories still stir the blood and fire the soul! Their heroism, to a large extent, depended upon public note, the present approval of their fellow citizens, or upon the animal excitement of the battlefield. But Paul's heroism, so far as man was concerned, was self-contained—deliberate and as sure to display itself in the solitude of a dungeon as in the assembly of the faithful. He was parting with his weeping friends and going forward to trials of unknown intensity, but he was altogether unmoved by fear and advanced on his way without a question.

His leave-taking of the elders irresistibly reminds me of the old historian's record of Epaminondas the Theban general who, when he was mortally wounded by a Spartan spear, the head of which remained in his flesh, bade his friends leave it alone a little, "for" he said, "I have lived long enough only if I die unconquered." And when they told him that the battle was won and that his comrades were victorious, he bade them draw out the head of the spear, that his life might end. One observed to him that he had fallen but that he had not lost his shield and that the victory was won—to which he replied with his last breath, "Your Epaminondas thus dying does not die." So Paul has lived long enough if the Gospel is prospering in its course! And though he lays down his life, he does not die if his ministry is fulfilled!

Let me read you his words and you shall judge if they have not this heroic ring—"And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Spirit witnesses in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God."

We shall, this morning, first of all inquire what was this Gospel which Paul judged to be worth dying for?—"The Gospel of the Grace of God." When we have made that inquiry, I think we shall be prepared for another. If we cannot *die* for it, how can we *live* for it? And then, thirdly, I shall press this consecration upon you by answering the question—Why should we? Oh, that the Holy Spirit may work in us the holy devotion and self-sacrifice of Paul!

**I.** First, then, our enquiry this morning is, WHAT WAS THIS GOSPEL FOR WHICH PAUL WOULD DIE? It is not everything called, "gospel," which would produce such enthusiasm, or deserve it. For, my Brothers and Sisters, we have gospels, nowadays, which I would *not* die for, nor recommend anyone of you to *live* for, inasmuch as they are gospels that will be snuffed out within a few years. It is never worth while to die for a doctrine which will, itself, die out. I have lived long enough to see half-a-

dozen new gospels rise, flourish and decay. They told me long ago that my old Calvinistic doctrine was far behind the age and was an exploded thing!

And, next, I heard that evangelical teaching in any form was a thing of the past, to be supplanted by “advanced thought.” I have heard of one improvement upon the old faith and then of another—and the philosophical divines are still improving their theology! They have gone on advancing and advancing, till Heaven knows and perhaps Hell knows what next they will advance to, but I am sure I do not. I would not die for any one of all the modern systems. I would like to ask broad church divines whether there is any positive doctrine in the Bible at all—and whether any form of teaching could, for a moment, be judged worth dying for—and whether the martyrs were not great fools to die for Truths of God which might be valuable to them, but which the advance of thought has cast into disuse!

Those men and women who went to Smithfield and were burnt to death for Christ—were they not fools, every one of them, to die for a set of ideas which “modern thought” has quite exploded? I do verily think that to our modern divines, there is no such thing as fixed truth, or that, if there is, they are not sure of having yet reached it. They have dug and dug, and dug—look at the dark pits of unbelief which they have opened—but they have not come yet to the rock. Wait a little longer—they may, one of these days, find out something solid—but as yet they have only bored through layers of sand. Yet there used to be a Gospel in the world which consisted of facts which Christians never questioned. There was once, in the Church, a Gospel which Believers hugged to their hearts as if it were their soul’s life! There used to be a Gospel in the world which provoked enthusiasm and commanded sacrifice!

Tens of thousands have met together to hear this Gospel at peril of their lives. Men, to the teeth of tyrants, have proclaimed it and have suffered the loss of all things—they went to prison and to death for it—all the while singing Psalms! Is there not such a Gospel remaining? Or have we arrived at cloudland, where souls starve on suppositions and become incapable of confidence or ardor? Are the disciples of Jesus now to be fed upon the froth of “thought” and the wind of imagination on which men become heady and high-minded? No! We will return to the substantial meat of Infallible Revelation and cry to the Holy Spirit to feed us upon His own Inspired Word! What is this Gospel which Paul valued before his own life? It was called, by him, “the Gospel of the Grace of God.” That which most forcibly struck the Apostle in the Gospel was that it was a message of Grace and of Grace, alone!

Amid the music of the glad tidings, one note rang out above all others and charmed the Apostle’s ears—that note was Grace—the Grace of God. He regarded that note as characteristic of the whole strain! The Gospel was “the Gospel of the Grace of God.” In *these* days that word, “Grace,” is not often heard—we hear of moral *duties*, scientific *adjustments* and human *progress*—but who tells us of “the Grace of God” except a few old-fashioned people who will soon be gone? As one of those antiquated folk, I am here this morning, and I shall try to proclaim that word, “GRACE,” so that those who know its joyful sound shall be glad, and those who despise it shall be cut to the heart! Grace is the *essence* of the Gospel! Grace is

the one hope for this fallen world! Grace is the sole comfort of saints looking forward to Heaven!

Perhaps Paul had a clearer view of Grace than even Peter, or James, or John and, therefore, he has so much larger space in the New Testament. The other Apostolic writers excelled Paul in certain respects, but Paul, as to his depth and clearness in the Doctrines of Grace, stood first and foremost. We need Paul again, or at least the Pauline evangelism and definiteness. He would make short work of the new gospels and say of those who follow them, "I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the Grace of Christ unto another Gospel, which is not another; but there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ."

Let me try to explain in a brief manner how the Gospel is the good news of Grace. The Gospel is an announcement that God is prepared to deal with guilty man on the ground of free favor and pure mercy. There would be no good news in saying that God is just, for, in the first place, that is not even news—we *know* that God is just. The natural conscience teaches man that. That God will punish sin and reward righteousness is not news at all and, if it were news, yet it would not be *good* news, for we have all sinned—and upon the ground of justice we must perish. But it *is* news and news of the best kind, that the Judge of all is prepared to pardon transgression and to justify the ungodly! It is good news to the sinful that the Lord will blot out sin, cover the sinner with righteousness and receive him into His favor—and that not on account of anything he *has* done, or *will* do—but out of Sovereign Grace!

Though we are all guilty without exception and all most justly condemned for our sins, yet God is ready to take us from under the curse of His Law and give us all the blessedness of righteous men as an act of pure mercy! Remember how David saw this and spoke of it in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Psalm—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." This is a message worth dying for, that through the Covenant of Grace, God can be just and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus! That He can be the righteous Judge of men and yet believing men can be freely justified by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus! That God is merciful and gracious—and is ready to bless the most unworthy—is a wonderful piece of news, worth a man's spending a hundred lives to tell!

My heart leaps within me as I repeat it in this Hall and tell the penitent, the desponding and the despairing that, though their sins deserve Hell, yet Grace can give them Heaven and make them fit for it—and that as a sovereign act of love—altogether independent of their character or what they deserve! Because the Lord has said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," there is hope for the most hopeless! Since "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy," (Rom. 9:16), there is an open door of hope for those who otherwise might despair!

It is as though there had been held a great assize and the judge had passed from county to county and a number of prisoners had been con-

demned. Now there remained nothing further in the course of justice but that their sentences should be carried into execution. Lo, suddenly, by the silver trumpets of messengers clothed in silken apparel, it is proclaimed that the king has discovered a method by which, without violating justice, he can deal with the condemned in pure mercy and so grant them free pardon, immediate release from prison and a place in his majesty's favor and service! This would be glad tidings in the condemned cells, would it not? Would you not be glad to carry such news to the poor prisoners? Ah, Paul, I can understand your getting into a holy excitement over such a Revelation as that of Free Grace! I can understand your being willing to throw your life away that you might tell to your fellow sinners that Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life!

But the Gospel tells us much more than this, namely, that in order to His dealing with men upon the ground of free favor, God the Father has, Himself, removed the grand obstacle which stood in the way of mercy. God is just—that is a Truth most sure—man's conscience knows it to be so—and man's conscience will never rest content unless it can see that the justice of God is vindicated. Therefore, in order that God might justly deal in a way of pure mercy with men, He gave His only-begotten Son, that by *His* death the Law might receive its due and the eternal principles of His government might be maintained. Jesus was appointed to stand in man's place; to bear man's sin and endure the chastisement of man's guilt.

How clearly does Isaiah state this in his 53<sup>rd</sup> chapter! Man is now saved because the commandment is not set aside, nor the penalty revoked—all is done and suffered which could be exacted by the sternest justice and yet Grace has her hands untied to distribute pardons as she pleases. The debtor is loosed, for the debt is paid! See a dying Savior and hear the Prophet say, "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." Here, too, everything is of Grace. Brothers and Sisters, it was Grace on God's part to resolve upon devising and accepting an atonement and, especially, in His actually providing that atonement at His own cost! *There* is the wonder of it—He that was offended provides the reconciliation! He had but one Son and sooner than there should be any obstacle in His way as to dealing with men on the footing of pure Grace, He took that Son from His bosom, allowed Him to assume our frail nature and, in that nature permitted Him to die—the Just for the unjust—to bring us to God!

You admire Abraham's giving up his son to God? Much more admire Jehovah's giving up His Son for sinners! "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." This, then, is the Gospel of the Grace of God—that God is able, without injustice, to deal with men in a way of pure mercy, altogether apart from their sins or their merits because their sins were laid upon His dear Son Jesus Christ, who has offered to Divine Justice a complete satisfaction, so that God is glorious in holiness and yet rich in mercy! Ah, beloved Paul, there is something worth preaching here!

In the Gospel there is also revealed a motive for mercy which is in agreement with the Grace of God. There is always needed, in the action of every wise man, a competent motive. Men do not act without reason if

they are reasonable men. The same is true with God, the highest of all intelligences—He acts upon the highest reasons. His motive for dealing with men on the footing of Free Grace is the revealing of His own glorious Character. He says, “Not for your sakes do I do this, says the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.” He works the wonders of His Grace “to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

He finds a motive in His own Nature and mercy since He could not find it anywhere else! He will deal with guilty men according to the sovereignty of His will, “to the praise of the glory of His Grace in which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.” He saves men that His own beloved Son, Jesus Christ, may be magnified and extolled, and be very high, and that His Holy Spirit may be honored in the new-creating of rebellious natures. Listen to this, you that feel your guilt—God is able, without infringement of His justice, to deal with you on the footing of pure Grace, and He has found a reason for so doing, a reason which will apply as much to the worst of men as to the best! If it is for His own glory’s sake that He saves guilty sinners! Then a window is opened by which light can come to those who sit in the thickest gloom of despair!

In order to the accomplishment of the designs of Grace, it was necessary, further, that a Gospel message should be issued full of promise, encouragement and blessing. And truly that message has been delivered to us, for that Gospel which we preach today is full of Grace to the very brim! It speaks on this wise—Sinner, just as you are, return to the Lord and He will receive you graciously and love you freely! God has said, “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” For Christ’s sake, and not because of any agonies, or tears, or sorrows on *your* part, He will remove your sins as far from you as the east is from the west! He says, “Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

You may come to Jesus just as you are and He will give you full remission upon your believing in Him. The Lord says today, “Look not within, as though you would search for any merit there, but look unto Me, and be you saved. I will bless you apart from merit, according to the Atonement of Christ Jesus.” He says, “Look not within as though you looked for any strength for future life—I am both your strength and your salvation, for when you were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” The Gospel invitation is, “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money, come buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Come and welcome, you lame, you halt, you blind, you wandering, you foul, you miserable! You are invited, not because you are good, but because you are evil—not because you are hopeful, but because you are hopeless!

The Gospel message is of Grace because it is directed to those whose only claim is their need. The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repen-

tance. Come, therefore, you morally sick—you whose brows are white with the leprosy of sin—come and welcome, for to you is this free Gospel proclaimed by Divine authority! Assuredly such a message as this is worth any exertion for its spreading and it is so blessed, so Divine, that we may gladly pour out our blood to proclaim it!

Further, Brethren, that this Gospel blessing might come within the reach of men, God's Grace has adopted a method suitable to their condition. "How can I be forgiven?" one asks, "tell me truly and quickly!" "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved!" God asks of you no good works, nor good feelings, either, but only that you are willing to accept what He most freely gives! He saves upon *believing*. This is faith—that you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that you trust yourself with Him! "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." If you believe, you are saved! Salvation "is of faith that it might be of Grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed."

Do you say, "But faith itself seems beyond my reach"? Then, in the Gospel of the Grace of God, we are told that even faith is God's *gift*—and that He works it in men by His Holy Spirit—for apart from that Spirit they lie dead in trespasses and sins. Oh, what Grace is this, that the *faith* which is commanded is also conferred! "But," says one, "if I were to believe in Christ and have my past sins forgiven, yet I fear I should go back to sin, for I have no strength by which to keep myself for the future." Listen! The Gospel of the Grace of God is this, that He will keep you to the end—that He will preserve within you the fire which He kindles, for He says, "I give unto My sheep *eternal life*." And again He says, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." The sheep of Christ shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of Christ's hand!

Do you hear this, you guilty ones—you who have no claim upon God's Grace whatever? His Free Grace comes to you, even to you! And if you are made willing to receive it, you are this day a saved man and saved forever beyond all question! I say it again, this is a Gospel so well worth the preaching that I can understand Paul saying, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God." I read in an old book a dream of one who was under concern of soul. He fell asleep and dreamed that he was out in the wilds in a terrible storm. The lightning flamed around him and the voice of the thunder made the earth rock beneath him.

He looked eagerly around for a shelter. He ran to the first house before him, but he was denied admittance. He that dwelt there was named Justice and he said in angry tones, "Get out of here—I cannot shelter a criminal, a traitor to his King and God!" He fled to the next house and it turned out to be the mansion of Truth. Truth came to the door with a calm but stern countenance and said, "You are full of falsehood, you can not sojourn here." He fled to the home of Peace, which stood near, and hoped that there, perhaps, he might be housed from the storm. But Peace said, "Go away! There is no peace, says my God, unto the wicked." He could

not, then, tell what to do, for the storm waxed yet more furious, when lo, he saw a portal over which was written, "Mercy." "Yes," he said, "this is the place for me, for I am guilty." The door was open and he was welcomed there.

To that house I invite you! Come in and be at rest. You who cannot as yet be harbored by justice, or peace, or truth, may come to mercy and receive abundant Grace! Do you seem inclined to accept the way and method of Grace? Let me test you. Some men think they love a thing and yet they do not, for they have made a mistake concerning it. Do you understand that you are to have no claim upon God? He says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." When it comes to pure mercy, then, no one can possibly make a claim! In fact, no claim can exist! If it is of Grace it is not of debt, and if of debt it is not of Grace. If God wills to save one man and another is left to perish in his own willful sin, that other cannot dare to dispute with God! Or if he does, the answer is— "Can I not do as I will with My own?"

Oh, but you seem now as if you started back from it! See, your pride revolts against the Sovereignty of Grace! Let me beckon you back again. Though you have no claim, there is another Truth of God which smiles upon you, for, on the other hand, there is no bar to *your* obtaining mercy. If no goodness is needed to recommend you to God—since all must be pure favor which He gives—then also no evil can shut you out from that favor! However guilty you may be, it may be God may show favor to you. He has in other cases called out the chief of sinners—why not in *your* case also? At any rate, no aggravation of sin, no continuance in sin, no height of sin can be a reason why God should not look with Grace upon you, for if pure Grace and nothing else but Grace is to have sway, then the jet black transgressor may be saved. In his case there is room for Grace to manifest its greatness!

I have heard men make excuses out of the Doctrine of Election. They have said, "What if I should not be elect?" It seems to me far wiser to say, "What if I *should* be elect?" Yes, I am elect if I believe in Jesus, for there never was a soul yet that cast itself upon the Atonement of Christ but what that soul was chosen of God from before the foundation of the world! This is the Gospel of the Grace of God and I know that it touches the heart of many of you. It often stirs my soul like the sound of martial music to think of my Lord's Grace from old eternity, a Grace that is constant to its choice and will be constant to it when all these visible things shall disappear as sparks that fly from the chimney!

My heart is glad within me to preach Free Grace and dying love—I can understand why crowds met at the dead of night to hear of the Grace of God. I can understand the Covenanters on the bleak hills listening with sparkling eyes as Cameron preached of the Grace of the great King! There is something in a Free-Grace Gospel worth preaching, worth listening to, worth living for and worth dying for!

**II.** This brings me to the second head. You and I are not called to die for it just yet—let us make sure that today we *live* for it. HOW CAN WE LIVE FOR THIS GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD? I answer first, if any-

body here is to live for this Gospel, he must have received it from God and he must have received a call to minister or serve for it. He must feel himself under bonds to hold and keep this Gospel not so much because he has chosen it, but because it has chosen him. I forget who it was, but a quaint old minister was once told that he could not preach in a certain pulpit if he held to the Doctrines of Grace. "Well," he said, "I think I might be allowed to preach there for I can truly say that I do not hold to the Doctrines of Grace—the Doctrines of Grace hold me."

That might be rather a quibble, but there is a grand truth in it. When a man picks and selects his creed, the probabilities are that, by-and-by, he will pick again and will select another next time. There is about the love which constitutes our domestic bliss a something of necessity—our beloved one was chosen by us, but yet we could not help it—we were carried away and overborne and so our marriage came to pass. It was not altogether choice—there was a mystic power that enchained our hearts. And I am sure it is so with the Doctrines of Grace if we believe them—we chose them with a willing soul—but yet we were under constraint and could do no other.

To me there is but one form of doctrine. I know no other. Brothers and Sisters, I cannot be of any other faith than that which I preached nearly 29 years ago on this platform! [Exeter Hall.] I think I have read as much as most men and I know most of the maunderings of advanced thinkers. But I have never come into their secret and I never can! I abhor the very idea of an advance upon the Gospel which Paul preached. I am today what I was when, as a youth, I preached to crowds in this Hall. I have progressed in my theology not so much as a tithe of an inch! I hope I preach better and with more experimental knowledge of the Truth of God; but that which I preached 33 years ago, I preach today!

You know the story of the boy who stood upon the burning deck because his father said, "Stand there." And I desire to imitate his steadfastness. Other boys might be much wiser than he was, but his wisdom was *obedience*. I prefer obeying God to being wise with my own wisdom. The Gospel which the Bible has revealed and the Holy Spirit has taught me, I must preach—and no other! I am incapable of believing the novelties of the hour. I must abide in my old faith! I would say with Luther, "I cannot help it, so help me God!" I know no other Gospel today than that which I knew when I first believed in Jesus! I know that by Grace we are saved through faith and that not of ourselves—it is the gift of God! What more do I need to know? You may leave this Rock, if you like, my Brother, for you may be able to swim. But I must stay right where I am, for I would drown. When the crack of doom shall be heard, I shall be here, God helping me, believing the Gospel of the Grace of God and no other creed. I hope there is something in adhesiveness which will help to preserve, if not to spread the Gospel. Steadfastness at this particular time has a special value and I urge you to it—to the Gospel which you have received—to the Gospel of the Grace of God! I implore you to stand fast so long as you live.

But the next thing Paul did was to make it known. Wherever he went, he published the Gospel. This is what we must do. "Oh," says one, "I cannot make it known." Why not? "I could not tell out the Gospel." Why not?

“Why, I am a person of mean appearance and I do not suppose people would pay me any respect.” Just what they said about Paul—“His personal presence is weak.” “Oh, but I am no speaker.” Just so, that also is what they said of Paul—“His speech is contemptible.” “Oh, but if I were to say anything, I could not adorn it with a figure of speech, or illustrate it with a simile; I could not even quote a bit of poetry to make it fine.” Paul also used homespun. He says, “We use great plainness of speech.”

Many of the other teachers were great orators, but Paul always fought shy of oratory. He stood up and allowed the Truth of God to freely flow out of his mouth, in its own way, and I believe at the present moment we need a race of preachers who will not be fine, or scholarly, or rhetorical, or sensational! We need men of whom you will say, when you have heard them—“I cannot make out why people flock to hear such a ministry. All that they can go for is what the man says, for he does not say it grandly. He does not seem as if he wanted to do so He appears only concerned to get his message out of his own heart and get it into the people’s hearts.” That is just what Paul did. Do you not think that you could tell the Gospel out in his fashion? “Oh, but I have so many infirmities.” Yes, Paul said he gloried in infirmities because the power of Christ the more clearly rested on him. When he had done preaching the people could not say, “Oh, we understand why we felt it so! You see, Paul practices all the graces of manner. We quite understand why his speech penetrated our hearts—he has such a melodious, bell-like voice! We can understand why we like to hear him—he has such expressive eyes, they look into our souls.”

Now, Paul, in all probability, had weak eyes. According to his name, he was a short man and it is likely that he spoke very plainly. Yet he never felt sorry that it was so. On the contrary, he believed that in his weakness he was strong, for the power of Christ rested upon him. He hoped, also, that for this very reason their faith would not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God! Brothers and Sisters, we are all qualified, if this is the case, to go and tell others the Gospel of the Grace of God! Yet further, Paul desired to *testify* to the Gospel. Now, to testify is something more than to proclaim—it means to bear personal witness to the Truth of God. Paul was specially qualified to testify, was he not? When he preached, he frequently told that story about the fierce persecutor who was on the way to Damascus and was suddenly struck down—a persecutor who had never *asked* to be saved by Grace, who had no free will towards Christ, but who had a very strong will *against* Him and was hauling men and women to prison—compelling them to blaspheme, being exceedingly mad against them.

Oh how sweetly Paul told out the Gospel of the Grace of God when he said, “The Lord appeared to me by the way.” “I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.” Friend, cannot you tell of your conversion, and let men know how Free Grace came to you when you were not looking for it? Nor would Paul end there, for he would often tell his consolations, how the Gospel had comforted him when he had been stoned and tried by false brethren—and yet had been upheld by the Grace of God. Paul could tell, also of his heavenly

joys—how he had been often exceedingly lifted up and made to triumph in Christ by feeding upon the Gospel of the Grace of God! His personal experience of its power over himself was that which he used as the great instrument and argument for spreading the Gospel—for this is the meaning of testifying.

My Friend, if the Gospel has done nothing for you, hold your tongue or speak against it! But if the Gospel has done for you what it has done for some of us—if it has changed the current of your life; if it has lifted you up from the dunghill and made you to sit as on a throne; if it is, today, your meat and your drink—if to your life it is the very center and sun, then bear constant witness to it! If the Gospel has become to you what it is to me—the light of my innermost heart, the core of my being—then proclaim it, proclaim it wherever you go and make men know that even if they reject it, it is to you the power of God unto salvation and will be the same to every man that believes!

**III.** My time is gone, but yet I must detain you a minute while I remind you of reasons **WHY WE, MY BRETHREN, SHOULD LIVE TO MAKE KNOWN THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.** First, because it is, after all, the only Gospel in the world! These mushroom gospels of the hour, which come and go like a penny newspaper which has its day and then is thrown aside, have no claim on any man's zeal! These changing moons of doctrine, what are they doing for England? They are doing much evil in this city—they are alienating the mass of the people from going to any place of worship at all! Why should they come to hear uncertainties? Why should they come merely to be taught their duty and to be moralized, and so on?

Men are not led to assemble in multitudes by such poor attractions. I do not think that I would go across the street Sunday after Sunday merely to hear a moral essay! I might as well stay at home and read the paper. But to hear the Gospel of the Grace of God is worth many a mile's walk! And if it is plainly set forth in all our churches and chapels, I guarantee we should see very few empty pews—the people would come and hear it, for they always have done so! It is your graceless Gospel which starves the flock till they forsake the pasture! It is your Socinian reasoning which leads men to treat ministry and public worship with contempt! The old Gospel is a sweet savor which attracts the masses. When Whitefield sounded it forth, what common was big enough to hold the thousands? Man needs something that will cheer his heart in the midst of his labor and give him hope under a sense of sin. As the thirsty need water, so does man need the Gospel of the Grace of God!

And there are no two gospels in the world any more than there are two suns in the heavens. There is but one atmosphere for us to breathe and one Gospel for us to live by. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ the Righteous." Therefore proclaim the Gospel lest men die for lack of the knowledge of it! Do it, next, because it is for God's Glory. Do you not see how it glorifies God? It lays the sinner low; it makes man nobody, but God All in All. It sets God on a Throne and trails man in the dust! And then it sweetly leads men to worship and reverence the God of all Grace, who passes by transgression, iniquity and sin—

therefore spread it! Spread it because thus you will glorify Christ! Oh, if He should come on this platform this morning, how gladly would we all make way for Him! How devoutly would we adore Him! If we might but see that head, that dear majestic head, would we not all bow in worship?

And if He then spoke and said, “My Beloved, I have committed to you My Gospel. Hold it fast as you have received it! Give not way to the notions and inventions of men, but hold fast the Truth of God as you have received it and go and proclaim My Word, for I have other sheep, that are not yet of My fold, who must be brought in; and you have brothers that yet are prodigals and they must come home.” I say, if He looked you, each one, in the face and addressed you so, your soul would answer, “Lord, I will live for You! I will make You known! I will die for You, if necessary, to publish the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Now, if you and I awaken ourselves this day, and God’s Holy Spirit shall help us to do so—and we begin to proclaim the Gospel of the Grace of God—do you know what I think is sure to happen? I prophesy the best results! They tell us that all sorts of evils are growing strong—and Brothers, darkly prophetic, tell us that awful times are coming—I cannot tell you how dreadful they are to be! Popery is to come back, according to some, and once again the harlot of the Seven Hills is to dominate over all the earth! Is she? We shall see. If you boldly proclaim the Gospel, I tell you it will not be so! If the Gospel of the Grace of God is fully and fairly preached, it *cannot* be so! Listen to what John saw—“I saw another angel fly in the midst of Heaven having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, fear God and give glory to Him.”

Do you see that angel? Observe what follows! Close behind him flies another celestial herald. “And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” Fly, angel of the everlasting Gospel! Fly, for as surely as you speed your flight, that other angel will follow who shall proclaim the downfall of Babylon and of every other system that opposes itself to the Grace of the Lord God Almighty! The Lord stir you up for His name’s sake. Amen.

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# THE MINISTER'S FAREWELL

## NO. 289

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 11, 1858,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS,  
*Upon the last occasion of his preaching in that place.***

***“Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure  
from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned  
to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”  
Acts 20:26-27.***

WHEN Paul was parting from his Ephesian friends, who had come to bid him farewell at Miletus, he did not request of them a commendation of his ability. He did not request of them a recommendation for his fervid eloquence, his profound learning, his comprehensive thought, or his penetrating judgment. He knew right well that he might have credit for all these and yet be found a castaway at last. He required a witness which would be valid in the court of Heaven and of value in a dying hour. His one most solemn adjuration is—“I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”

In the Apostle this utterance was no egotism. It was a fact that he had, without courting the smiles or fearing the frowns of any, preached the Truth of God, the whole Truth of God and nothing but the Truth of God, as it had been taught to him by the Holy Spirit and as he had received it in his own heart. O that all ministers of Christ could honestly challenge the like witness!

Now, this morning I propose, by the help of God's Spirit, to do two things. The first will be to say a little upon the Apostle's solemn declaration at parting. And then, afterwards, in a few solemn words, to take my own personal farewell.

**I.** In the first place, THE APOSTLE'S WORD AT PARTING—“I call you to record I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” The first thing that strikes us is the declaration of the Apostle concerning the doctrines he had preached. He had preached ALL the counsel of God. By which I think we are to understand that he had given to his people the entire Gospel. He had not dwelt upon some one doctrine of it, to the exclusion of the rest. But it had been his honest endeavor to bring out every Truth of God according to the analogy of faith. He had not magnified one doctrine into a mountain and then diminished another into a molehill. He had endeavored to present all blended together, like the colors in the rainbow, as one harmonious and glorious whole.

Of course, he did not claim for himself any infallibility as a man, although as an inspired man he was

without error in his writings. He had, doubtless, sins to confess in private and faults to bemoan God. He had, doubtless, sometimes failed to put a Truth of God as clearly as he could have wished, when preaching the Word. He had not always been earnest as he could desire. But at least he could claim this, that he had not willfully kept back a single part of the truth as it is in Jesus.

Now, I must bring down the Apostle's saying to these modern times. And I take it, if anyone of us would clear our conscience by delivering the whole counsel of God, we must take care that we preach, in the first place, the doctrines of the Gospel. We ought to declare the grand doctrine of the Father's love towards His people from before all worlds. His sovereign choice of them, His covenant purposes concerning them and His immutable promises to them, must all be uttered with trumpet tongue. Coupled with this the true Evangelist must never fail to set forth the beauties of the Person of Christ, the glory of His offices, the completeness of His work and above all, the efficacy of His blood. Whatever we omit, this must be in the most forcible manner proclaimed again and again.

That is no Gospel which has not Christ in it and the modern idea of preaching THE TRUTH instead of Christ, is a wicked device of Satan. Nor is this all, for as there are Three Persons in the Godhead, we must be careful that they all have due honor in our ministry. The Holy Spirit's work in regeneration, in sanctification and in perseverance, must be always magnified from our pulpit. Without His power our ministry is a dead letter and we cannot expect His arm to be made bare unless we honor him day by day.

Upon all these matters we are agreed and I therefore turn to points upon which there is more dispute and consequently more need of honest avowal, because more temptation to concealment. To proceed then—I question whether we have preached the whole counsel of God, unless *predestination* with all its solemnity and sureness is continually declared—unless *election* is boldly and nakedly taught as being one of the Truths revealed of God. It is the minister's duty, beginning from this fountain head, to trace all the other streams—dwelling on *effectual calling*, maintaining *justification by faith*—insisting upon the certain *perseverance of the Believer* and delighting to proclaim that gracious covenant in which all these things are contained and which is sure to all the chosen, blood-bought seed.

There is a tendency in this age to throw doctrinal truth into the shade. Too many preachers are offended with that stern truth which the Covenanters held and to which the Puritans testified in the midst of a licentious age. We are told that the times have changed. That we are to modify these old (so-called) Calvinistic doctrines and bring them down to the tone of the times. That, in fact, they need dilution, that men have become so intelligent that we must pare off the angles of our religion and make the square into a circle by rounding off the most prominent edges.

Any man who does this, so far as my judgment goes, does not declare the whole counsel of God. The faithful minister must be plain, simple,

pointed, with regard to these doctrines. There must be no dispute about whether he believes them or not. He must so preach them that his hearers will know whether he preaches a scheme of free will, or a Covenant of Grace—whether he teaches salvation by works, or salvation by the power and grace of God.

But Beloved, a man might preach all these doctrines to the full and yet not declare the whole counsel of God. For here comes the labor and the battle—here it is that he who is faithful in these modern days will have to bare the full brunt of war. It is not enough to preach doctrine. We must preach *duty*, we must faithfully and firmly insist upon *practice*. So long as you will preach nothing but bare doctrine, there is a certain class of men of perverted intellect who will admire you, but once begin to preach responsibility—say outright, once and for all, that if the sinner perishes it is his own fault. That if any man sinks to Hell, his damnation will lie at his own door and at once there is a cry of “Inconsistency! How can these two things stand together?”

Even good Christian men are found who cannot endure the whole Truth of God and who will oppose the servant of the Lord who will not be content with a fragment, but will honestly present the whole Gospel of Christ. This is one of the troubles that the faithful minister has to endure. But he is not faithful to God—I say it solemnly—I do not believe that any man is even faithful to his own conscience who can preach simply the doctrine of responsibility. I do assuredly believe that every man who sinks into Hell shall have himself alone to curse for it. It shall be said of them as they pass the fiery portal—“You would not.” “You would have none of My rebukes. You were bid to the supper and you would not come. I called and you refused. I stretched out My hands and no man regarded. And now, behold, I will mock at your calamities. I will laugh when your fear comes.”

The Apostle Paul knew how to dare public opinion and on one hand to preach the duty of man and on the other the Sovereignty of God. I would borrow the wings of an eagle and fly to the utmost height of high doctrine when I am preaching Divine Sovereignty. God has absolute and unlimited power over men to do with them as He pleases, even as the potter does with the clay. Let not the creature question the Creator, for He gives no account of His matters.

But when I preach concerning man and look at the other aspect of truth, I dive to the utmost depth. I am, if you will so call me, a low-doctrine man in that, for as an honest messenger of Christ I must use his own language and cry—“He that believes not is condemned already, because he believes not on the Son of God.” I do not see that the whole counsel of God is declared unless those two apparently contradictory points are brought out and plainly taught.

To preach the whole counsel of God it is necessary to declare the promise in all its freeness, sureness and richness. When the promise makes the subject of the text the minister should never be afraid of it. If it is an unconditional promise, he should make its unconditionality one of the most prominent features of his discourse. He should go the whole way

with whatever God has promised to His people. Should the command be the subject, the minister must not flinch. He must utter the precept as fully and confidently as he would the promise.

He must exhort, rebuke, command with all long-suffering. He must ever maintain the fact that the perceptive part of the Gospel is as valuable—no, as invaluable—as the promissory part. He must stand to it, that “By their fruits you shall know them.” That “Unless the tree bring forth good fruit it is hewn down and cast into the fire.” Holy living must be preached, as well as happy living. Holiness of life must be constantly insisted on, as well as that simple faith which depends for all on Christ. To declare the whole counsel of God—to gather up ten thousand things into one—I think it is needful that when a minister gets his text, he should say what that text means honestly and uprightly.

Too many preachers get a text and kill it. They wring its neck, then stuff it with some empty notions and present it upon the table for an unthinking people to feed upon. That man does not preach the whole counsel of God who does not let God's Word speak for itself in its own pure, simple language. If he finds one day a text like this—“It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy,” the faithful minister will go all the lengths of that text. And if on the morrow the Spirit of God lays home to his conscience this—“You will not come unto Me that you might have life,” or this other—“Whosoever will, let him come,” he will be just as honest with his text on that side as he was on the other.

He will not shirk the Truth of God. He will dare to look at it straight in the face himself and then he will bring it up into the pulpit and there say to it—“O Word, speak for Yourself and be You heard alone. Suffer me not, O Lord, to pervert or misinterpret Your own Heaven-sent Truth.” Simple honesty to the pure Word of God is, I think, requisite to the man who would not shun to declare the whole counsel of God.

Moreover, this is not all. If a man would declare the whole counsel of God and not shun to do so, he must be very particular upon the crying sins of the times. The honest minister does not condemn sin in the mass. He singles out separate sins in his hearers and without drawing the bow at a venture he puts an arrow on the string and the Holy Spirit sends it right home to the individuals conscience. He who is true to his God does not look to his congregation as a great mass, but as separate individuals and he endeavors to adapt his discourse to men's conscience, so that they will perceive he speaks of *them*.

It is said of Rowland Hill that he was so personal a preacher, that if a man were far away sitting in a window, or in some secret corner, he would nevertheless feel—“That man is speaking to me.” And the true preacher who declares the whole counsel of God so speaks that his hearers feel that there is something for them. A reproof for their sins, an exhortation which they ought to obey, a something which comes pointedly, pertinently and personally home. Nor do I think any man has declared the whole counsel of God, who does not do this.

If there is a vice that you should shun, if there is an error that you should avoid, if there is a duty that you ought to fulfill—if all these things are not mentioned in the discourses from the pulpit—the minister has shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. If there is one sin that is rife in the neighborhood and especially in the congregation, should the minister avoid that particular vice in order to avoid offending you, he has been untrue to his calling, dishonest to his God.

I do not know how I can describe the man who declares the whole counsel of God better than by referring you to the Epistles of St. Paul. There you have the doctrine and the precept, experience and practice. He tells of corruption within and temptation without. The whole Divine life is portrayed and the needed directions given. There you have the solemn rebuke and the gentle comfort. There you have the words that “drop as the rain and distil as the dew.” And there you have the sentences that roll like thunder and flash like lightning. There you see him at one time with his crook in his hand, gently leading his sheep into the pastures. And, another, you see him with his sword drawn, doing valiant battle against the enemies of Israel. He who would be faithful and preach the whole counsel of God must imitate the Apostle Paul and preach as he wrote.

The question, however, is suggested, is there any temptation which arises to the man who endeavors to do this? Is there anything which would tempt him from the straight path and induce him not to preach the whole counsel of God? Ah, my Brother, little do you understand the minister's position, if you have not sometimes trembled for him. Espouse but one phase of the Truth of God and you shall be cried up to the very heavens. Become such a Calvinist that you shut your eyes to one half the Bible and cannot see the responsibility of the sinner and men will clap their hands and cry Hallelujah. And on the backs of many you shall be hoisted to a throne and become a very prince in their Israel.

On the other hand, begin to preach mere morality, practice without doctrine and you shall be elevated on other men's shoulders. You shall, if I may use such a figure, ride upon these asses into Jerusalem. And you shall hear them cry, Hosanna! and see them wave their palm branches before you. But once preach the *whole* counsel of God and you shall have both parties down upon you—one crying, “The man is too high,” the other saying, “No, he is too low.” The one will say, “He's a rank Arminian,” the other, “He's a vile hyper-Calvinist.”

Now, a man does not like to stand between two fires. There is an inclination to please one or other of the two parties and so, if not to increase one's adherents, at least to get a more ferociously attached people. Yes, but if we once begin to think of that, if we suffer the cry of either party on either hand to lead us from that narrow path—the path of right and truth and rectitude—it is all over with us then. How many ministers feel the influence of persons of wealth? The minister in his pulpit, perhaps, is inclined to think of the squire in his green pew. Or else he thinks—“What will deacon So-and-So say?” Or, “What will the other deacon say, who thinks the very reverse?” or, “What will Mr. A, the editor

of such a newspaper, write next Monday?" or, "What will Mrs. B say next time I meet her?"

Yes, all these things cast their little weight into the scale. And they have a tendency, if a man is not kept right by God the Holy Spirit, to make him diverge a little from that narrow path in which alone he can stand if he would declare the whole counsel of God. Ah, Friends, there are honors to be had by the man who will espouse the opinion of a clique. But while there are honors, there are far more dishonors to be gained by him who will stand firm to the unstained banner of Truth, singly and alone and do battle against mischief of every shape, as well in the Church as in the world. Therefore, it was no mean testimony that the Apostle asked for himself, that he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

But, then, let me remark further—while there is this temptation not to declare all the counsel of God, the true minister of Christ feels impelled to preach the whole Truth of God, because it, and it alone, can meet the wants of man. What evils has this world seen through a distorted, mangled, man-molded Gospel? What mischiefs have been done to the souls of men by men who have preached only one part and not all the counsel of God? My heart bleeds for many a family where Antinomian doctrine has gained the sway. I could tell many a sad story of families, dead in sin, whose consciences are seared as with a hot iron by the fatal preaching to which they listen. I have known convictions stifled and desires quenched by the soul-destroying system which takes manhood from man and makes him no more responsible than an ox.

I cannot imagine a more ready instrument in the hands of Satan for the ruin of souls than a minister who tells sinners that it is not their duty to repent of their sins or to believe in Christ. And all the while call himself a Gospel minister while he teaches that God hates some men infinitely and unchangeably for no reason whatever but simply because *he* chooses to do so. O my Brethren! May the Lord save you from the voice of the charmer and keep you ever deaf to the voice of error.

Even in Christian families, what evil will a distorted Gospel produce! I have seen the young Believer, just saved from sin, happy in his early Christian career and walking humbly with his God. But evil has crept in, disguised in the mantle of truth. The finger of partial blindness was laid upon their eyes and but one doctrine could be seen. Sovereignty was seen, but not responsibility. The minister once beloved was hated. He who had been honest to preach God's Word, was accounted as the off-scouring of all things. And what became the effect? The very reverse of good and gracious. Bigotry usurped the place of love. Bitterness lived where once there had been a loveliness of character.

I could point you to innumerable instances where harping upon any one peculiar doctrine has driven men to excess of bigotry and bitterness. And when a man has once come there, he is ready enough for sin of any kind to which the devil may please to tempt him. There is a necessity that the whole Gospel should be preached, or else the spirits, even of Christians, will become marred and maimed. I have known men diligent

for Christ, laboring to win souls with both hands. And on a sudden they have espoused one particular doctrine and not the whole Truth of God and they have subsided into lethargy.

On the other hand, where men have only taken the practical side of the Truth of God and left out the doctrinal, too many professors have run over into legality. They have talked as if they were to be saved by works and have almost forgotten that grace by which they were called. They are like the Galatians. They have been bewitched by what they have heard. The believer in Christ, if he is to be kept pure, simple, holy, charitable, Christ-like, is only to be kept so by a preaching of the whole Truth as it is in Jesus.

And as for the salvation of sinners, ah, my Hearers, we can never expect God to bless our ministry for the conversion of sinners unless we preach the Gospel as a whole. Let me get but one part of the Truth of God and always dwell upon it, to the exclusion of every other, and I cannot expect my Master's blessing. If I preach as He would have me preach, He will certainly own the Word. He will never leave it without His own living witness. But let me imagine that I can improve the Gospel—that I can make it consistent, that I can dress it up and make it look finer—I shall find that my Master is departed and that Ichabod is written on the walls of the sanctuary.

How many there are kept in bondage through neglect of Gospel invitations. They are longing to be saved. They go up to the House of God, crying to be saved. And there is nothing but predestination for them. On the other hand, what multitudes are kept in darkness through practical preaching. It is do! Do! Do! And nothing but do! And the poor souls come away and say—"Of what use is that to me? I can do nothing. Oh, that I had a way shown to me available for salvation." Of the Apostle Paul we think it may be truly said that no sinner missed a comfort from his keeping back Christ's Cross. That no saint was bewildered in spirit from his denying the bread of Heaven and withholding precious truth. That no practical Christian became so practical as to become legal and no doctrinal Christian became so doctrinal as to become unpractical. His preaching was of so savory and consistent a kind, that they who heard him, being blessed of the Spirit, became Christians, indeed, both in life and spirit, reflecting the image of their Master.

I feel I cannot dwell very long upon this text. I have been so extremely unwell for the last two days that the thoughts which I hoped to present to you in better form, have only come tumbling out of my mouth in far from an orderly manner.

**II.** I must now turn away from the Apostle Paul to address you A VERY FEW EARNEST, SINCERE AND AFFECTIONATE WORDS BY WAY OF FAREWELL. "Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

I wish not to say anything in self-commendation and praise. I will not be my own witness as to my faithfulness. But I appeal unto you—I take

you to witness this day—that I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Often have I come into this pulpit in great weakness and I have far more often gone away in great sorrow, because I have not preached to you as earnestly as I desired. I confess to many errors and failings and more especially to a want of earnestness when engaged in prayer for your souls. But there is one charge which my conscience acquits me of this morning and I think you will acquit me, too—I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

If in anything I have erred, it has been an error of judgment. I may have been mistaken, but so far as I have learned the Truth of God, I can say that no fear of public opinion, nor of private opinion, has ever turned me aside from that which I hold to be the Truth of my Lord and Master. I have preached to you the precious things of the Gospel. I have endeavored to the utmost of my ability to preach grace in all its fullness. I know the preciousness of that doctrine in my own experience—God forbid that I should preach any other. If we are not saved by grace, we can never be saved at all. If from first to last the work of salvation is not in God's hands, none of us can ever see God's face with acceptance.

I preach this doctrine, not from choice, but from absolute necessity. If this doctrine is not true, then are we lost souls. Your faith is vain, our preaching is vain and we are still in our sins and there we must continue until the end. But, on the other hand, I can say also, I have not shunned to exhort, to invite, to entreat. I have bid the sinner come to Christ. I have been urged not to do so, but I could not resist it. With a heart yearning over perishing sinners, I could not conclude without crying—"Come to Jesus, Sinner, come." With eyes weeping for sinners, I am compelled to bid them come to Jesus.

It is not possible for me to dwell upon doctrine without invitation. If you come not to Christ it is not for want of calling, or because I have not wept over your sins and travailed in birth for the souls of men. The one thing I have to ask of you is this—bear me witness, my Hearers, bear me witness—that in this respect I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have preached all that I know of the whole counsel of God. Have I known a single sin which I have not rebuked? Has there been a doctrine that I have believed which I have kept back? Has there been a part of the Word, doctrinal or experimental, which I have willfully concealed? I am very far from perfect, again with weeping I confess my unworthiness. I have not served God as I ought to do. I have not been so earnest with you as I could desire.

Now that my three years' ministry in the Music Hall is over, I could have wished that I might begin again, that I might fall on my knees before you and beseech you to regard the things that make for your peace. But here, again, I do repeat it, that while as to earnestness I plead guilty, yet as to truth and honesty I can challenge the bar of God. I can challenge the elect angels, I can call you all to witness that I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

It is easy enough, if one wills to do it, to avoid preaching an objectionable doctrine by simply passing over the texts which teach it. If an unpleasant Truth of God thrusts itself on you, it is not hard to put it aside, imagining that it would disturb your previous teaching. Such concealment may, for a while, succeed, and possibly your people will not find it out for years. But if I have studied after anything, I have sought always to bring out that Truth of God which I have neglected beforehand. And if there has been any one Truth that I have kept back up to now, it shall be my earnest prayer that from this day forth it may be made more prominent, that so it may be the better understood and seen.

Well, I simply ask you this question and if I indulge in some little egotism—if on this parting day, “I am become a fool in glorying,” it is not for the sake of glorying, it is with a better motive. My Hearer, I put this question to you—there may come sad disasters to many of you. In a little time some of you may be frequenting places where the Gospel is not preached. You may embrace another and a false Gospel. I only ask this thing of you—bear me witness that it was not my fault—that I have been faithful and have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. In a little time some here who have been restrained by the fact of having attended a place of worship, seeing the chosen minister has gone, may not go anywhere else afterwards. You may become careless.

Perhaps next Sabbath-Day you may be sitting at home, lolling about and wasting the day. But there is one thing I should like to say before you make up your mind not to attend the House of God again—bear me witness that I have been faithful with you. It may be that some here who have professedly run well for a time while they have been hearing the Word, may go back. Some of you may go right into the world again. You may become drunkards, swearers and the like. God forbid that it be so! But I charge you, if you plunge into sin, do at least say this one thing for him who desires nothing so much as to see you saved—say I have been honest with you. Say I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

Oh, my Hearers, some of you in a little time will be on your deathbeds. When your pulse is feeble, when the terrors of grim death are round about you, if you are still unconverted to Christ, there is one thing I shall want you to add to your last will and testament. It is this—the exclusion of the poor minister who stands before you this day from any share in that desperate folly of yours which has led you to neglect your own soul. Oh, have I not cried to you to repent? Have I not bid you look to it before death surprised you? Have I not exhorted you, my Hearers, to flee for a refuge to the hope set before you? Oh, Sinner, when you are wading through the black river, cast back no taunt on me as though I were your murderer, for in this thing I can say—“I wash my hands in innocence. I am clear of your blood.”

But the day is coming when we shall all meet again. This great assembly shall be submerged into a greater, as the drop loses itself in the ocean. And I shall stand on that day to take my trial at God's bar. If I have

not warned you, I have been an unfaithful watchman and your blood will be required at my hands. If I have not preached Christ to you and bid you flee for refuge, then, though you perish, yet shall your soul be required of me. I beseech you, if you laugh at me, if you reject my message, if you despise Christ, if you hate His Gospel, if you will be damned, yet at least give me an acquittal of your blood!

I see some before me who do not often hear me. And yet I can say concerning them, they have been the subject of my private prayers. And often, too, of my tears, when I see them going on in their iniquities. Well, I do ask this one thing and as honest men you cannot deny it me. If you will have your sins, if you will be lost, if you will not come to Christ—at least—amid the thunders of the Great Day, when I stand for trial at God's bar, acquit me of having destroyed your souls.

What more can I say? How shall I plead with you? Had I an angel's tongue and the heart of the Savior, then would I plead. But I cannot say more than I have often done. In God's name I beseech you flee to Christ for refuge. If all has not sufficed before, let this suffice you now. Come, guilty Soul and flee away to Him whose wide open arms are willing to receive every soul that flees to Him with penitence and faith. In a little time the preacher himself will lie stretched upon his bed. A few more days of solemn meeting, a few more sermons, a few more prayers, and I think I see myself in yon upper chamber, with friends watching around me.

He who has preached to thousands now needs consolation for himself. He who has cheered many in the article of death is now passing through the river himself. My Hearers, shall there be any of you whom I shall see upon my death bed who shall curse me with being unfaithful? Shall these eyes be haunted with the visions of men whom I have amused and interested, but into whose hearts I have never sought to plunge the Truth of God? Shall I lie there and shall these mighty congregations pass in dreary panorama before me and as they subside before my eyes, one after the other, shall each one curse me as being unfaithful?

God forbid! I trust you will do me this favor—that when I lie dying you will allow that I am clear of the blood of all men and have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. I see myself standing at the last great day a prisoner at the bar. What if this shall be read against me—"You have had many to listen to you. Thousands have crowded to hear the words which fell from your lips. But you have misled, you have deceived, you have willfully mistaught this people"? Thunders such as have been never heard before must roll over this poor head and lightning more terrific than have ever scathed the fiend shall blast this heart, if I have been unfaithful to you. My position—if I had but preached the Word to these crowds, not to speak of many thousands of times—my position were the most awful in the whole universe if I were unfaithful. Oh may God avert that worst of ills—unfaithfulness—from my head.

Now, as here I stand, I make this my last appeal—"I pray you in Christ's stead be you reconciled to God." But if you will not be, I ask you this single favor—and I think you will not deny it—take the blame of your

own ruin, for I am pure from the blood of all men, since I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

This much by way of calling you to witness. Now, I come to put up a request. I have a favor to ask of all here present. If in anything you have been profited, if in anything you have ever had comfort, if you have found Christ in any way during the preaching of the Gospel here, I beg you, even though you should not listen to my words again, I beg you to carry me up in your heart before the Throne of God in prayer. It is by the prayers of our people that we live. God's ministers owe more to the prayers of their people than they ever know. I love my people for their prayerfulness for me. Never minister was so much prayed for as I have been.

But will those of you who will be compelled to separate from us by reason of distance and the like, will you still carry me in your thoughts before God and let my name be unengraved on your bosoms as often as you present yourselves before the mercy seat? It is a little thing I ask. It is simply that you say—"Lord, help Your servant to win souls to Christ." Ask that he may be made more useful than he has ever been. That if he is in anything mistaken he may be set right. If he has not comforted you, ask that he may do so in the future. But if he has been honest with you, then pray that your Master may have him in His holy keeping. And while I ask you to put up this request for me, it is for all those that preach the Truth in Jesus.

Brethren, pray for us. We would labor for you as those that must give account. Ah, it is no little thing to be a minister if we are true to our calling. As Baxter once said, when someone told him the ministry was easy work—"Sir, I wish you would take my place, if you think so and try it." If to agonize with God in prayer, if to wrestle for the souls of men, if to be abused and not to reply, if to suffer all manner of rebukes and slanders—if this is rest—take it, Sir, for I shall be glad to get rid of it. I do ask that you would pray for all ministers of Christ, that they may be helped and upheld, maintained and supported, that their strength may be equal to their day.

And then, having put up this request for myself and therefore a selfish one, I have an entreaty to put up for others. My Hearers, I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that there are still many of you who have long listened to the Word here, but who have still not given your hearts to Christ. I am glad to see you here, even though it should be for the last time. If you should never tread the hallowed courts of God's House again, never hear His Word, never listen to hearty invitation or honest warning, I have one entreaty to put up for you. Mark, not a request, but an entreaty. And such an one, that if I were begging for my life I could not be more honest and intensely earnest about it.

Poor Sinner, stop awhile and think. If you have heard the Gospel and been profited by it, what will you think of all your lost opportunities when you are on your dying bed? What will you think when you are cast into Hell, when this thought shall come ringing in your ears—"You did hear the Gospel, but you did reject it." Then the devils in Hell shall laugh in

your face and say—"We never rejected Christ, we never despised the Word," and they shall thrust you into a deeper Hell than ever they themselves experienced. I entreat you, stop and think of this. Are the joys that you have in this world worth living for? Is not this world a dull and dreary place? Man, turn over a fresh leaf. I tell you, there is no joy for you here and there is none hereafter while you are what you are.

Oh, may God teach you that the mischief lies in your sin. You have unforgiven sin about you. As long as your sin is unforgiven, you can neither be happy here, nor in the world to come. My entreaty is, go to your chamber. If you know yourself to be guilty, make a full confession there before God. Ask Him to have mercy upon you, for Jesus' sake. And He will not deny you. Man, He will not deny you. He will answer you. He will put all your sins away. He will accept you. He will make you His child. And as you shall be more happy here, so shall you be blessed in the world to come. Oh, Christian Brothers and Sisters, I entreat you, implore the Spirit of God to lead many in this crowd to full confession, to real prayer and humble faith. And if they have never repented before, may they now turn to Christ.

Oh, Sinner, your life is short and death is hastening. Your sins are many and if judgment has lead feet, yet has it a sure and heavy hand. Turn, turn, turn, I beseech you. May the Holy Spirit turn you. Lo, Jesus is lifted up before you now. By His five wounds, I beseech you, turn. Look to Him and live. Believe on Him and you shall be saved, for whosoever believes on the Son of Man has everlasting life and he shall never perish, neither shall the wrath of God rest upon him.

May the Spirit of God now command His own abiding blessing, even life forevermore, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[At the commencement of the Service, Mr. SPURGEON said—"The service of this morning will partake very much of the character of a farewell discourse and a farewell meeting. However sorrowful it is to me to part with many of you whose faces I have so long seen in the throng of my hearers, yet for Christ's sake, for the sake of consistency and the Truth of God, we are compelled to withdraw from this place and on next Sabbath morning hope to worship God in Exeter Hall. On two occasions before, as our friends are aware, it was proposed to open this place in the evening and I was then able to prevent it by the simple declaration, that if so I should withdraw.

"That declaration suffices not at this time. And you can therefore perceive that I should be a coward to the Truth of God, that I should be inconsistent with my own declarations, that in fact, my name would cease to be SPURGEON, if I yielded. I neither can nor will give way in anything in which I know I am right. And in the defense of God's holy Sabbath, the cry of this day is, 'Arise, let us go from this place!' "]

# PAUL CHEERED IN PRISON BY HIS LORD NO. 3153

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 15, 1909.

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

*“And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle. And the following night the Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as you have testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must you bear witness also at Rome. And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.”*  
*Acts 23:10-13.*

FROM the midnight whisper of the Lord to Paul we may draw forth sweet encouragement. Those of the Lord's children who have been engaged in His work and are called to suffer in it, have here a special word of consolation!

Paul had been in a great tumult and had been roughly rescued from the wrath of the people by the chief captain who saw that otherwise he would be pulled in pieces. Paul was like the rest of us, made of flesh and blood and, therefore, liable to be cast down. He had kept himself calm at first, but still, the strong excitement of the day had no doubt operated upon his mind and when he was lying in prison all alone, thinking upon the perils that surrounded him, he needed good cheer—and he received it. The bravest man may find his spirit sinking after the battle and so perhaps it was with the Apostle.

I. In this passage, we note the good cheer that came to Paul in the dungeon. This consisted, first, in HIS MASTER'S PRESENCE—“the Lord stood by him.”

If all else forsook him, Jesus was company enough! If all others despised him, the smile of Jesus was patronage enough! If the good cause seemed in danger—in the Presence of his Master victory was sure! The Lord, who had stood for him at the Cross, now stood by him in the prison. The Lord, who had called to him out of Heaven, who had washed him in His blood, who had commissioned him to be His servant, who had often sustained him in labors and trials, now visited him in his solitary cell! It was a dungeon, but the Lord was there! It was dark, but the Glory of the Lord lit it up with Heaven's own splendor! Better to be in a jail with the Lord than to be in Heaven without Him! The harps above could make no heavenly place without Jesus—and Jesus being there, the clanking fetters and the cold floor of the stony cell could not suggest a sorrow.

“The Lord stood by him.” This shall be said of each one who diligently serves God. Dear Friend, if you are a worker for the Lord Jesus, depend upon it, He will not desert you. If, in the course of your endeavors, you are brought into sadness and depression, you shall then find it sweetly

true that the Lord stands by you. Did you ever forsake a friend who was spending his strength for you? If you have done so, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, but I think I hear you say indignantly, "No, I have always been faithful to my faithful friend." Do not, therefore, suspect your Lord of treating you ungenerously, for He is faithful and true. All your former helpers may desert you—Sadducees, Pharisees and scribes may all set themselves to oppose you—but with the Lord at your right hand you shall not be moved! Cheer up, desponding Brothers and Sisters—

***"God is near you, therefore cheer up,  
Sad soul!  
He'll defend you when around you  
Billows roll."***

**II.** The next comfort for Paul was the reflection that THE LORD'S STANDING BY HIM PROVED THAT HE KNEW WHERE HE WAS AND WAS AWARE OF HIS CONDITION.

The Lord had not lost sight of Paul because he was shut up in the common jail. One is reminded of the Quaker who came to see John Bunyan in prison and said to him, "Friend, the Lord sent me to you and I have been seeking you in half the prisons in England." "No, verily," said John, "that cannot be! For if the Lord had sent you to me, you would have come here at once, for He knows I have been here for years!" God has not a single jewel laid by and forgotten. "You see Me" is a great consolation to one who delights himself in the Lord. Many and diverse are the prisons of affliction in which the Lord's servants are shut up. One may be lying in the prison of pain, chained by the leg or by the hand, through accident or disease. Or perhaps he is shut up in the narrow cell of poverty, or in the dark room of bereavement, or in the dungeon of mental depression—but the Lord knows in what ward His servant is shut up and He will not leave him to pine away forgotten, "as a dead man out of mind."

The Lord stood by Paul despite doors and locks. He asked no warden's leave to enter, nor did He stir bolt or bar, but there He was—the Companion of His humble servant! The Lord can visit His chosen when nobody else could be allowed to do so because of contagion, or from fear of exciting the fevered brain. If we come into such a peculiar position that no earthly friend knows our experience—none having been tempted as we are—yet the Lord Jesus can enter into our special trial and sympathize in our peculiar grief. Jesus can stand side by side with us, for He has been afflicted in all our afflictions.

What is more, that part of our circumstances which we do not ourselves know, Jesus knows, and in these He stands by us, for Paul was not aware of the danger to which he was exposed. He did not know that certain Jews, to the number of forty, had banded themselves together to kill him! But He who was his shield and his exceeding great reward had heard the cruel oath and arranged to disappoint the bloodthirsty ones. Dear Friend, the Lord knows all about your troubles before they come to you—He anticipates them by His tender foresight. Before Satan can draw the bow, the Preserver of men will put His Beloved beyond the reach of the arrow. Before the weapon is forged in the furnace and fashioned on the anvil, He knows how to provide us with armor of proof which shall burn the edge of the sword and break the point of the spear. Let us

therefore sing with holy boldness, “In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me. He shall set me up upon a rock.” How safe we are, for Jehovah has said, “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment, you shall condemn.” With joy, therefore, let us draw water out of these two wells of salvation—the Lord is present with us and He knows us altogether! Putting the two thoughts together, we may hear Him say to our inmost souls—

***“I, the Lord, am with you,  
Be you not afraid!  
I will help and strengthen,  
Be you not dismayed!  
Yes, I will uphold you  
With My own right hand.  
You are called and chosen  
In My sight to stand!  
Onward then, and fear not,  
Children of the day!  
For His Word shall never,  
Never pass away.”***

**III.** When the Lord Jesus came to Paul, He gave him a third reason for courage. He said, “Be of good cheer, Paul: for you have testified of Me in Jerusalem. THERE WAS MUCH COMFORT IN THIS ASSURANCE THAT HIS WORK WAS ACCEPTED OF HIS MASTER.

We dare not look for much joy in anything that we have done, for our poor works are all imperfect. And yet the Lord sometimes gives His servants honey in the carcasses of lions which they have, themselves, slain, by pouring into their souls a sweet sense of having walked in integrity before Him. Before the Great Day of reward, the Lord whispers into the ear, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Or He says openly before all men, “She has done what she could.” Herein is good cheer, for if the Lord accepts, it is a small matter if men condemn! The Lord says to Paul, “You have testified of Me in Jerusalem.” The Apostle had done so, but he was too humble to console himself with that fact till his Lord gave him leave to do so by acknowledging the brave deed!

Perhaps, dear Friend, you also shall be made to remember that you have borne witness for Jesus and that your life has not been altogether in vain. It may be that your conscience makes you more familiar with your faults than with your services, and you rather sigh than sing as you look back upon your Christian career. Yet your loving Lord covers all your failures and commends you for what His Grace has enabled you to do in the way of witness-bearing. It must be sweet to you to hear Him say, “I know your works; for you have a little strength and have kept My Word, and have not denied My name.”

Be faithful to your Lord, dear Friend, if you are now in prosperity, for thus you will be laying up a store of cheering memories for years to come. To look back upon a well-spent life will not cause an atom of legal boasting to an experienced Believer—but it will justly create much holy rejoicing! Paul was able to rejoice that he had not run in vain, neither labored in vain—and happy are we if we can do the same. If it is right for us to chasten our conscience on account of omissions, it must be lawful ground for thankful joy that our heart condemns us not, for then have

we confidence towards God. [See Sermon #3152, Volume 55—THE LOWER COURTS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] If any of us should fall into straitened circumstances, it will be a comfort to be able to say, “When I was rich, I freely used my wealth for my Lord.” If we are ill, it will be a satisfaction to remember that when we were in health, we used our strength for Jesus. These are reflections which give light in the shade and make music at midnight. It is not out of our own reflections that the joy arises, but out of the witness of the Holy Spirit that the Lord is not unrighteous to forget our work of faith and labor of love.

**IV.** A fourth comfort remained for Paul in the words, “As you have testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must you bear witness also at Rome.” The Lord would have us take comfort from THE PROSPECT OF FUTURE SERVICE AND USEFULNESS. We are not done with yet—and thrown aside as vessels in which the Lord has no more pleasure. This is the chief point of comfort in our Lord’s word to the Apostle. Be of good courage, *there is more for you to do*, Paul. They cannot kill you at Jerusalem, for you must bear witness also at Rome.

Brace yourself up, O weary, working Brother, for your day’s work is not yet over and your sun cannot go down till, like Joshua, you have finished your conflict with Amalek! The old saying is true, “You are immortal till your work is done.” Possibly not one half of your work is even begun and, therefore, you will rise again from sickness, you will soar above depression and you will do more for the Lord than ever! It will yet be said to you, as to the angel of the Church in Thyatira, “I know your works, and the last to be more than the first.” Wycliffe could not die though the malicious monks favored him with their best wishes in that direction. “No,” said the Reformer, “I shall not die, but live, and declare all the evil deeds of the friars.” The sight of rogues to be exposed awakened his flickering life and revived its flame. Disease could not carry off Melancthon because he had eminent service yet to do, side by side with Luther. I have admired the way in which the great Reformer dragged his friend back to life by assuring him that the great work needed him and he must recover. “He devoutly prayed, ‘We implore You, O Lord our God. We cast all our burdens on You *and will cry till You hear us*, pleading all the promises which can be found in the Holy Scriptures respecting Your hearing prayer, so that *You must indeed hear us* to preserve at all future periods our entire confidence in Your own promises. After this, he seized hold of Melancthon’s hand and said, ‘Be of good courage, Philip, YOU SHALL NOT DIE.’” He prayed his friend back from the mouth of the grave and sent him on his way comforted with the truthful prediction that he had yet to bear more testimony for the Truth of God! Surely there is no restorative from sickness and no insurance for continued life like the confidence that our task is not done—and our race is not ended!

Godly Whitefield, when smitten with a dangerous illness, rose again to renew his seraphic activities after his death had become matter of daily expectation. It is said, in connection with this event, that shortly after his recovery, a poor Black woman insisted on having an interview with him. On being admitted, she sat down upon the ground and looking earnestly into his face, said to him in broken language, “Massa, you just go to Heaven’s gate, but Jesus Christ said, ‘Get you down; you must not come here yet, but go first and call some more poor Negroes.’” And who would

not be willing to tarry here to win more poor Negroes for Jesus? Even the bliss of Heaven may be cheerfully postponed for such a gain!

Come, then, ailing and desponding one, there is no use in lying down in despair, for a life of usefulness is still in reserve for you! Up, Elijah, and no more ask to die, for God has further errands for His servant! Neither the lion nor the bear can kill you, O David, for you have yet to fight a giant and cut off his head! Be not fearful, O Daniel, of the rage of Babylon's drunken king, for you are yet to outlive the rage of hungry lions! Courage, O you mistrustful spirit—you have only run with the footmen as of yet—you shall yet contend with horses and prove more than a match for them! Therefore lift up the hands that hang down! "You must stand before Caesar." A Divine decree ordains for you greater and more trying service than as yet you have seen. A future awaits you and no power on the earth or under the earth can rob you of it—therefore be of good cheer!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
ACTS 25-26; 1 JOHN 4.**

**Acts 25:1.** *Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem.* Porcius Festus had been appointed governor in the place of Felix who had left Paul a prisoner so as to please the Jews, though he would have been willing enough to release him if Paul or his friends would have given him a sufficiently heavy bribe. He had trembled as Paul had "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," but his conscience had not been so quickened as to make him act justly towards the Apostle. Yet his unrighteous conduct was made to serve the Lord's purpose, which was that Paul should testify before one earthly ruler after another until he should ultimately appear before the cruel Nero, himself, at Rome. Paul was at Caesarea, but he was not at once brought before Festus. When the governor went up to Jerusalem, the Apostle's enemies renewed their plotting against him

**2, 3.** *Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, and desired favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.* They had been foiled in their previous attempt to assassinate the Apostle but their malice led them to try again to put him to death in that dastardly fashion.

**4, 5.** *But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea and that he himself would depart shortly there. Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there is any wickedness in him.* Whether Festus suspected their real reason for being so anxious for him to send for Paul, we cannot tell, but at any rate, their scheme was once more a failure.

**6, 7.** *And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea, and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought. And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.* It was easy for them to lay many and grievous complaints against Paul, yet it was not

only difficult but impossible for them to prove their charge against the Apostle!

**8, 9.** *While he answered for himself, “Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the Temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended anything at all.” But Festus, willing to do the Jew’s pleasure. In that respect he was just like his predecessor, Felix. No doubt he took into account the number and position of Paul’s accusers and thought it would be the wiser policy to side with them rather than with the prisoner and, therefore, “Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure.”*

**9-11.** *Answered Paul, and said, Will you go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as you very well know. For if I am an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there are none of these things of which these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. As a freeborn Roman citizen, he had the right of appeal to the emperor—and that right he exercised. It may be that he also realized that this was the way in which the Lord’s prophecy would be fulfilled—“Be of good cheer, Paul, for as you have testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must you bear witness also at Rome.”*

**12.** *Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Have you appealed unto Caesar? Unto Caesar shall you go. The die was cast—there was no need to argue the matter any further.*

**13-16.** *And after certain days King Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus. And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul’s cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him. To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him. Festus must have felt profound contempt for the chief priests and elders of the Jews who clamored for Paul’s death even before he had been tried—and he made it very plain to them that this was not the Roman way even if it were the Jewish method of dealing with accused persons.*

**17-19.** *Therefore, when they were come here, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought no accusations of such things as I supposed: but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. [See Sermon #2016, Volume 34—JESUS AFFIRMED TO BE ALIVE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Festus may have supposed that they would have accused Paul of plotting against Rome, or of some other political crime. He would have thought such matters of far greater importance than the “certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.” Paul could make that affirmation with the utmost confidence, for Christ had appeared to him on the road to Damascus, proving without doubt that, though once dead, He was again alive.*

**20-22.** *And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar. Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. Tomorrow, said he, you shall hear him.* So Paul's witness-bearing was made to spread still further! It is scarcely possible to conceive of any other circumstances in which the Gospel could have been made known to such an audience as the Apostle was, on the morrow, to have the opportunity of addressing!

**23.** *And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.* It was such a congregation as Paul was only too glad to address—and the Gospel could not have had a nobler or worthier advocate—yet we do not read of any who were present yielding up himself or herself to the Lord Jesus Christ.

**4.** *And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, you see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.* Festus took care that the Jews would not be able to forget that they had demanded the death of a man who had not even been put on trial.

**25-27.** *But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself has appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him. I have nothing certain to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him forth before you, and especially before you, O King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place, I might have something to write. For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not to signify the crimes laid against him.* The governor talked like a man of sense and he even went so far as to say that the prisoner before him “had committed nothing worthy of death.”

**Acts 26:1.** *Then Agrippa said unto Paul, You are permitted to speak for yourself. Then Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself.* I do not suppose Agrippa imagined that Paul would take all the liberty that he did, but inasmuch as the king had said to him, “You are permitted to speak for yourself,” Paul, who even when he was permitted to speak for himself, did not forget that he was the servant of God and used that liberty as the servant of God! And so he took the opportunity to seek to impress the Truth of God upon the conscience and heart of the king. Thus Paul answered for himself.

**2, 3.** *I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before you, touching all the things of which I am accused of the Jews: especially because I know you to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: therefore I beseech you to hear me patiently.* It is always well to try to be on good terms with the person whom you wish to impress with the Truth of the Gospel. Paul, therefore, did not begin bluntly, as some foolish people would have done, but he addressed the king most courteously and respectfully. I think I see the little man, as he doubtless was, Paul—the man with feeble eyes and with

no great bodily presence to command attention—yet bravely stretching out his hand and, like a preacher, thus addressing Herod Agrippa!

**4-7.** *My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among my own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.* The Jews still had hope concerning the promise of the Messiah and all the promises in God's Covenant with them. And Paul says that for the sake of this hope he had been led to do that which had now brought him as a prisoner before the king.

Notice that the fiction concerning “the ten lost tribes” has no foundation in Scripture. There are no lost tribes, several of them are mentioned by name in the New Testament. The Apostle James writes “to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad,” and here Paul speaks of them as “our twelve tribes.” The Jews whom we have among us at this day belong to all of the twelve tribes, as they will tell you if you ask them. There are no lost tribes yet to be discovered, neither are we, as a nation, those ten tribes that are supposed to have been lost! We are Gentiles and not Jews. The Apostle speaks here concerning the hope of the whole nation of the Jews. We who have believed in Jesus are the inheritors of that grand hope, as we have understood it correctly and have realized that it is fulfilled in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only-begotten Son of God!

**8.** *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* [See Sermon #1067, Volume 16—THE RESURRECTION CREDIBLE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That great fact of the Resurrection of Christ is the cornerstone of the temple of Truth, the keystone of the arch of the Gospel. The Apostles made this Truth of God very prominent in their preaching and here Paul began his address with it. It was the great difficulty of the Christian religion at that period, so Paul went straight to it at once.

**9, 10.** *I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem.* For Paul was the kind of man who, if he thought he ought to do anything, he always did it. Even in his unregenerate state, his conscience, unenlightened as it was, swayed him. But now, with an enlightened conscience, he looked back upon that part of his life with deep regret—and he did not fail to acknowledge and mourn the wrong that he had ignorantly done to the Lord Jesus Christ and His faithful followers.

**10, 11.** *And many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And punished them often in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.* Paul was a whole-hearted man. Whatever he did, he did intensely, so that when he did wrong, he did it with a kind of madness. Such a furious hatred of Jesus of Nazareth was upon him that all Judaea was not large enough for the indulgence of his persecuting malice against the saints! And so he “persecuted them even unto strange cities.”

**12-14.** *Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from Heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?* [See Sermon #202, Volume 4—THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *It is hard for you to kick against the pricks. He was like a stubborn ox kicking against the goads—the harder he kicked, the more the sharp points of the goads pricked him!*

**15-18.** *And I said. Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus whom you persecute. But rise, and stand upon your feet: for I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send you, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me.* [See Sermon #1774, Volume 30—GOD'S WORK UPON MINISTER AND CONVERT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Part of this address was spoken to Paul by Ananias when he came to open his eyes, hence some have thought that Paul here mixed up what was said to him by Christ and what was said by Ananias, yet all the while recognizing it as being virtually all one message from Christ—but I do not think so. I believe that Paul would have us understand that the Lord Jesus Christ actually said to him, on the road to Damascus, all that we have recorded here—and that when Ananias came to him, he, without having heard what the Lord had said to Paul, said the same thing to him—and this would be a kind of sign and token to the Apostle that what was said to him was really a message from God. How often this happens under every true Gospel ministry! The very thing that you were talking about while on your way to the service will be spoken to you by God's servant in the House of Prayer. That which you were reading before you came here may be the very subject selected for our present consideration, for God has a wondrous way of making one of His calls tally with another, so that the two meeting without any collusion on our part shall confirm and establish one another—and the more deeply impress the heart of the hearer!

**19-23.** *Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the Temple, and went about to kill me. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other thing than those which the Prophet and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. Paul stuck to the Scriptures and to the Gospel revealed in them—and was not speaking his own thoughts, ideas and notions—he was a herald proclaiming what his King bade him say and telling what the Grace of his Master made him only too glad to say!*

**24, 25.** *And as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, you are beside yourself. Much learning is making you mad! But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.* He had been “mad” once, as he had just confessed, but he had recovered from that madness. Now how calmly he replies to the taunt of Festus—there is nothing of anger or resentment about his dignified answer, “I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.”

**26, 27.** *For the king knows of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa—*Now the Apostle comes to close grips with the king.

**27, 28.** *Believe you the Prophet? I know that you believe. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”* [See Sermon #871, Volume 15—TO THOSE WHO ARE “ALMOST PERSUADED”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] A great deal of effort has been put forth to prove that Agrippa did not say anything of the kind, but that he was only laughing at Paul when he ironically said, “Are you going to make me a Christian so easily as this?” If so, the reply of Paul was singularly inappropriate, but taking Agrippa’s words to be as they appear here, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian,” Paul’s answer can be well understood.

**29.** *And Paul said, I would to God that not only you, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.* And in so speaking he skillfully hinted how unfairly he was chained before his judges—and yet how he wished ill to none, but only wished good to all!

**30, 31.** *And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: and when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man has done nothing worthy of death or of bonds.* He had impressed Agrippa most favorably and it is quite clear that the king was not jesting with him—he was at least convinced that Paul had done “nothing worthy of death or of bonds.”

**32.** *Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Caesar.* But it was not God’s purpose that Paul should be set at liberty—he must go to Rome and must there, before the emperor, himself, bear witness which he could not bear as a free man, but which the emperor must hear when Paul was brought before him as a prisoner who had appealed to him—and must therefore be heard in person!

**1 John 4:1.** *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* This is an injunction of which there is great need in the present day when so many accept anything that they hear from a “priest” or from a pastor without *searching the Scriptures* to see whether what they hear is in accordance with the Inspired Word of God!

**2.** *Hereby know you the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.* Some say that Jesus Christ was not God. Others say that He was not Man, while some talk as if everything about Him was a mystery! But they who are truly sent by God

declare plainly that Jesus Christ did literally come in the flesh—and such teachers are “of God.”

**3.** *And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, of which you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.* That was the form that antichrist took in John’s day. It is constantly taking different forms, but it is always antichrist—against Christ.

**4.** *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them.* If you have a childlike spirit. If God has made you teachable as little children and His Spirit dwells within you, you will not be overcome by these false Prophets, but you will overcome them!

**4.** *Because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.* They may dupe the world, but they shall not dupe you. If it were possible, they would deceive the very elect, but that is not possible.

**5.** *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world hears them.* They are the world’s prophets—they preach the world’s doctrines, they flatter the world and the world likes that—so “the world hears them.”

**6.** *We are of God: he that knows God hears us, he that is not of God hears us not. Hereby know we the spirit of Truth, and the spirit of error.* They who accept the Apostolic teaching prove that they are “of God.” There are some, nowadays, who say, “We accept the teaching of the Gospels, but we will have nothing to do with the Apostles and their Epistles”—thus they clearly show that they are not of God, for John says, writing under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit—“He that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears us not.”

**7.** *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God.* He who has the spirit of love within him “is born of God,” “for love is of God.” He who constantly seeks the good of others. He whose heart beats with love to those who are not within the narrow confines of His own ribs. He whose love goes forth to God and His people—and to the sons of men in general—this is the man who “is born of God, and knows God.”

**8.** *He that loves not knows not God; for God is love.* He may be very orthodox, but if he does not love, he does not know God. And if he does not know God, what does he know? There is such a thing as holding the Truth of God in bitterness, but those who know God and are truly His children, hold the Truth of God in love.

**9.** *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him.* That was the highest possible proof of love that even God could give us!

**10, 11.** *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* [See Sermons #1707, Volume 29—“HEREIN IS LOVE”; #2447, Volume 42—(same title) and #2394, Volume 41—LOVE’S CLIMAX—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] As God “so loved us” when there was nothing lovable about us, and so loved us as to give His only-begotten Son to save us, “we ought also to love one another.”

**12-14.** *No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we*

*have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.* [See Sermon #2383, Volume 40—SEEING AND TESTIFYING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] John could testify as an eye-witness to the sufferings and death of Christ, for he stood at the foot of the Cross and saw the Savior die—and he had before laid his head upon his Master’s breast. He knew that Christ was real flesh and blood and he knew that Christ really died, so he could truly say, “We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.”

**15, 16.** *Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love, and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.* This is a deep Book. The words are very simple and plain—mainly monosyllables, yet who among us can ever fathom the depth of this Epistle? May we fathom it so far as to plunge into its wondrous depths!

**17, 18.** *Wherein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love.* Questioning, mistrust, unbelief, doubt—all these die when we come truly and heartily to love our Lord! And in proportion as our love to Him burns like a flame of fire, it burns up all this wood, hay and stubble of trembling, slavish fear.

**19.** *We love Him because He first loved us.* [See Sermons #229, Volume 5—LOVE; #1008, Volume 17—LOVE’S LOGIC and #2730, Volume 47—THE SECRET OF LOVE TO GOD—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] We would never have loved Him unless He had “first loved us.” His love to us begat our love to Him!

**20.** *If man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar.* John is very emphatic in his condemnation of such a man as that! Some of the most tender-hearted men in the world are the most blunt in their mode of speaking. And some of the most fawning flatterers are the most cruel in their hearts. We love John all the better because he writes so plainly, “If a man says I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar.”

**20.** *For he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?* Why, Sir, if you could see God, it is clear that you would not love Him. If you talk about your love to Him whom you have not seen, it is utterly false if you do not love men like yourself whom you have seen!

**21.** *And this commandment have we from Him.* That is, from the Lord Jesus, who again and again gave this commandment to His disciples.

**21.** *That he who loves God love his brother also.* O lovers of God, prove the reality of your affection for Him by the genuineness of your love to your fellow men!

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

# RESURRECTION FOR THE JUST AND THE UNJUST NO. 3346

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 1913.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 4, 1868.

*“There shall be a resurrection both for the just and the unjust.”*  
*Acts 24:15.*

THE heathen had, somehow or other, spelled out the Truth of God that the soul of man is immortal. Almost all their religions implied this and some of their sages plainly taught it. But never had they imagined that this immortality might belong also to the body!

The Doctrine of the Resurrection from the Dead was peculiar to Christianity. It was so novel and it seemed, at first, to be so absurd that when men heard the Apostles speak of such a resurrection they mocked and laughed them to scorn as fools. They called Paul, “a babbler,” because of this. They believed he must be mad. Had they not seen the body sicken and die? Had they not marked it in various stages of decay? Did they not know that it was frequently dissolved into small dust, scattered to the manifold winds of Heaven, or that its fragments mingled with the waves of the sea, or that its various members were torn by wild beasts and could they, therefore, imagine it to be credible that any sane person could believe that the human body would rise again from the dead? Yet Paul believed this and this he preached—that there would be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust, not that the just and the unjust would merely live as to their souls, but that their *bodies* would be restored from the grave and that a resurrection, as well as an immortality, would be the future of every man of woman born, whatever his character might be!

Now, this is the great Doctrine of the Christian faith which we do not doubt, but joyously accept! Our Lord’s Body, that same Body in real identity which was nailed to the tree and laid in the tomb for three days—that same Body came to life again, with the nail prints visible—into which Thomas was invited to put his finger—with the mark of the spear into which the same doubting Apostle was asked to thrust his hand! Christ proved Himself to be not merely a spirit, but a solid, tangible, corporeal existence, for He said, “Handle Me, and see; a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have.” And although He appeared in the room, the doors being shut, and thus proved that His body had lost some

of the properties of coarse matter, yet, at the same time, He took a piece of flesh and of honeycomb and did eat before them—and let them see that it was His very Self who had hung upon the Cross and died there at Calvary! And so shall it be with us! Though by death our bodies shall lose some of their qualities which we shall all be only too glad to lose, though their corruptions and weaknesses shall all be laid aside, yet my body and yours in definite identity, each for itself, shall rise up from its bed of dust and silent clay, and enter into the rest that remains where Jesus dwells before the Throne of God! Behold at this present, “the whole creation groans and travails in pain together, until now, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.”

My great purpose tonight, Beloved, is to speak on the majestic fact that the just and the unjust are to live on in a resurrection state. I am not going to debate, discuss, argue as to the fact of it, but, assuming your belief in God’s Inspired Word, declare a few thoughts which that sublime Truth seems to raise in one’s mind. I shall treat the Truth as though it were a lantern—and shall look at some of the rays of Divine Light that stream from it on all sides. And, first of all—

#### I. WHAT AN ENNOBLING EFFECT THIS TRUTH HAS UPON US!

Observe the effect it has, first of all, *given our bodies*. Paul elsewhere calls the body, “this vile body,” and so it is in comparison with what it is to be, by-and-by! But yet if this body has been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and if the Holy Spirit dwells in our bodies, as we are taught in Scripture—and if these bodies are to be partakers of a pure and sinless immortality—then what noble things these otherwise vile bodies become! So noble, my Brothers and Sisters, that it becomes us to guard them sacredly, as sacred things! Now, our bodies may be defiled, but shall they be defiled after being washed in pure water and after being given up to Christ? You know how they may be defiled. The Apostle speaks very plainly concerning certain carnal lusts whereby members of Christ may be made members of all manner of iniquity. From these things we fly—they should not be so much as named among you, as becomes saints. Our bodies may be defiled by eating and drinking, unless in the eating and the drinking we glorify God. We may by excess in either way bring ourselves into conditions in which the mind will not act and I believe, mark you, that gluttony is as much a sin in the sight of God as drunkenness, and that, in fact, any eating or drinking which makes us unfit for communion with God becomes sinful at once! Any passing beyond that boundary, whatever it may be, whether in eating or in drinking, becomes sinful! The body is clogged and defiled and who would have it so when it has been purchased by Christ’s precious blood and is to dwell with Him forever?

The body, too, may be defiled by outward adornments, for the Holy Spirit has expressly warned Christian men and women against these. There is a holy adornment that we speak of—that of a meek and a quiet spirit—but when men and women hang upon themselves their jewels and

their ornaments of an ungodly profession, they sin against the plain precepts of the Word of God and they really defile the bodies that belong to Christ! So every bowing of the knee to that to which I ought not to bow, every yielding of this body of mine to write what is not true, every motion of my tongue to speak that which is not upright and according to the fear of God, every movement of these feet to take me where it is not good for me to be—defiles the body! So there are ten thousand ways in which the Temple of God may be defiled, but I say again that with the thought that this body is to live forever and ever, we ought to guard with sacred care these members of Christ! The body that has been bought with His blood—that is to sleep on His bosom, that is to be awakened in His likeness, that is to dwell with Him forever, molded after His own Image—take care of that body and keep it consecrated unto the Lord!

And while this ennobles the body, let me say that *it also ennobles the entire man*. If man is a creature. If he is only first among animals, though the most highly organized of all the vertebrate creatures. And if, when he dies, that is the end of him, as that might be of a sheep or a dog, then, looking up to the stars and thinking of man as a mere beast, you need not say with David, “Lord, what is man?” You know what he is! You have got your answer—and a gloomy and a melancholy answer it is. But if man is to live forever and ever, what a noble creature he becomes! And, mark you, men are ready enough to admit this of some of their fellow creatures—kings, queens, princes, senators and men who have heaped up their gold—but when it comes to this, that the beggar, being immortal, is to be honored, they do not like it! I would that men would remember that the same Bible that says, “Honor the king,” also says, “Honor all men”—that is, be they what they may! But men must honor people’s coats—not the men! Or they honor their carriages, or they honor their sovereigns, but they do not honor the men! And yet, in truth, seeing that man is to live forever, that his existence in the future is coeval with the life of God, every man becomes a strange and wondrous thing! If you could pile up a mountain of gold, a huge pyramid of it, and then by the side of it a pyramid of precious stones, yet all these put together could not be valued with the soul of the pauper’s child that has been in the workhouse from its very birth! Despise not, then, despise not a man made in the image of God—a man redeemed with the blood of Christ, a man immortal, a man a mystery if he is immortal—a mystery of mysteries!

As I begin to look at him in the light of my text, which is far above all the fictitious surroundings to which men attach so much weight, he appears to me now to be a greater being than stars or suns, for these may die out and their brightness become extinct—but here is a star that shall shine on forever! A sun that shall flash its beams throughout eternity! We must not, therefore, if we are poor, broken, despised—at once go into sin as though we were too mean to be capable of excellence! We must not

begin to say, "I cannot be saved—I am so illiterate, I am so obscure." Why not? If you are not saved, you will have to live forever in misery! Can you understand that? You are endowed with an immortality from which it is impossible for you to escape! In that respect, by that wondrous gift, God has put you on an elevated position and I pray that you may look at it as such—may, by His Grace, not fling yourselves away, nor trifle with yourselves, nor do the devil's bidding—but seek Him who has promised in His Word that they that seek Him shall find Him!

Thus much on that one thought. And now a second one. If there is another state, as you know there is, for body and soul—

## II. WHAT A LIGHT THAT CASTS UPON THIS PRESENT LIFE!

How little it makes it! How great it makes it! How little! Well, if I suffer, today. If my life should be made weary through weakness of body, or if it should be bitter through heart-toil, or if it should be severe through stern poverty, yet you know how we sing—

***"The way may be rough, but it cannot be long."***

And again, we sometimes sing—

***"An hour with my God will make up for it all."***

These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the weight of glory which shall be revealed in us! Looking at the trials of this present life and comparing and contrasting them with the splendor, glory, and eternity of the life to come, they are not worth a thought! They disappear and we sing as we wade through the midst of them, knowing that it is so written that through much tribulation we must inherit the Kingdom of God. When we look back from the hilltops of Heaven, I suppose life itself will seem to be infinitesimal. Those great troubles of ours will look like pin's pricks and we shall almost laugh to think that we should have weighed those burdens and thought them so heavy when they were, after all, light as feathers. I think we shall, as Watts says—

***"With transporting joys recount  
The labors of our feet."***

We shall say, one to another, "How could we have been so unbelieving?" What was there, after all, in our trials to depress us so much? Our sufferings were not worth a thought when once compared with those of our Master. "His way was much rougher and darker than mine. Did Christ my Lord suffer, and did I repine?" Why was it that with such blessed help, such rich promises, such Covenant blessings and with the everlasting arms underneath us, yet nevertheless we were faint and ready to die? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, this world seems so little when we think of the world to come! Now, you who have been envious of the rich, you little think how soon they will be as poor as you! You who have sometimes thought how richly you were favored—think how fame is nothing but a breath—and how soon it is gone! Princes will sleep side by side with the slave. The great conqueror will not be distinguished from the victims of his ambition. The greatest millionaire will be no richer than you! Both

alike, you came naked into this world—and naked you return to the dust. So must it be. Oh, it is all little! “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” The big round world becomes a bubble and it vanishes—and as a puff of smoke, the glory of the world departs!

And yet in this respect, I say, how great this present life becomes! You know how our poet puts its—

**“Great God! On what a slender thread  
Hang everlasting things!  
The eternal state of all the dead  
Upon life’s feeble strings.”**

This life is the mother of the life to come. There is a resurrection for the just, and all the glory which the just shall inherit will be but the outcome of that immortal life which they received here! There is a resurrection for the unjust, and the worm undying and the fire that shall never be quenched! And all these will be just the development and open revealing of the character which they acquired here on earth. Living in sin is the germ of living forever in Hell! Believing in Jesus is the root of rejoicing forever in glorious immortality! Now, Sirs, see you not that life is not a thing to be played with, not a heap of counters that a child may toss to and fro, not the mere spray on the great sea of eternity? You must not joke and talk about it as though it were a thing to be despised—but come up and look at it with all its solemn possibilities and results—and live the life of sober men, live the life of men who have peered beyond the veil and seen some of the momentous issues of this fleeting existence! Henceforth, live while you live, earnestly, as in the sight of God, the Judge of the quick and the dead! Yes, let the light of the Resurrection stream over the whole of your present life to make its great things for the present to become little—to make those things which otherwise might be little, which have a reference to eternity—become great in your esteem. But I will not tarry on this and, therefore, pass on to the thought—

### III. WHAT ENCOURAGEMENT THIS OFFERS TO US!

To think that there is a resurrection and another life! What? Were it worth our while to toil here in the service of Christ, often unrewarded and very frequently misrepresented and persecuted for what we do, if there were not a place where the reward of Divine Grace would be given and where the mistakes of earth would all be set right? “Therefore,” says the Apostle, “beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” It might be in vain *here*, but forasmuch as there is a resurrection, your labor is not in vain in the Lord! If we win souls for Christ, it often happens that some of those whom we thought were saved, go back into perdition—many of those who are really saved walk disorderly—others are ungrateful to their spiritual parents and turn aside to crooked ways. But if our record is on high and we do not look to our success for our reward, but to our Master—then we may be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in work! You who are doing some-

thing for Jesus Christ in the school, or in any other department of labor, if you look upon your rewards as the *result*, you may, perhaps, have very few conversions and you may go toiling on very heavily. But if you will look beyond all present results to the great Taskmaster's blessed smile and think you hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant"—when you see Him reward you not according to your success, but according to the measure of Grace which you use faithfully in His service—when you see that, you will pluck up courage, you will not be of heavy heart, you will be instant in season, out of season!

The same thing is an encouragement under suffering. For this the martyrs cheerfully gave themselves up to their tormentors, not accepting deliverance because they looked for a better resurrection. This it was that made them brave to meet the lions in the amphitheater, or to lie and silently rot in the dismal dungeons of the Roman Emperors. This it was that made Smithfield glorious, as the saints in their chariots of fire clapped their hands and ascended to the skies! They were, of all men, most miserable if, in this life only, they had hope. They were, of all men, most insane to fling away their lives if this world were all! But because there is another and a better land, to die for Jesus became a glorious thing and they did it, being not amazed, not trembling, but dying with greater grandeur about them than that with which most men have learned to surround their living! And now, you that today are poor, or today are scoffed at. You who, though trying to follow Christ, find it a hard path. You who at home have little to encourage you and comfort you—remember *this world* is not your rest! If you were to have 50 years of your present trouble, well, it will be as nothing compared with the eternal weight of Glory! Have patience. Ask your Master to give you His patience. Pray of the Holy Spirit to work in you holy virtue, that after you have endured awhile, you may inherit the promise. Remember that there must first be the service before there can be the reward—and even under the economy of Grace—in which we are not saved by works, but saved by the merit of Jesus, yet the Lord will have His servants, first of all, be made perfect through suffering before He admits them to their everlasting rest. Be of good courage, then! He will strengthen your heart. This is not your rest, but it remains for you, and you shall inherit it, by-and-by. Passing on again, for I only dwell for a moment upon each thought—this fact of our rising again and living forever suggests to us—

#### **IV. WHAT OUGHT TO BE THE ONE CONCERN OF LIFE.**

What shall this be for the saint—what for the sinner? If I am to live again as a child of God. If my salvation is accomplished. If my sin is blotted out and I am really saved, then *let me serve my God with all my might*, seeing what a blessed immortality He has prepared for me! Slaves work when they hear the whip crack, but the children of God are not slaves—they are not under bondage—they work from a very different motive. They have no fear of Hell, no fear of losing Heaven. When their faith is constantly fixed upon the merits of their Savior, they know that their

warfare is accomplished, that their iniquity is pardoned, that their salvation is secure beyond all risks through the Everlasting Covenant, the inimitable purpose and the Divine promise of the Father in Christ Jesus! Because their salvation is secure and because it leads to such a blessed immortality, they burn with fervent love and passionate gratitude towards Him who has done so much for them! Gratitude in the heart ought to be, and I believe it is, the most powerful force in human motive. Love—what shall equal it? Its wheels move until the axles grow hot with speed. Love has an impetuous force about it. Many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it. What love we owe to Him who died, that when we die we may live again, who rose that we might rise and made a pathway to the skies that we might follow Him, even to His Throne!

“He lives, the great Redeemer lives,” and beckons us to come and live with Him! When our bodies must, for awhile, see corruption, His voice, which shall be the trumpet sound, shall call us from the beds wherein we slumber to abide with Him forever! Let us love Him, then! Let us be up and doing to find the lost ones that are His sheep, to find His pieces of money that are now in the dust, to discover our prodigal brethren that are still going astray! Shall we ask for rest when rest remains? Shall we escape from toil when toil is the only exposition of our love? Shall we bemoan our sufferings when sufferings give us opportunities of proving our affection to Him? If the saint in Heaven could wish himself back again, he almost might—if he could win a soul by tarrying here a little longer! If any one of yonder white-robed hosts could wish to be on earth, surely it might be to occupy the place of an earnest Evangelist, or of a fervent Sunday school teacher, or of any other who is a soul-winner for Jesus! I must confess I do not envy Gabriel his crown when God gives me souls! I have then thought that I would rather be here to talk with you and point you to my Master’s Cross, than be up there and cast my crown at His feet—for surely there can be no joy in Heaven greater than the joy of doing the Master’s will in winning souls for Him! Do not let us throw away our opportunities for doing this. Some of you do not, perhaps, think of using them. In your business, in the acquaintances that Providence puts in your way—you have opportunities in all these things of bearing your witness for your Master. I pray you to see them and seize them! They will soon pass, and in the silent chamber, when you are about to enter into another world, if regret shall mingle with the holy peace that then shall gild your brow, it will be this regret, “I wish I had served Him better, whom I am so soon to see. I wish I had more to take to Him who gave Himself up for me.” Surely you will bid “good-bye” to friends with reluctance, if you have never warned them to escape from the wrath to come! And those dear children—it will bring hotter tears into your eyes to leave them—if you leave them unsaved because you did not plead and wrestle with them for their salvation. So live, dear Friends, that when you come to die, there shall be nothing left undone and you

may go and feel that through Grace you have been what you are, and unto God be the praise—that you have not neglected the lifework which your Master gave you!

Now, I said that this text should make the unforgiven sinner *think*—and so it should, and very earnestly, too, because there will be a resurrection of the unjust as well as of the just. If you who are now living in sin were really to die and perish like horses, there might be some sort of excuse found for choosing the pleasures of this life as being all-in-all. After all, if there is no other world, I do not know but what the Epicurean philosophy is the right one—“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” If we are only to live in this world, it is the part of wisdom to enjoy one’s self as much as possible. I do not know but that even then a man would be justified in running into vice—because that does not bring enjoyment—it is sure to guarantee, even in this life, the most serious results. But still, at the bottom, that old Greek philosopher had hit upon the true philosophy of life if this life were all—“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” But if there is a life to come, as there is, then what a fool Epicurus was! And what nonsense his philosophy becomes! Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we do *not* die, or if we do, yet we live again—and in the light of living again, why, eating and drinking seems such dreadful trumpery, such driveling idiocy that a man cannot tolerate it either from philosopher or from a fool! Oh, if you are to live forever, you who are living without thinking of your God, what sort of life must the next one be for you? You to whom, even now, to think of God is an irksome burden, what will the next world be for you? You believe that Book, you dare not doubt it! And that Book tells you that “except you repent of your sin, you shall all likewise perish.” Moreover, it tells you that there is no salvation out of Christ, but “He that believes in Him shall be saved; but He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God.” According to this Book of God’s perfectly revealed mind, there is reserved for you, if you remain impenitent, a “fearful-looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation.” Fear not him who can destroy the body—only fear Him who can cast both soul and body into Hell!

Why do you give so much attention to this world that is so soon to be left—and the eternal things are quite forgotten or despised by you? I do not feel as if I could plead this with you with any sort of force or eager earnestness because it is really so plain that you, in your sins, must see it for yourselves! You surely, surely, as sober-minded men and women—and I know there are some here who are accustomed to think—you must feel that the living throughout millions of ages ought to be of greater concern than living from week to week, or even year to year! We think a man is very foolish that lives from hand to mouth, and never cares to make any provision for a rainy day. But what a fool that man must be who makes no provision for that rainy day when the tempest of Heaven’s retribution shall beat upon his naked soul—and he shall have no shelter and no way of escape! And if a man has grown old and yet neglects eter-

nity, if his constitution is being gradually undermined and yet the everlasting things are despised. If he has had solemn warnings that he must soon depart. If he has seen old companions, one by one, taken to the grave—and he still trifles away his time, lingering upon the brink of fate—what folly is this and in what words can I describe it?

Blessed Spirit, take away this folly and make men wise that they may be saved! Let this be our one great concern—with holy care to make our calling and election sure, that when the Master comes we may not be found castaways—but may be gathered with His people! And now for the last point. I do not know whether you will set much store by this last thought, but it is this—considering that our friends whom we talk with everyday, with whom we go up and down to the market, and to the place of worship—considering that they are to live forever—

**V. SHOULD WE NOT ALTER A GREAT DEAL OF OUR PRESENT BEHAVIOR UNDER THE POWER OF THIS TRUTH?**

What kind of behavior does this majestic fact inculcate towards our fellow men and women? Well, I think that Christian people ought always to *act to one another as immortal beings*. Now I know some who belong to one denomination who will scarcely speak to those of another section of Christ's one Church. Well, well, well—if you both ever get to Heaven, you will have to dwell together! Yet it seems as though you cannot live together on earth without bickering! Why can't you make up your minds to *differ from each other, but always in a Christian spirit*? I think, if I knew I had to live with a man, forever, one thing I would like to do would be to tell him perfectly honestly, with sincere love, all the Truths of God I knew—and I ought to be willing to hear from him all the Truth he thought he knew. I would not like him to say to me, "Now, you must not hold your views strongly—you must not speak of them, or try to propagate them." That would be as bad as telling me I must sin against God by restraining the light which He had given me! Neither ought I to say to him, "You shall not be free to hold and disseminate your views," for that would be to take upon myself a responsibility which does not belong to me!

But each holding our separate views and contending earnestly for what we believe to be "the faith once for all delivered to the saints," might we not thus exercise an honesty which we shall look back upon in Heaven with joy—and at the same time, a brotherly kindness which will be a sweet reflection even beyond the stars? If any two of you have fallen out, even about the faith, go your way and agree tonight! You have got to live together forever—do not quarrel! You who are relatives, especially, let not the sun go down upon your wrath, but as you are birds in the same nest, children of one family, and one with God, do not fall out! And if you have, make it up at once and let holy Christian forgiveness reign and rule! You see, God will not put a partition between you in Heaven. I do not believe they will practice any kind of strict communion up there. I do not believe

there will be any separate bench for any who would like to have that kind of thing, but that the whole company of saints will have communion with each other and with their common Lord, their glorious risen Head! And that it will be their delight, all washed from all their imperfections and infirmities, to eat bread together in the Kingdom of God, world without end! Well, let us have large hearts and brotherly kindness—not keeping back our views, for that would be to sin—but holding with a firm hand everything which we have received from the Holy Spirit, and yet loving the whole household of faith. If we were to die, and there were no life to come, then we might be foolish and unchristian enough to be forever squabbling and bickering! But if, after death, we are to live forever in the same place of Glory, let us so behave to one another that we shall not be ashamed or embarrassed to meet each other there.

And so with regard to the unconverted. Oh, Christian people, try to *think of all the unconverted* people with whom you have to meet *as immortal souls*. Your servant girl that nurses and loves your child—you may, perhaps, never have thought of but as a servant girl—but she is an immortal soul as much as the Queen on the throne! Or it may be the man who comes to do odd jobs about the house and who blacks your shoes—you never thought of him, probably—but as a worker, yet he—even he—shall outlast the stars! And all those working men and women, and girls who come streaming into your yard or factory, who weave at your looms, toil in your workrooms, stand at your printing press or at the book-binding, or in your builder's shop—all these and the myriads engaged in commercial and professional life you may hitherto, perhaps, have only thought of them as two-legged machines to earn so many shillings for you and draw so many less from you every week! Yes, but now just think again. They are living for immortality as well as yourselves! Will you try to act with them that if their funeral knell were heard and they were gone, the voice of conscience might not have to torment you with this suggestion, “You neglected their souls! You did not do to them what you ought to have done to them! You kept back from their immortal part that which, alone, could make them blessed in this life and in the life to come.” ‘Tis but a simple thought, and yet if I leave it with you, and God the Holy Spirit blesses it, it may be a very blessed thought to some whom you know not of today! Remember that all you see in the streets, and all you see in the house, and all you see here tonight are all immortal and shall live again! And so treat them as such, looking forward to the time when you will have to give an account whether you have abused or used graciously the opportunities which your Master placed in your way.

And now may the good Lord keep our thoughts Heavenward and bless us in them, for His name's sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 73.**

Here you have the Psalmist in a fainting fit. He has allowed the flesh to conquer the spirit. The observant eye of reason has, for awhile rendered dim the clear vision of faith.

**Verse 1.** *Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.* That must be true. Whatever we have seen or felt, it cannot be doubted but what God must become a good God to His own people, "Such as are of a clean heart."

**2, 3.** *But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well near slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.* I began to envy those whom God hates and to think that it would be better for me to have been one of them!

**4.** *For there are no pangs in their death: but their strength is firm.* Their unbelief helps them to die in peace, mocking God even to the last.

**5, 8.** *They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasses them about as a chain; violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily.* They justify themselves in treading others down. They laud it over others. They bully them. They rob them. They crush them, yet speak as if they had a perfect right to do so!

**9.** *They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth.* Leaving nobody alone, sparing no character, however pure.

**10, 11.** *Therefore his people return here: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?* They get to doubt the Personality of God. If they will not precisely say that there is no God, yet they go as near to it as they can! They come to what is about the same thing. They have a god who does not know and who does not perceive.

**12.** *Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.* And this is what the good man said—

**13, 14.** *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.* "Is this all I am to get by my righteousness? Is this the reward of following after God—to be whipped as soon as I wake, and to be sent to bed sore with grief?"

**15.** *If I say, I will speak thus, behold I should offend against the generation of Your children.* So he did not say what he thought. Some have said, "If you think so, you may as well say so." But not so! You might as well say if you have a match you may as well burn your house down! Bad thought is bad to yourself, but it ends there—turn it into words and tell it to others and it may do infinite mischief.

**16, 17.** *When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end.* He went and hid himself in his God! He got near his God. It does not mean that he

went to some place of worship, but that he went to the God whom he worshipped—hid himself in his God.

**18.** *Surely you did set them in slippery places; You cast them down into destruction—*

**“On hills of ice I see them stand,  
While flaming billows roll below,”**

*melting down their foundation.*

**19, 22.** *How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awakes; so, O Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my veins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You. It is a man of God that talks thus about himself. He feels that he had got to act and think as a beast might do, for a beast only calculates things according to time present—it crops the grass, is satisfied and lies down. But an immortal man ought to take a wider sweep and range in his thoughts and not merely think of today and of this present life, but of the end of time and of the eternity that lies beyond this present mortal state! And because he had failed to do so, he calls himself foolish and ignorant, and says—*

**23, 28.** *Nevertheless I am continually with You: You have held me by my right hand. You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterwards receive me to Glory. Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You. My flesh and my heart fails: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. For, lo, they who are far from You shall perish: You have destroyed all them that desert You for harlotry But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Your works. He finds all his comfort in his God. He comes to the conclusion that whatever the portion of the ungodly may be, his is infinitely better than theirs because they have not God and he has God, who is All-in-All!*

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

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

# THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

## NOS. 66, 67

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 17, 1856,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”  
Acts 24:15.***

REFLECTING, the other day, upon the sad state of the Churches at the present time, I was led to look back to Apostolic times and to consider wherein the preaching of the present day differed from the preaching of the Apostles. I remarked the vast difference in their style from the set and formal oratory of the present age. I remarked that the Apostles did not take a text when they preached, nor did they confine themselves to one subject, much less to any place of worship. But I find that they stood up in any place and declared from the fullness of their heart what they knew of Jesus Christ. But the main difference I observed was in the subject of their preaching. I was surprised when I discovered that the very staple of the preaching of the Apostles was the resurrection of the dead! I found myself to have been preaching the Doctrine of the Grace of God, to have been upholding Free Election, to have been leading the people of God as well as I was enabled, into the deep things of His Word. But I was surprised to find that I had not been copying the Apostolic fashion half as nearly as I might have done. The Apostles, when they preached, always testified concerning the Resurrection of Jesus and the consequent resurrection of the dead. It appears that the Alpha and the Omega of their Gospel was the testimony that Jesus Christ died and rose again from the dead according to the Scriptures. When they chose another Apostle in the place of Judas, who had become apostate, (Acts 1:22), they said, “One must be ordained to be a witness with us of His Resurrection,” so that the very office of an Apostle was to be a witness of the Resurrection. And well did they fulfill their office! When Peter stood up before the multitude, he declared unto them that, “David spoke of the Resurrection of Christ.” When Peter and John were taken before the council, the great cause of their arrest was that the rulers were grieved, “because they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:2). When they were set free, after having been examined, it is said, “With great power gave the Apostles witness of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great Grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33). It was

this which stirred the curiosity of the Athenians when Paul preached among them—"They said, he seems to be a proclaimer of strange gods, because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection of the dead." And this moved the laughter of the Areopagites, for when he spoke of the resurrection of the dead, "Some mocked and others said, we will hear you again of this matter."

Truly did Paul say, when he stood before the council of the Pharisees and Sadducees, "Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am called in question." And equally did he constantly assert, "If Christ is not risen from the dead, then is our preaching vain and your faith is vain and you are yet in your sins." The Resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of the righteous is a Doctrine which we believe, but which we too seldom preach or care to read about. Though I have inquired of several booksellers for a book especially upon the subject of the Resurrection, I have not yet been able to purchase one of any sort whatever! And when I turned to Dr. Owen's works, which are a most invaluable storehouse of Divine knowledge, containing much that is valuable on almost every subject—I could find, even there, scarcely more than the slightest mention of the resurrection of the dead. It has been set down as a well-known Truth of God and, therefore, has never been discussed. Heresies have not risen up respecting it. It would almost have been a mercy if there had been, for whenever a Truth of God is contested by heretics, the orthodox fight strongly for it and the pulpit resounds with it every day! I am persuaded, however, that there is much power in this Doctrine. And if I preach it this morning, you will see that God will acknowledge the Apostolic preaching and there will be conversions! I intend putting it to the test, now, to see whether there is not something which we cannot perceive at present in the resurrection of the dead which is capable of moving the hearts of men and bringing them into subjection to the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

There are very few Christians who believe the resurrection of the dead! You may be surprised to hear that, but I should not wonder if I discovered that you, yourself, have doubts on the subject. By the resurrection of the dead is meant something very different from the immortality of the soul. *That*, every Christian believes but therein is only on a level with the heathen, who also believes it! The light of nature is sufficient to tell us that the soul is immortal, so that the infidel who doubts it is a worse fool, even than a heathen, for he, before Revelation was given, had discovered it—there are some faint glimmerings in men of reason which teach that the soul is something so amazing that it must endure forever! But the resurrection of the *dead* is quite another Doctrine, dealing not with the

soul, but with the *body*. The Doctrine is that this actual body in which I now exist is to live with my soul. That not only is the “vital spark of heavenly flame” to burn in Heaven, but the very censer in which the incense of my life does smoke is holy unto the Lord and is to be preserved forever! The spirit, everyone confesses, is eternal. But how many there are who deny that the bodies of men will actually start up from their graves at the Great Day! Many of you believe you will have a body in Heaven, but you think it will be an airy fantastic body, instead of believing that it will be a body like to this—flesh and blood (although not the same kind of flesh, for all flesh is not the same flesh), a solid, substantial body, even such as we have here! And there are yet fewer of you who believe that the wicked will have bodies in Hell, for it is gaining ground everywhere that there are to be no positive torments for the damned in Hell to affect their bodies, but that it is to be metaphorical fire, metaphorical brimstone, metaphorical chains, metaphorical torture! But if you were Christians as you profess to be, you would believe that every mortal man who ever existed shall not only live by the immortality of his soul, but his body shall live again—that the very flesh in which he now walks the earth is as eternal as the soul and shall exist forever! That is the peculiar Doctrine of Christianity. The heathens never guessed or imagined such a thing. And consequently, when Paul spoke of the resurrection of the dead, “Some mocked,” which proves that they understood him to speak of the resurrection of the *body*, for they would not have mocked had he only spoken of the immortality of the *soul*—that having been already proclaimed by Plato and Socrates and received with reverence!

We are now about to preach that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. We shall consider first, the *resurrection of the just*. And secondly, the *resurrection of the unjust*.

**I.** There shall be A RESURRECTION OF THE JUST. The first proof I will offer of this is that it has been the *constant and unvarying faith of the saints from the earliest periods of time*. Abraham believed the resurrection of the dead, for it is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews, 11:19, that he, “accounted that God was able to raise up Isaac even from the dead; from where also he received him in a figure.” I have no doubt that Joseph believed in the resurrection, for he gave commandment concerning his bones and surely he would not have been so careful of his body if he had not believed that it should be raised from the dead. The Patriarch, Job, was a firm believer in it, for he said in that oft repeated text, Job 19:25, 26—“For I know that my Redeemer lives. And that He shall stand at last on the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” David believed it beyond the shadow of a

doubt, for he sang of Christ, “You will not leave my soul in Hell, neither will you suffer Your Holy One to see corruption.” Daniel believed it, for he said that, “Many who sleep in the dust shall rise, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting contempt.” Souls do not sleep in the dust—*bodies* do! It will do you good to turn to one or two passages and see what these holy men thought. For instance, in Isaiah 26:19, you read—“Your dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust. For your dew is as the dew of herbs and the earth shall cast out the dead.” We will offer no explanation. The text is positive and sure. Let another Prophet speak—Hosea, 6:1, 2—“Come and let us return unto the Lord: for He has torn and He will heal us. He has smitten and He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us. In the third day He will raise us up and we shall live in His sight.” Although this does not declare the resurrection, yet it uses it as a figure which it would not do were it not regarded as a settled Truth of God. It is declared by Paul, also, in Hebrews 11:35, that such was the constant faith of the martyrs. For he says, “Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.” All those holy men and women, who, during the time of the Maccabees, stood fast by their faith and endured the fire, sword and unutterable tortures, believed in the resurrection and that resurrection stimulated them to give their bodies to the flames—not caring, even, for death—but believing that thereby they should attain to a blessed resurrection! But our Savior brought the resurrection to light in the most excellent manner, for He explicitly and frequently declared it. “Marvel not,” He said, “at what I have said unto you. Behold the hour comes when they who are in their graves shall hear the voice of God.” “The hour is coming when He will call the dead to judgment and they shall stand before His Throne.” Indeed, throughout His preaching, there was one continued flow of firm belief and a public and positive declaration of the resurrection of the dead! I will not trouble you with any passages from the writings of the Apostles—they abound therewith! In fact, Holy Scripture is so full of this Doctrine that I marvel, Brothers and Sisters, that we should so soon have departed from the steadfastness of our faith—that it should be believed in many churches that the actual bodies of the saints will not live again—and especially that the bodies of the wicked will not have a future existence. We maintain as our text does, that, “there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”

A second proof, we think, we find in the *translation of Enoch and Elijah to Heaven*. We read of two men who went to Heaven in their bodies. Enoch “was not. For God took him.” And Elijah was carried to Heaven in

a chariot of fire. Neither of these men left his ashes in the grave—neither left his body to be consumed by the worm, but both of them in their mortal frames (doubtless changed and glorified) ascended up on high. Now, those two were the pledge to us that all of us shall rise in the same manner! Would it be likely that two bright spirits would sit in Heaven clothed in flesh, while the rest of us were unclothed? Would it be at all reasonable that Enoch and Elijah should be the only saints who should have their bodies in Heaven and that we should be there only in our souls—poor souls—longing to have our bodies again? No! Our faith tells us that these two men, having safely gone to Heaven, as John Bunyan has it, by a bridge that no one else trod, by which they were not under the necessity to wade the river—we shall also rise from the flood and our flesh shall not forever dwell with corruption!

There is a remarkable passage in Jude, where it speaks of Michael the Archangel contending with the devil about the body of Moses and using no “railing accusation.” Now, this refers to the great Doctrine of *angels watching over the bones of the saints*. Certainly it tells us that the body of Moses was watched over by a great archangel. The devil thought to disturb that body but Michael contended with him about it. Now would there be a contention about that body if it had been of no value? Would Michael contend for that which was only to be the food of worms? Would he wrestle with the enemy for that which was to be scattered to the four winds of Heaven, never to be united again into a new and goodlier fabric? No. Assuredly not! From this we learn that an angel watches over every tomb. It is no fiction, when on the marble we carve the cherubs with their wings. There are cherubs with outstretched wings over the head of the gravestones of all the righteous. Yes, and where “the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep,” in some nook overgrown by nettles, there an angel stands night and day to watch each bone and guard each atom, that at the resurrection, those bodies, with more glory than they had on earth, may start up to dwell forever with the Lord! The guardianship of the bodies of the saints by angels proves that they shall rise again from the dead!

Yet, further, the *resurrections that have already taken place* give us hope and confidence that there shall be a resurrection of all saints. Do you not remember that it is written when Jesus rose from the dead, many of the saints who were in their graves arose? They came into the city and appeared unto many. Have you not heard that Lazarus, though he had been dead three days, came from the grave at the word of Jesus? Have you never read how the daughter of Jairus awoke from the sleep of death when Jesus said, “*Talitha cumi*”? Have you never seen Him at the

gates of Nain, bidding that widow's son rise from the bier? Have you forgotten that Dorcas, who made garments for the poor, sat up and saw Peter after she had been dead? And do you not remember Eutychus, who fell from the third loft and was taken up dead, but who, at the prayer of Paul, was raised again? Or does not your memory roll back to the time when hoary Elijah stretched himself upon the dead child and the child breathed and sneezed seven times and his soul came to him? Or have you not read that when they buried a man, as soon as he touched the Prophet's bones he rose again to life? These are *pledges* of the resurrection! A few specimens, a few chance gems flung into the world to tell us how full God's hand is of resurrection jewels! He has given us proof that He is able to raise the dead by the resurrection of a few, who afterwards were seen on earth by infallible witnesses.

We must now, however, leave these things and refer you once more to the Holy Spirit by way of confirming the Doctrine that the saints' bodies shall rise again. The Chapter in which you will find one great proof is in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, 6:13, 14—"Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord. And the Lord for the body." *The body, then, is the Lord's.* Christ died not only to save my soul, but to save my *body!* It is said He "came to seek and to save that which was lost." When Adam sinned, he lost his body and he lost his soul, too. He was a lost man, lost altogether. And when Christ came to save His people, He came to save their bodies and their souls. "Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord." Is this body for the Lord and shall death devour it? Is this body for the Lord and shall winds scatter its particles far away where they never shall discover their fellows? No! The body is for the Lord and the Lord shall have it. "And God has both raised up the Lord and will also raise us by His own power." Now look at the next verse—"Know you not that *your bodies are the members of Christ.*" Not merely is the *soul* a part of Christ—united to Christ, but the *body* is, also! These hands, these feet, these eyes are members of Christ, if I am a child of God. I am one with Him, not merely as to my mind, but one with Him as to this outward frame! The very body is taken into union. The golden chain which binds Christ to His people goes round the body and soul, too! Did not the Apostle say, "they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery. But I speak concerning Christ and the Church"—Ephesians 5:31, 32. "They are one flesh." And Christ's people are not only one with Him in spirit, but they are "one flesh," too. The flesh of man is united with the flesh of the God-Man. And our bodies are members of Jesus Christ. Well, while the head lives, the body cannot die. And while Jesus lives, the members cannot perish! Further, the Apostle says, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>

verses of 1 Corinthians 6, “Know you not that your *body is the temple of the Holy Spirit* which is in you, which you have of God and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price.” This body, he says, is the temple of the Holy Spirit. And where the Holy Spirit dwells in a body, He not only sanctifies it, but renders it eternal! The temple of the Holy Spirit is as eternal as the Holy Spirit! You may demolish other temples and their gods, too, but the Holy Spirit cannot die, nor “can His temple perish.” Shall this body which has once had the Holy Spirit in it, be always food for worms? Shall it never be seen more but be like the dry bones of the valley? No! The dry bones shall live and the temple of the Holy Spirit shall be built up again! Though the legs, the pillars, of that temple fall—though the eyes, the windows of it, are darkened and those that look out of them see no more—yet God shall rebuild this fabric, relight the eyes and restore its pillars and rebuild it with beauty—“this mortal shall put on immortality and this corruptible put on incorruption!”

But the master argument with which we close our proof is that *Christ rose from the dead* and verily His people shall. The Chapter which we read at the commencement of the service is proof to a demonstration that if Christ rose from the dead all His people must. If there is no resurrection, then is Christ not risen! But we will not long dwell on this proof, because I know you all feel its power and there is no need for me to bring it out clearly. As Christ actually rose from the dead—flesh and blood—so shall we! Christ was not a spirit when He rose from the dead—His body could be touched. Did not Thomas put his hand into His side? And did not Christ say, “Handle Me and see. A spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have”? And if we are to rise as Christ did—and we are taught so—then we shall rise in our *bodies*—not spirits. Not fine aerial things, made of I know not what—some very refined and elastic substance, perhaps? No, but “as the Lord our Savior rose, so all His followers must.” We shall rise in our flesh, “though all flesh is not the same flesh.” We shall rise in our bodies, though all bodies are not the same bodies. And we shall rise in glory, though all glories are not the same glories. “There is one flesh of man and another of beasts.” And there is one flesh of this body and another flesh of the heavenly body! There is one body for the soul, here, and another body for the spirit up there. And yet it shall be the same body that will rise again from the grave—the same, I say, in identity—though not in glory or in adaptation.

I come now to some practical thoughts from this Doctrine before I go to the other.

My Brothers and Sisters, what thoughts of comfort there are in this Doctrine, that the dead shall rise again! Some of us have, this week, been

standing by the grave. And one of our Brothers, who long served his Master in our midst, was placed in the tomb. He was a man valiant for the Truth of God, indefatigable in labor, self-denying in duty and always prepared to follow his Lord [Mr. Turner, of Lamb and Flag School] and to the utmost of his ability, serviceable to the Church. Now, there were tears shed there—do you know what they were about? There was not a solitary tear shed about his soul! The Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul was not required to give us comfort, for we knew it well, we were perfectly assured that he had ascended to Heaven. The burial service used in the Church of England most wisely offers us no comfort concerning the soul of the departed Believer, since that is in bliss. But it cheers us by reminding us of the promised resurrection for the body! And when I speak concerning the dead, it is not to give comfort as to the soul, but as to the body. And this Doctrine of the Resurrection has comfort for the mourners in regard to the buried mortality. You do not weep because your father, brother, wife, husband, has ascended to Heaven—you would be cruel to weep about that. None of you weep because your dear mother is before the Throne of God. But you weep because her *body* is in the grave, because those eyes can no more smile on you, because those hands cannot caress you, because those sweet lips cannot speak melodious notes of affection. You weep because the body is cold and dead and clay-like. For the *soul*, you do not weep. But I have comfort for you. That very body will rise again! Those eyes will flash with genius again! Those hands will be held out in affection once more! Believe me, I am speaking no fiction! Those very hands those positive hands—those cold, clay-like arms that hung down by the side and fell when you lifted them up—shall hold a harp one day! And those poor fingers, now icy and hard, shall be swept along the living strings of golden harps in Heaven! Yes, you shall see that body once more—

***“Their inbred sins require  
Their flesh to see the dust,  
But as the Lord, their Savior, rose  
So all His followers must.”***

Will not that remove your tears? “He is not dead, but sleeps.” He is not lost, he is “seed sown against harvest time to ripen.” His body is resting a little while, bathing itself in spices, that it may be fit for the embraces of its Lord!

And here is comfort for you, too, you poor sufferers, who suffer in your bodies. Some of you are almost martyrs with aches of one kind and another—lumbagos, gouts, rheumatisms and all sorts of sad afflictions that flesh is heir to. Scarcely a day passes but you are tormented with some suffering or other. And if you were silly enough to be always doctor-

ing yourselves, you might always be having the doctor in your house. Here is comfort for you! That poor old rickety body of yours will live again without its pains, without its agonies! That poor shaky frame will be repaid all it has suffered. Ah, poor Negro slave, every scar upon your back shall have a stripe of honor in Heaven! Ah, poor martyr, the crackling of your bones in the fire shall earn you sonnets in Glory! All your sufferings shall be well repaid by the happiness you shall experience there! Don't fear to suffer in your body, because your body will one day share in your delights! Every nerve will thrill with delight, every muscle move with bliss! Your eyes will flash with the fire of eternity! Your heart will beat and pulsate with immortal blessedness! Your body shall be the channel of beatitude—the body which is now often a cup of wormwood will be a vessel of honey! This body which is now often a comb out of which gall distills, shall be a honeycomb of blessedness to you! Comfort yourselves, then, you sufferers, weary languishers upon the bed—fear not, your bodies shall live!

But I want to draw a word of *instruction* from the text, concerning the Doctrine of Recognition. Many have puzzled themselves as to whether they will know their friends in Heaven. Well now, if the bodies are to rise from the dead, I see no reason why we should not know them! I think I should know some of my Brothers and Sisters, even by their spirits, for I know their character so well, having talked with them of the things of Jesus and being well acquainted with the most prominent parts of their character. But I shall see their bodies, too. I always thought that the quietus to the question was exemplified in a conversation between old John Ryland and his wife. "Do you think," she said, "you will know me in Heaven?" "Why," he said, "I know you *here*. And do you think I shall be a bigger fool in Heaven than I am on earth?" The question is beyond dispute. We shall live in Heaven with bodies and that decides the matter. We shall know each other in Heaven. You may take that as a positive fact and not mere fancy.

But now a word of *warning*, and then I have done with this part of the subject. If your bodies are to dwell in Heaven, I beseech you take care of them. I do not mean, take care of what you eat and drink and wherewithal you shall be clothed. But I mean, take care that you do not let your bodies be polluted by sin. If this throat is to warble forever with songs of glory, let not words of lust defile it! If these eyes are to see the King in His beauty, even let this be your prayer, "Turn off my eyes from beholding vanities." If these hands are to hold a palm branch, oh, let them never take a bribe, let them never seek after evil! If these feet are to walk the golden streets, let them not be swift after mischief. If this tongue is forev-

er to talk of all He said and did, ah, let it not utter light and frothy things! And if this heart is to pulsate forever with bliss, I beseech you give it not unto strangers, neither let it wander after evil! If this body is to live forever, what care we ought to take of it—for our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and they are members of the Lord Jesus!

Now, will you believe this Doctrine or not? If you will not, you are excommunicated from the faith! This is the faith of the Gospel and if you do not believe it, you have not yet received the Gospel. “For if the dead rise not, then your faith is vain and you are yet in your sins.” The dead in Christ *shall* rise and they shall rise *first*.

**II.** Now we come to the RESURRECTION OF THE WICKED. Will the wicked rise, too? Here is a point of controversy. I shall now have some hard things to say—I may detain you long, but I beg you, nevertheless, listen to me. Yes, the wicked shall rise!

The first proof is given in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle to the Corinthians, 5:10—“We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it is good or bad.” Now, since we are *all to appear*, the wicked must appear—and they will receive the deeds done in the body. Since the body sins, it is only natural that the body should be punished. It would be unjust to punish the soul and not the body, for the body has had as much to do with sin as ever the soul has had. But wherever I go, now, I hear it said, “The ministers in old times were known to say there was fire in Hell for our bodies, but it is not so. It is metaphorical fire, fancied fire.” Ah, it IS so! You shall receive the things done in your body. Though your souls shall be punished, your bodies will be punished as well. You who are sensual and devilish, do not care about your souls being punished because you never think about your souls. But if I tell you of *bodily* punishment, you will think of it far more! Christ may have said that the soul should be punished—but He far more frequently described the body in misery in order to impress His Hearers. For He knew that they were sensual and devilish and that nothing that did not affect the body would touch them in the least. “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive the things done in the body according to what we have done, whether it is good or evil.”

But this is not the only text to prove the Doctrine. I will give you a better one—Matthew 5:29. “If your right eye offends you, pluck it out and cast it from you: for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish and not that your whole body should be cast into Hell.” Not, “your whole *soul*,” but, “your whole *body*.” Man, this does not say that your soul shall be in Hell—that is affirmed many times—but it posi-

tively declares that *your body* shall! That same body which is now standing in the aisle, or sitting in the pew—if you die without Christ—shall burn forever in the flames of Hell! It is not a fancy of man but a Truth of God that your actual flesh and blood and those very bones shall suffer—“your whole body shall be cast into Hell.”

But lest that one proof should not suffice you, hear another out of the same Gospel—Chapter 10:28. “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and *body* in Hell.” Hell will be the place for bodies as well as for souls! As I have remarked, wherever Christ speaks of Hell and of the lost state of the wicked, He always speaks of their bodies. You scarcely find Him saying anything about their souls. He says, “Where their worm dies not,” which is a figure of physical suffering—the worm torturing forever the inmost heart, like a cancer within the very soul. He speaks of the “fire that never shall be quenched.” Now, do not begin telling me that that is a metaphorical fire—who cares for that? If a man were to threaten to give me a metaphorical blow on the head, I should care very little about it! He would be welcome to give me as many as he pleased. And what say the wicked? “We do not care about metaphorical fires.” But they are *real*, Sir—as real as yourself! There is a real fire in Hell, as truly as you have now a real body—a fire exactly like that which we have on earth in everything except this—that it will not consume, though it will torture you. You have seen the asbestos lying in the fire red hot, but when you take it out it is unconsumed. So your body will be prepared by God in such a way that it will burn forever without being consumed. It will lie, not as you consider, in metaphorical fire, but in actual flame. Did our Savior mean fictions when He said He would cast body and soul into Hell? What would there be a pit, for, if there were no bodies? Why fire? Why chains, if there were to be no bodies? Can fire touch the soul? Can pits shut in spirits? Can chains fether souls? No—pits and fire and chains are for *bodies* and *bodies* will be there! You will sleep in the dust a little while. When you die, your soul will be tormented alone—there will be a Hell for it—but at the Day of Judgment, your body will join your soul and then you will have twin Hells—body and soul shall be together, each full of pain—your soul sweating in its inmost pore drops of blood and your body from head to foot suffused with agony! Conscience, judgment, memory—all tortured—but more—your head tormented with racking pains, your eyes starting from their sockets with sights of blood and woe. Your ears tormented with—

**“Sullen moans and hollow groans,  
And shrieks of tortured ghosts.”**

Your heart beating high with fever. Your pulse rattling at an enormous rate in agony. Your limbs cracking like the martyrs in the fire and yet unburnt. Yourself put in a vessel of hot oil, pained, yet coming out undestroyed. All your veins becoming a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on—every nerve a string on which the devil shall ever play his diabolical tune of Hell's unutterable lament! Your soul forever and ever aching and your body palpitating in unison with your soul. Fictions, Sir? Again, I say, they are no fictions and, as God lives, but solid, stern truth. If God is true and this Bible is true, what I have said is the Truth of God—and you will find it one day to be so!

But now I must have a little reasoning with the ungodly on one or two points. First, I will reason with such of you as are very proud of your comely bodies and array yourselves in goodly ornaments and make yourselves glorious in your apparel. There are some of you who have no time for prayer, but you have time enough for your wardrobe. You have no time for the Prayer Meeting, but you have time enough to be brushing your hair to all eternity. You have no time to bend your knees, but plenty of time to make yourselves look smart and grand. Ah, fine lady, you who take care of your goodly fashioned face—remember what was said by one of old when he held up a skull—

***“Tell her, though she paint herself an inch thick  
To this complexion she must come at last.”***

And something more than that—that fair face shall be scarred with the claws of Fiends and that fine body shall be only the medium for torment! Ah, dress yourself, proud gentleman for the worm! Anoint yourself for the crawling creatures of the grave. And worse, come to Hell with powdered hair—a gentleman in Hell! Come down to the pit of Hell in goodly apparel, my lord! Come there to find yourself no higher than others, except it is higher in torture and plunged deeper in flames! Yes, it ill becomes us to waste so much time upon the trifling things, here, when there is so much to be done and so little time for doing it in the saving of men's souls! O God, our God, deliver men from feasting and pampering their bodies when they are only fattening them for the slaughter and feeding them to be devoured in the flame!

Again—hear me when I say to you who are gratifying your lusts—do you know that those bodies, the lusts of which you gratify, here, will be in Hell and that you will have the same lusts in Hell that you have here? The debauchee hastens to indulge his body in what he desires—can he do that in Hell? Can he find a place, there, where he shall gratify his lust and find indulgence for his foul desires? The drunk, here, can pour down his throat the intoxicating and deadly draught. But where will he find the

liquor to drink in Hell, when his drunkenness will be as hot upon him as it is here! Yes, where will he find so much as a drop of water to cool his parched tongue? The man who loves gluttony, here, will be a glutton there—but where will be the food to satisfy him—when he may hold his finger up and see the loaves go away from him and the fruits refuse his grasp? Oh, to have your passions and yet not to satisfy them! To shut a drunk up in his cell and give him nothing to drink! He would dash himself against the wall to get the liquor, but there is none for him. What will you do in Hell, O drunk, with that thirst in your throat and having nothing but flames to swallow? And what will you do, O profligate, when you would still be seducing others but there are none with whom you can sin? Do I speak plainly? Did not Christ do so? If men will sin, they shall find men who are not ashamed to reprove them. Ah, to have a body in Hell, with all its lusts, but not the power to satisfy them! How horrible that Hell will be!

But hear me yet again. Oh, poor Sinner, if I saw you going into the inquisitor's den to be tormented, would I not beg of you to stop before you should put your foot upon the threshold? And now I am talking to you of things that are real. If I were standing on a stage, this morning, and were acting these things as fancies, I would make you weep—I would make the godly weep to think that so many should be damned and I would make the ungodly weep to think that *they* should be damned! But when I speak of realities, they do not move you half as much as fictions would and you sit just as you did before the service had commenced. But hear me while I again affirm God's Truth. I tell you, Sinner, that those eyes that now look on lust shall look on miseries that shall vex and torment you! Those ears which now you lend to hear the song of blasphemy, shall hear moans and groans and horrid sounds—such as only the damned know! That very throat down which you pour drink shall be filled with fire. Those very lips and arms of yours will be tortured all at once. Why, if you have a headache, now, you will run to your physician. But what will you do when your head and heart and hands and feet ache all at once? If you have but a pain in your body, you will search out medicines to heal you. But what will you do when gout, rheum, vertigo and all else that is vile, attack your body at once? How will you bear yourself when you shall be loathsome with every kind of disease, leprous, palsied, black, rotten, your bones aching, your marrow quivering, every limb you have, filled with pain? When your body is a temple of demons and a channel of miseries? And will you march blindly on? As the ox goes to the slaughter and the sheep licks the butcher's knife, so is it with many of you. Sirs, you are living without Christ, many of you! You are self-righteous and ungod-

ly. One of you is going out this afternoon to take his day's pleasure. Another is a fornicator in secret. Another can cheat his neighbor. Another can, now and then, curse God. Another comes to this Chapel, but in secret he is a drunk. Another prates about godliness and God knows he is a wretched hypocrite! What will you do in that day when you stand before your Maker? It is a little thing to have your minister upbraid you now. It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment—what will you do when God shall thunder out not your accusation, but your condemnation?—"Depart you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Ah, you sensual ones, I knew I could never move you while I spoke about torments for your souls. Do I move you now? Ah, no, many of you will go away and laugh and call me, as I remember once being called before, "a Hell-fire parson." Well, go. But you will see the Hell-fire preacher one day in Heaven, perhaps, and you yourselves will be cast out. And looking down, then, with reproving glance, it may be I shall remind you that you heard the Word of God and listened not to it. Ah, Man, it is a light thing to hear it but it will be hard enough to bear it! You listen unmoved to me now. It will be harder work when death gets hold of you and you lie roasting in the fire! Now you despise Christ. You will not despise Him then! Now you can waste your Sabbaths. Then you would give a thousand worlds for a Sabbath if you could but have it in Hell! Now you can scoff and jeer. There will be no scoffing or jeering, then—you will be shrieking, howling, wailing for mercy. But—

***"There are no acts of pardon passed  
In the cold grave to which we haste.  
But darkness, death and long despair,  
Reign in eternal silence there."***

O my hearers! The wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come! Who among you can dwell with devouring fire? Who among you can dwell with everlasting burnings? Can you, Sir? Can you? Can you abide the flames forever? "Oh, no," you say, "what can I do to be saved?" Hear you what Christ has to say—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned." "Come, now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

## **EXPOSITION**

### **1 Corinthians 15.**

THERE were people in the Apostles' days who had an idea that there was no resurrection. Paul endeavors to refute the idea and teaches the

Corinthians that there was a resurrection from the dead. From the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> verse he proves the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and upon that grounds the Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Just.

*“Moreover, Brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also you received and wherein you stand. By which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain.”* Now, we expect to hear a whole list of Doctrines when the Apostle says, “I declare unto you the Gospel.” But instead of that, he simply tells us of the Resurrection of Jesus, for that is the very marrow of the Gospel, the foundation of it—that Jesus Christ died and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.

*“For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. And that He was buried and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”* That is the whole of the Gospel. He who perfectly understands that, understands the first principles. He has commenced aright. This is the starting point if we wish to learn the Truth of God, “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. And that He was buried and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

*“And that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. After that He was seen of about five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that He was seen of James. Then of all the Apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.”* The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is one of the best attested facts on record. There were so many witnesses to behold it, that if we do, in the least degree, receive the credibility of men’s testimonies, we cannot and we dare not doubt that Jesus rose from the dead! It is all very easy for infidels to say that these persons were deceived. But it is equally foolish, for these persons could not, everyone of them, have been so positively deceived as to say that they had seen this Man, whom they knew to have been dead, afterwards alive! They could not all, surely, have agreed together to help on this imposture—if they did, it is the most marvelous thing we have on record—that not one of them ever broke faith with the others, but that the whole mass of them remained firm! We believe it to be quite impossible that so many rogues could have agreed forever. They were men who had nothing to gain by it. They subjected themselves to persecution by affirming the very fact. They were ready to die for it and did die for it. Five hundred or a thousand persons who had seen Him at different times declared that they did see Him and that He rose from the dead. The fact of His death having been attested beforehand—how, then, dare any man say that the

Christian religion is not true—when we know for a certainty that Christ died and rose again from the dead? And knowing that, who shall deny the Divinity of the Savior? Who shall say that He is not mighty to save? Our faith has a solid basis, for it has all these witnesses on which to rest and the more sure witness of the Holy Spirit witnessing in our hearts! “And last of all,” says the Apostle, “He was seen of me, also, as of one born out of due time—for I am the least of the Apostles.” We would not have thought Paul proud if he had said, “I am the greatest of the Apostles,” for his writings occupy the largest portion of the sacred Scriptures. And he preached more abundantly than they all. There was not one who could exceed Paul, or even come near him in his arduous labors! Yet he says,

*“For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God.”* When he looked upon the mercies that God gave to him, he always remembered how little he deserved. And when he found himself preaching—oh, with what quality did he preach to the ungodly, for he could always close up—“But I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Christ might show forth all long-suffering as a pattern to them who believe.” Have I a persecutor here? Let him know that his sin is a most damnable sin that will sink him lower into Hell than any other! But even for him there is mercy and abundant pardon, for Paul says he obtained mercy even though he persecuted the Church of God.

*“But by the Grace of God I am what I am: and His Grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain. But I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the Grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach and so you believed.”* “But by the Grace of God I am what I am.” That is about as far as most of us can get. We shall never get any further. “By the Grace of God I am what I am and His Grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain. But I labored more abundantly than they all.” Then he stops himself—“Yet, not I, but the Grace of God which was with me.” We should always take care that we do not take any of our good works to ourselves—they are the effects of *Grace* within us! If we once get to putting the crown on our own heads, we shall soon have heavy heads for our trouble. But if we put them all on the head of Jesus, He will honor us if we honor Him!

Having thus proved the Resurrection of Christ, he goes on—

*“Now if Christ is preached that He rose from the dead, how many among you can say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen! And if Christ is not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain. Yes, and we*

*are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ to whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ is not raised, your faith is vain. You are yet in your sins.*” Perhaps it does not strike you, at first sight, that there is an indissoluble connection between the Resurrection of Christ and that of all His people. Perhaps you do not see the marrow of the argument. The Apostle says, “If the dead do not rise, then Christ did not rise. And if Christ did rise, then all the dead will rise.” Do you see how it is? Why, because Christ and human nature are now so linked together that what Christ did, He did as the Representative of all His people! When Adam sinned, the world sinned and the world died. “As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Christ could not rise except as the Representative of His people. And “if Christ rose,” says Paul, “then His people will rise. And if He did not rise, then we shall not rise, because we are one with Him. And if we do not rise, Christ did not rise, because we are one with Him.” See here a connection which cannot be broken—that if Christ rose, then must the dead rise also. This brings another argument.

*“Then they, also, which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.”* How do you like that thought?

*“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”* For they were then persecuted, cast to the wild beasts, shut up in prison. And if this life were all, what would be the value of the Christian religion? It would only make men miserable!

*“But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the First Fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”* It is no use for the Arminian to strain this and say that it proves that *everyone* receives Grace through Christ. It says no such thing. It simply says, “die” and “live.” Everybody shall live at the resurrection!

*“But every man in his own order: Christ the First Fruits: afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming. Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father. When He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”* Here the great proof flashes out—if death is to be destroyed, then there must be a resurrection, for death cannot be destroyed until the very bones of the saints are delivered from the strongholds of the enemy!

*“For He has put all things under His feet. But when He says, All things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all*

*things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be All-in-All.*" We are not to suppose, when we read that Jesus Christ will deliver up His Kingdom to God, even to His Father, that He will, therefore, cease to be God or cease to be a King! Understand this, God the Father gave to the Son a Mediatorial Kingdom as Man-God. But the Father was just as much God when He had given Him that Kingdom. It was His own special Kingdom which He, as the Man-God Mediator, was to take and God the Father lost no Glory by giving it to Him. When Christ shall have worked out all His Mediatorial purposes—when He shall have finished the salvation of all His elect—He will lay the crown of His Mediatorial Kingdom at the feet of God and, as the Man-Mediator, He, too, will be subject unto the great Jehovah, the Three-in-One. Then there will be no Mediator any longer, since there will be no necessity for any mediation, but we shall all be gathered in one, even the things that are on earth and the things that are in Heaven—one in Christ Jesus! Then Christ will have His kingdom as God, but as Mediator He will have no Kingdom. It is a destruction of *office*, not of Person, nor yet of honor! It is a laying aside of His official capacity, not in any degree a diminution of His Glory and honor.

*"Else what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?"* This text has had thirty or forty explanations. Doddridge and a great many more think it refers to the practice, when a martyr died, for another person to come forward and fill the offices which he held and so to be "baptized for the dead." But the meaning I like best is—What shall they do who are baptized with the certainty that they are not baptized to live a long while, but that immediately after Baptism, they will be dragged away to die—baptized in the very teeth of death? For as soon as anyone was baptized, the Romans would be looking after him, to drag him away to death. Thus they were many of them baptized as if they were being washed for their burial and dedicating themselves to the grave. They came forward and said, "O Lord, I give myself unto Your service—not to serve You here below, for that the enemy will not let me do, but since I must die, I will be baptized and brave it all. I will be baptized even for death, itself." Well, what shall these do who are baptized in the certain prospect of death if the dead rise not? "Why are they then baptized for the dead?"

*"And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantages it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink. For tomorrow we die."* It does not say

that Paul did fight with beasts at Ephesus. But a great many others did. It was a common practice to put Christians to the lions, giving them a short sword and bidding them fight for their lives. And sometimes, strengthened by God, they fought manfully and came out alive. But “if,” says Paul, “I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantages it me, if the dead rise not?” I might as well give up my religion, then I could lie down and be at peace. “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” Oh, wicked Paul! To quote from a heathen poet! How disgraceful! If I were to repeat a verse and it looked as if Shakespeare or any profane author ever wrote such a thing, you would say, “how criminal!” But I like good things wherever I find them. I have often quoted from the devil and I dare say I shall often quote from his people! Paul quoted this from Meander and another heathen poet who wrote far worse things than have been written by modern poets! If any of us who may have stored our minds with the contents of books we wish we had never read—and if there were some choice gems in them which may be used for the service of God—by His help we will so use them!

*“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness and sin not. For some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.”* You can read what follows at home. It is so beautiful, like one great rolling poem, with more music in it than Milton’s “Paradise Lost.” We will conclude by reading the last few verses.

*“Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed.”* Christ is coming and He will find some alive on the earth and those who are alive will not die. Paul was so full of the Second Coming that he says—“We shall not all sleep.” He did not know but what Christ might come while he was writing the letter! And we are so earnestly looking for Christ, that we, too, are constrained to say, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed.”

*“For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?’ The sting of death is sin. And the strength of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* What a shame it is, when we sometimes attend a funeral and hear that magnificent portion of Scripture read over by a chaplain without heart, or soul, or life—the quicker he can get through the ser-

vice, the better. Oh that such noble words should be so awfully spoiled by men who know nothing about them!

*“Therefore, my Beloved Brethren, be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”*

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

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

# PAUL'S SERMON BEFORE FELIX

## NO. 171

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 10, 1858,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled and answered, Go your way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for you.”***  
**Acts 24:25.**

THE power of the Gospel appears in marvelous grandeur when we see its hold upon hearts devoted to it when subjected to trouble, persecution and sorrow. How mighty must that Gospel be, which, when it gained an entrance into the heart of Paul, could never be driven out of it! For it he suffered the loss of all things, and as for them, he counted them but dung that he might win Christ. To spread the Truth of God, he encountered hardships, shipwrecks, perils on land and perils by sea. But none of these things moved him—neither did he count his life dear unto him—that he might win Christ and be found in Him. Persecution followed persecution. Of the Jews was he beaten with rods. He was dragged from one tribunal to another. Scarcely in any city did he find anything but bonds and imprisonment awaiting him.

Attacked in his own country—he is accused at Jerusalem and arraigned at Caesarea. He is taken from one tribunal to another to be tried for his life. But mark how he always maintains the prominent passion of his soul. Put him where you may, he seems to be like John Bunyan, who says, “If you let me out of prison today, I will preach the Gospel again tomorrow, by the grace of God.” No, more than that, he preached it *in* prison, before his judges he proclaimed it. Standing up before the Sanhedrin, he cries, “As touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question.” When brought to stand before Agrippa, he tells of his conversion and so sweetly speaks of the grace of God that the king himself cries, “Almost you persuade me to be a Christian.” And here in our text, when he stands before the Roman Procurator to be tried for life or death, instead of entering into a defense of himself, he reasons “of righteousness, continence and judgment to come,” until his judge trembles and he that sits upon the throne takes the prisoner’s place, while the prisoner judges him, in anticipation of that time when the saints shall judge the angels, as assessors with Christ Jesus.

Why, once let a man believe the Gospel and determine to spread it and it makes him a grand man. If he is a man destitute of power, intellect and talent, it makes him grandly earnest in his arduous desire to serve Christ in the little measure in which he can do it. But if he is a gifted man, it sets his whole soul on fire, brings out all his powers, develops everything that lies hidden, digs up every talent that had been buried in its napkin and spreads out all the gold and silver of man's intellectual wealth, displaying it all to the honor of that Christ who has bought it all with His blood.

We might stay a little while and dilate on this thought and show you how, in all ages, this has been the truth—that the power of the Gospel has been eminently proved in its influence over men's hearts—proving the truth of that utterance of Paul when he said that neither tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword shall separate them from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ their Lord. But instead of so doing, I invite you to contemplate the text more closely.

We have before us a picture containing three characters—Felix and Drusilla, sitting side by side upon the judgment seat. Paul, the prisoner, bound in chains, to explain to Drusilla and Felix the doctrines of the Christian religion, in order that he might either be acquitted or condemned to die. You have a judge extremely willing to put the prisoner to death because he desired to please the Jews. You have, on the other hand, a prisoner unabashed, who comes before the judge and without any debate begins to unfold the Gospel, selecting a certain part of it, described in our text as reasoning concerning “righteousness, temperance and judgment to come.” The judge trembles, dismisses the prisoner in haste and promises to attend to him at a convenient season. Note, first then, *the appropriate sermon*. Note, secondly, *the affected audience*—for the audience was certainly moved—“Felix trembled!” Note, then, thirdly the *lamentable disappointment*. Instead of attending to the message, “Go your way” was all that Paul had.

**I.** First, then, we have an APPROPRIATE SERMON. Just hear for a moment or two the history of Felix. Felix was originally a slave—he was freed by Claudius and became one of the infamous favorites of the emperor. Of course in that capacity he pandered to his master's vices and was at all times prepared to indulge the emperor in every lustful wish of his abominable heart. Through this he became promoted and ran through the stages of Roman preferment until he obtained the Governorship of Judea. While he was governor there, he committed every act of extortion which it was possible for him to commit and went so far at last, that the Emperor Nero was obliged to recall him. He would have been severely punished for his crimes had it not been for the influence of his brother

Pallas, another freed man with the emperor, through whom he obtained a release, after a sharp rebuke.

The Roman historian, Tacitus, says, "He exercised, in Judea, the imperial functions with a mercenary soul." You may easily see, then, how appropriate was the discourse, when the Apostle Paul reasoned concerning righteousness. Felix had been an unjust extortioner and the Apostle purposely selected righteousness to be a topic of his discourse. By the side of Felix sat Drusilla. In the verse preceding our text she is called his wife. It is said she was a Jewess. This Drusilla was a daughter of Herod Agrippa the Great—a woman noted in that age for her superlative charms and for her unbridled voluptuousness.

She had been once affianced to Antiochus, who, upon the death of Herod, refused to marry her. She was afterwards married to Azizus, the king of the Amesenes, who, although a heathen, was so fond of her that he submitted to the most rigorous rites of the Jewish religion in order to obtain her in marriage. His love was but ill-requited, for in a little time she deserted him at the instigation of Felix and was, at the time of Paul's address, living as the wife of the lascivious Felix. We may easily understand then, why the Apostle Paul, fixing his stern eye on Drusilla, reasoned concerning continence and publicly rebuked both Felix and Drusilla for the shameless lust in which they were publicly living. And then you may imagine since there was now a court sitting and Felix himself was the judge and Paul the prisoner, how strikingly appropriate was the last theme—"judgment to come."

I think, my Brethren, it would not be very hard for us to imagine how well the Apostle handled this subject. I can conceive that Felix expected to have a grand disquisition upon some recondite themes of the Gospel. Possibly he expected that the Apostle Paul would reason concerning the resurrection of the dead. He thought perhaps that predestination, election and free will would be the topics of the Apostle's discourse. "Surely," thought he, "He will tell me those deep and hidden matters in which the Gospel of Jesus differs from Judaism." Not so. In another place, on Mars' Hill, the Apostle would speak of resurrection. In another place he would speak of election and declare that God was the potter and man was but the clay. This was not the place for that. And this was not the time for such subjects. This was the time for preaching the plain precepts of the Gospel and for dealing sternly with a wicked man who sat in eminent power. Conceive then, the pointed manner of his opening discourse—how he would address Felix concerning righteousness.

I can imagine how he would bring before the mind of Felix the widow who had been defrauded of inheritance—the fatherless children who, cast from affluence, were led to beg their bread. I can suppose how he brought

before the mind of that base man the many bribes that he had taken, when he sat upon his judgment seat. He would recall to him the false decisions that he had given. He would remind him how the Jews as a nation had been oppressed—how by taxation they had been ground to the earth. He would bring before him one scene after another—where avarice had overridden equity—boldly and sternly depicting the exact character of the man. And then at the end declaring that such men could have no inheritance in the kingdom of God—bidding him repent of this, his wickedness, that his sins might be forgiven him.

Then gently and delicately turning to the other subject, I imagine how he would fix his eyes upon Drusilla and remind her that she had lost everything for which a woman ought to live and solemnly bring the most powerful motives to bear upon her lascivious heart. And then turning to Felix, would remind him that adulterers, fornicators and unclean persons, have no inheritance in the kingdom of God—reminding him how the vices of a ruler would tend to pollute a nation and how the iniquities of the nation of the Jews must, in a great measure, be laid to his charge. I can conceive how for a moment Felix would bite his lips. Paul gave him no time for anger and passion. For in a moment, in a fury of impassioned eloquence he introduced the “judgment to come.”

He made Felix think he saw the Great White Throne, the books opened and himself arraigned before his Judge—he made him hear the voices of the trumpet—the “Come you blessed”—the “Depart you cursed.” He petrified him, nailed him to his seat, opened his ears and made him listen, while with stern and impassioned earnestness, though his hands were bound with chains, he used the liberty of the Gospel in upbraiding him. Well do I conceive that then Felix began to tremble. He that had been base and mean and perfidious, trembled like a coward slave, as he really was. And though sitting on a throne he pictured himself already damned. What he next would have done we cannot tell, if the devil had not then suggested to him that it was time to rise. For in hot haste he and Drusilla left the throne. “Go your way for this time. When I have a convenient season, I will call for you.”

Hear me, then, Brethren! What the Apostle Paul did, every minister ought to do. He selected a topic appropriate to his audience. It is ours ever to do the same. But are there not to be found many ministers who, if they addressed kings and princes, would pour out before them the vilest adulation and flattery that ever came from mortal lips? Are there not many who, when they are aware that great and mighty ones are listening to them, trim their doctrine, cut the edges of their speech and endeavor in some way or other to make themselves pleasing to their audience? Can there not be found many ministers who, if addressing an Antinomian audience,

would confine themselves strictly to predestination and reprobation? And ministers who, if they addressed an audience of philosophers, would just talk about morality, but never mention such words as the Covenant of Grace and salvation by blood?

Are there not some to be found who think the highest object of the minister is to attract the multitude and then to please them? O my God! How solemnly ought each of us to bewail our sin if we feel that we have been guilty in this matter. What is it to have pleased men? Is there anything in it that can make our head lie easy on the pillow of our death? Is there anything in it that can give us boldness in the Day of Judgment, or cause us happiness when we face Your tribunal, O Judge of quick and dead? No, my Brethren, we must always take our texts so that we may bear upon our hearers with all our might. I hope I may never preach *before* a congregation—I desire always to preach *to* you. Nor do I wish to exhibit powers of eloquence, nor would I even pretend to exhibit any depth of learning. I would simply say “Hear me, my fellow Men, for God does send me unto you. There are some things that concern you. I will tell you of them. You are dying. Many of you when you die must perish forever. It is not for me to be amusing you with some deep things that may instruct your intellect, but do not enter your hearts. It is for me to fit the arrow to the string and send it home—to unsheathe the sword—be the scabbard ever so glittering, to cast it aside and let the majesty of naked truth smite at your hearts. For in the Day of Judgment, anything beside personal home-speaking will be consumed as wood and hay and stubble. But these shall abide, like the gold and silver and precious stones that cannot be consumed.”

But some men will say, “Sir, ministers ought not to be personal.” Ministers ought to be personal and they will never be true to their Master till they are. I admire John Knox for going, Bible in hand, to Queen Mary and sternly upbraiding her. I admit I do not exactly love the way in which he did it. But the thing itself I love. The woman had been a sinner and he told her so flat to her face. But now we poor craven sons of nobodies have to stand and talk about generalities. We are afraid to point you out and tell you of your sins personally. But, blessed be God, from that fear I have been delivered long ago.

There walks not a man on the surface of this earth whom I dare not reprove. There are none of you, however connected with me by ties of profession or in any other respect, that I would blush to speak personally to, as to the things of the kingdom of God. And it is only by being bold, courageous and sending home the Truth of God that we shall at last be free from the blood of our hearers. May God grant us the power of Paul—that we may reason on appropriate subjects and not select generalities, when

we ought to be pushing home truths to the consciences of our hearers. After all, the Apostle Paul needs no eulogy. The best eulogy that could be passed on the Apostle was the fact that "Felix trembled." And that brings us to the second part of our subject.

**II. "FELIX TREMBLED."** Yes, the poor prisoner, having nothing where-with to assist him in the delivery of the truth, but having everything to his disadvantage—the chain, the prison dress, the character of one that had stirred up sedition in a nation—this poor prisoner with believing hand laid hold on the sword of truth and with this he did divide in sunder joints and marrow. He did beard the lion in his den. Even now I see him look the governor sternly in the face, attack him in his heart, drive him from his excuses, push the Word home at the point of the bayonet of Truth, drive him from every refuge of lies and make him tremble!

O marvelous power of a preached Gospel! O mighty truth that God is with the ministry, when the kings of the earth that take counsel together are yet dismayed by it. Who is he that does not see here something more than human eloquence, when a prisoner becomes the judge and the prince upon the throne becomes the criminal? "Felix trembled." Have I not some here who have experienced the same feelings as Felix? Some plain spoken minister has told you something that was rather too plain for you. At first you were angry. On second thought, and as the man moved on in his discourse, you became chagrined that you had given him the opportunity of thus exposing you, as you imagined.

A better thought struck you and you saw at once that the man could have no intention personally to insult you. And then your feelings changed. Thunderbolt after thunderbolt fell from his lips. He seemed a very Jupiter Tonans sitting upon his throne, casting lightning from his lips. You began to tremble. "Verily here is a man that has told me all things that ever I did. Is not this man sent from Christ?" Ah, and thus you have borne your witness to the Truth of the Gospel. Though you have not felt its power to your salvation, yet you have been an unwilling witness that the Gospel has been true, for you have felt its power when it has made your knees knock together and your eyes run down with tears.

But what is it that makes men tremble under the sound of the Gospel? Some say it is their conscience. Yes, and doubtless it is in some sense. The poet said, "Conscience makes cowards of us all." And certainly, when the minister's exposition is faithful and pertinent to our own case, conscience, if it is not thoroughly seared and dead will make our cheeks blush. But I take it that conscience of itself is so thoroughly corrupt, together with all the other powers of manhood—that it would never ever make a man go so far as trembling—if there were not something at work upon the conscience, besides its being left to its own natural force. My

Brethren, I believe that what some people call natural conviction is, after all, the work of the Spirit. Some very profound divines are so fond of the doctrine that the Holy Spirit always works efficaciously, that they think that the Spirit never can work a transitory emotion in a man's soul—they impute such things to conscience.

And if they see a man like Felix trembling, they say 'tis all natural conscience! Now, do they not see that they are in this touching on another doctrine equally dear to them—the doctrine of Total Depravity? If men are totally depraved by nature, then, as trembling is a good thing, they are not capable even of that without some influence of the Holy Spirit! The fact is, my Hearer, the Holy Spirit works in two ways. In some men's hearts He works with *restraining* Grace only, and the restraining Grace, though it will not save them, is enough to keep them from breaking out into the open and corrupt vices in which some men indulge who are totally lacking the restraints of the Spirit.

Now, there was in Felix some little portion of this restraining Grace. And when the Apostle laid the Gospel open to him, this restraining Grace quickened the conscience and compelled Felix to tremble. Mark you, this Grace man may resist, and does resist. For albeit that the Holy Spirit is Omnipotent and never can be resisted when He works Omnipotently, yet as a strong man may sometimes not put out all his strength, but work with his finger, for instance, so that he may permit even a gnat or an ant to overcome him, even so the Holy Spirit sometimes works but temporarily and but for good and excellent purposes, which He always accomplishes. But He allows men to quench and resist His influences so that salvation is not so much as approached thereby.

God the Holy Spirit may work in men some good desires and feelings and yet have no design of saving them. But mark, none of these feelings are things that accompany sure salvation, for if so, they would be continued. He does not work Omnipotently to save, except in the persons of His own elect, whom He assuredly brings to Himself. I believe, then, that the trembling of Felix is to be accounted for by the *restraining* Grace of the Spirit quickening his conscience and making him tremble.

But what shall be said of some of you who never tremble? You have come here this morning with your brazen face and with your impudent and arrogant heart. You have been mouthing high Heaven with your blasphemies and now you stand all unmoved and unabashed in the house of God. Though a Baxter should rise from the dead, and with moving sighs and tears should preach the Gospel, you would laugh and scoff. Though Boanerges, with a tongue of thunder, should come and preach to you, you would turn up your lip and find some fault with his oratory and his words

would never reach your heart. O ungodly generation! How has God given you up and how has Hell bewitched you!

O race of evil doers! Children that are corrupters! How are you seared! Your soul reads with prophetic glance the handwriting on the wall! You are condemned already. You are past hope—"trees plucked up by the roots, twice dead." For in the fact that you tremble not, there is proof not only of your death but of your positive corruption. You shall die as you are, without hope, without trust or refuge. For he that has lost feeling has lost hope. He that is past conscience God the Holy Spirit has given up—He will no more strive with him forever.

**III.** And now, passing rapidly over this point of the trembling audience, we come in the next place to the LAMENTABLE DISAPPOINTMENT which Paul experienced, when he saw Felix rise in haste and dismiss him from his presence. "It is wonderful," said a good man once to a minister, "it is wonderful to see a whole congregation moved to tears by the preaching of the Word" "Yes," said that minister, "it is wonderful. But I know a wonder ten times greater than that—the wonder is that those people should so soon wipe away their tears and forget what they have heard." 'Tis wonderful that Felix trembled before Paul. 'Tis more wonderful that Felix should say, "Go your way." 'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, that when the Word touches the conscience, even then sin has such power over men that the Truth of God is repulsed and driven out of the heart. Felix, unhappy Felix! Why is it that you do rise from your judgment-seat? Is it that you have much business to do? Stop, Felix. Let Paul speak to you a minute longer. You have business—but have you no business for your soul? Stop, unhappy Man! Are you about again to be extortionate, again to make your personal riches greater? Oh, stop! Can you not spare another minute for your poor soul?

It is to live forever—have you no imputed righteousness? Ah, Man, there will be a time when the business that seems so important to you will prove to have been but a daydream, a poor substitute for the solid realities you have forgotten. Do you reply "No, the king has sent me an urgent commission. I must attend to Caesar"? Ah, Felix, but you have a greater monarch than Caesar—there is One who is Emperor of Heaven and Lord of earth—can you spare no time to attend to His commands? Before His presence Caesar is but a worm. Man! Will you obey the one and will you despise the other? Ah, no. I know what you dare not say. Felix, you are turning aside again to indulge in your lascivious pleasures. Go, and Drusilla with you! But stop! Dare you do that, with that last word ringing in your ears, "Judgment to come"?

What? Will you repeat that wanton dalliance that has damned you already and will you go again to imbrue your hands in lust and doubly

damn your spirit after warnings heard and felt? O Man! I could weep over you, to think that as the bullock goes to the slaughter and as the lamb licks the knife, so do you go back to the sin that destroys you and to the lust that ruins you. You, too—many of you, have often been impressed under the ministry. I know what you have said on the Monday morning, after deep searching of heart on the Sabbath. You have said, “I must attend to business, I must see after the things of this world.” Ah, you will say that one day when Hell shall laugh you in the face for your folly. Think of men that are dying every day saying, “We must live,” and forgetting that they must die!

O poor Soul! To be caring about that house, your body, and neglecting the tenant within! Another replies, “I must have a little more pleasure.” Pleasure do you call it? What? Can there be pleasure in turning suicide to your own soul—pleasure in defying your Maker, trampling on His laws, despising His grace? If this is pleasure ‘tis a pleasure over which angels might weep. What, Man, will you count this pleasure when you come to die? Above all, will you count this pleasure when you stand before your Maker’s bar at last? It is a strange delusion that causes you to believe a lie. There is no pleasure in that which brings wrath upon your soul, even to the uttermost.

But the usual reply is, “There is time enough yet.” The young man says, “Let me alone till I grow old.” And you old men, what do you say? I can suppose that the youth looks forward to life and expects to find a future time more convenient. But there are some of you over whose heads seventy winters have blown. When do you hope to find a convenient season? You are within a few days’ march of the tomb. If you do but open your poor dull eyes, you may see Death but a slight distance in advance. The young may die. The old must! To sleep in youth is to sleep in a siege. To sleep in old age is to slumber during the attack. What? Man, will you that are so near your Maker’s bar still put Him off with a, “Go your way”?

What? Procrastinate now, when the knife is at your throat—when the worm is at the heart of the tree and the branches have begun to wither—when the grinders fail even now, because they are few and they that look out of the windows are darkened? The sere and yellow leaf has come upon you and you are still unready for your doom? O Man! Of all fools, a fool with a gray head is the worst fool anywhere. With one foot in the grave and another foot on a sandy foundation, how shall I depict you, but by saying to you, as God said to the rich man, “You fool! A few more nights and your soul shall be required of you”? And then where are you? But still the common cry is, “There is time enough.” Even the worldly moralist said, “Time enough is always little enough.” Time enough, Man? For what? Surely you have spent time enough in sin—the time past may “suffice you

to have worked the will of the Gentiles.” What? Time enough to serve a God that laid down His life for you?

No! Eternity will not be too long to utter His praise and therefore it cannot be too long to love Him here and serve Him the few remaining days that you are to live on earth. But stop! I will reason with you. Come, Felix! You shall not go away this morning till my whole soul has poured itself out over you, not until I have cast my arms round you and tried to stop you this time from turning from the face of Him that bids you live. You say, “Another time.” How do you know that you will ever feel again as you feel now? This morning, perhaps, a voice is saying in your heart, “Prepare to meet your God.” Tomorrow that voice will be hushed. The gaieties of the ball room and the theater will put out that voice that warns you now and perhaps you will never hear it again.

Men all have their warnings and all men who perish have had a last warning. Perhaps this is your last warning. You are told today that except you repent, you must perish—except you put your trust in Christ you must be cast away forever. Perhaps no honest lip will again warn you. Perhaps no tearful eye will ever look on you affectionately again. God today is pulling the reins tight to check you from your lust. Perhaps if today you spurn the bit and rush madly on, He will throw the reins upon your back saying, “Let him alone.” And then it is a dark steeplechase between earth and Hell and you will run it in mad confusion, never thinking of a Hell till you find yourself past warning, past repentance, past faith, past hope.

But again—how do you know if you should ever have these feelings again? Will God accept you then? “Today,” He says, “today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” This hour His love weeps over you and His heart yearns for you. Today He says, “Come, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool. And though they are red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow.” Do you today turn a deaf ear to Him? Do you today forego His invitation and despise His warning? Take heed! You may one day need what now you despise and you may then cry to Him, but He will not hear you. You may then pray to Him, but He will shut out your prayer and His only answer will be, “*I called!*”

“Remember the Surrey Music Hall that morning?” “*I called and you refused.* You stood against that pillar under the gallery. *I called and you refused! I stretched out My hands,* as if I would bring you to My bosom and no man regarded Me. You were there in the gallery. You listened, but it was as though you heard not. Therefore”—and oh—the dreadful conclusion!—“*I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear comes.*” Stop! Those are not *my* words. They are *God's* Words. Turn to the book of Proverbs and find them there. It were a harsh thing for me to say

of God. But God says it of Himself and God is true, though every man is a liar. And if He is true, how do you know that He may not despise your prayer one day, shut out your cry and banish you forever?

But again—how do you know that you shall live to be warned again? Said a minister once, when I gently hinted to him that he had not preached the Gospel that morning, “No, I did not mean to preach to sinners in the morning. But I will preach to them in the evening.” “Ah,” said I, “but what if some of your congregation of the morning should be in Hell before the evening?” So may I say to you. You have promised to go to a friend’s house today—you think you cannot break that promise. You wish you could. You wish you could go home and fall on your knees and pray. But no, you cannot, because your promise binds you. You will have a convenient season one of these days!

And so God Almighty is to wait man’s convenience! How do you know you will live till that convenience comes? A little too much heat or too much cold within the brain—a little too fast flowing of the blood, or a little too slow circulation thereof—some little turning of the fluids of the body in a wrong direction and you are dead!—

***“Dangers stand thick through all the ground,  
To bear you to the tomb,  
And fierce diseases wait around,  
To hurry mortals home.”***

Oh, why will you then dare to procrastinate and say, “Time enough yet.” Will your soul ever be saved by your saying, “Time enough yet”? Archbishop Tillotson well says, “A man might say I resolve to eat, but the *resolve* to eat would never feed his body. A man might say, I am resolved to drink, but the resolve to drink would never slake his thirst.” And you may say, “I am resolved by-and-by to seek God.” But your resolve will not save you. It is not the forgetful hearer, but the *doer* of the Word that shall be blessed therein. Oh that you might now say—“Today, my God, today I confess my sin. Today I ask you to manifest Your grace. Today receive my guilty soul and show me a Savior’s blood. Today I renounce my follies, my vices and my sins, constrained by Sovereign Grace. Today I cast away my good works as my ground of trust. Today I cry—

***“Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to Your Cross I cling!”***

Oh, happy minister who shall have such an audience!—Happier than Paul, if he should know that his congregation had said this! Come, O Holy Spirit, and draw unwilling hearts and make them bow before the scepter of Sovereign Grace.

Preaching, you see, takes away my voice. Ah, it is not that. It is not the preaching, but the sighing over your souls that is the hard work. I could preach forever. I could stand here day and night to tell my Master’s love

and warn poor souls. But 'tis the afterthought that will follow me when I descend these pulpit steps that many of you, my Hearers, will neglect this warning. You will go. You will walk into the street. You will joke. You will laugh. My master says, "Son of Man, have you heard what the children of Israel say concerning you? Behold, you are as one that plays a tune upon an instrument. They make merry with you and they go their ways." Yes, but that were little. To be laughed at is no great hardship to me. I can delight in scoffs and jeers. Caricatures, lampoons and slanders are my glory. Of these things I boast, yes, in these I will rejoice.

But that you should turn from His mercy, *this* is my sorrow. Spit on me, but oh, repent! Laugh at me, but oh, believe in my Master! Make my body as the dirt of the streets, if you will, but damn not your own souls! Oh, do not despise your own mercies. Put not away from you the Gospel of Christ. There are many other ways of playing fools beside that. Carry coals in your bosom. Knock your head against a wall—but do not damn your souls for the mere sake of being a fool—for other fools to laugh at. Oh, be in earnest upon an earnest subject. If there is no hereafter, live as you like. If there is no Heaven, if there is no Hell, laugh at me! But if these things are true and you believe them, I charge you, as I shall face you at the judgment bar of the Lord Jesus in the Day of Judgment—I charge you, by your own immortal welfare, lay these things to heart. Prepare to meet your God, O sons of Israel! And the Lord help you in this thing. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

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# JESUS AFFIRMED TO BE ALIVE

## NO. 2016

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, APRIL 1, 1888,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: but had certain questions against him of their own superstition and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.”*  
**Acts 25:18, 19.**

FESTUS is giving to King Agrippa a brief account of the matter between Paul and the Jews. It may not be a very accurate account. For Festus did not profess to understand the business. He was a Roman governor newly come to Judea. He had no acquaintance whatever with Jewish Scriptures nor with Jewish laws. He is, therefore, merely giving to King Agrippa a rough and ready outline of the affair as it struck him. He had never thought it worth his special attention but he was a little puzzled how he should represent the matter to Caesar, to whom Paul had appealed.

Festus is represented by our translators as calling the Jewish religion a “superstition.” I hardly think he would have used so harsh a term before Agrippa who professed to be of the Jewish faith. But yet, as he probably knew that Agrippa’s religion did not lie very deep and was the mere appendage of a man of fashion, Festus was not very particular about the word which he used. And he lighted upon one which may mean “superstition” as the Authorized Version has it, or “religion” as the Revised Version has it.

“Well, well,” he seems to say to Agrippa, “I do not know much about it. I supposed, when the Jews brought this man before me, that he would be charged with a breach of the Roman Law and I was prepared, of course, to deal with the prisoner. But when I listened to their accusation and found that there was nothing in it but some disputes about their religion, I hardly knew what to say. Their controversy is important to them, I dare say. But it can be of no consequence either to you or to me, for it turned very much upon a person of the name of Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.”

I want you to notice that, rough and ready as this description is, and neither full nor deep, yet on the surface we see that in the controversy we have the same condition of things as we usually see in such conflicts. On the one side Paul’s opponents fought with the weapons of “certain questions,” and on the other hand he defended himself with a bold affirmation. This is the old story of speculation against dogmatism. It is always the way—the adversaries of the Cross of Christ assert nothing but they question everything. They will not lay down a basis nor define their opinions. If they would do this, we might soon demolish their fabrics of falsehood. But all that they propound is “certain questions.”

On the other hand, those who are witnesses for the Lord Jesus have little care about questions, speculations and the boasted outcome of cultured thought. They affirm certain definite facts—they affirm these to be a Revelation from God and there they stand. Brethren, it is, at least, a hopeful token when we are on the side of the affirmation. As to that side which is abundant only in questions, what can be the practical value of its contentions? Can ten thousand questions ease a guilty conscience? Can a myriad of speculations yield comfort for the dying hour? Are we helped forward in true holiness or even converted to the way of life by questions?

Let us take hold upon the Truths of God which are surely revealed, the things which we have tasted and handled and verified. And, holding these intelligently and heartily, let us resolve to hold them to the end. Let us accept that which has come to us by Revelation of the Holy Spirit and let us stand firmly there, as Paul did when he affirmed that Jesus was alive. Let us plainly declare definite Truths of God of which we are not ashamed—Truths which are often disputed but can never be disproved.

Another thing is very noticeable in this somewhat flippant account of the whole affair by Festus—namely that he noticed that the Jews raised certain questions about opinions, superstitious or religious. But Paul made a statement concerning a Person. Paul was seen with half an eye to be the more conscientious and the more religious of the two. But still his religion resolved itself into attachment to a Person—“one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.” Brethren, the hinge of the controversy must ever turn upon our Lord, His Divine nature, the authority of His teaching and especially the meaning of His death and resurrection.

Did He die as a sacrifice for sin according to Old Testament prophecy? Did He justify many by bearing their iniquities? Did He, or did He not? The side which Paul takes is that which magnifies Jesus. He finds his chief treasure in the Person of the Savior. May the Spirit of God lead us more and more to contend for Jesus who is not only the Author and Finisher of our faith but the sum and substance of it! Son of God and yet Son of Man. Eternal, yet born into this world. Our Sacrifice and yet our Prophet, Priest and King. Bearer of our sorrow and fountain of our joy. Sacrifice for our transgression and yet source of our righteousness. Jesus Christ is our All in All!

God forbid that we should glory, save in His Cross, for we preach Christ crucified. God forbid that we should ever despair of His triumph, for we affirm that He is alive, able to save unto the uttermost those that come unto God by Him. Oh, for a deeper love to our Lord, Himself, loving doctrine, precept and ordinance for His dear sake—rejoicing most of all that He lives—since because He lives we shall live, also. May even the blindest observer of our lives be forced to see that Jesus holds the most prominent place in them and that the battle of our existence is for Jesus, our living Lord!

We will give more consideration this morning to the words of Festus than he gave to them himself. May the Spirit of God give us a blessing while we review this superficial utterance of an utterly worldly man! Seen in its true light, it may be instructive to us.

First, let us observe that true Gospel preaching is full of Jesus. Paul spoke so much of Him that an irreligious heathen magistrate perceived that he spoke of “one Jesus.” Secondly, note that Gospel preaching makes much of the resurrection. For this is implied in what Festus says of Paul’s affirmation. And, thirdly, Gospel preaching affirms that Jesus who died is alive. The great contention was concerning “one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.”

**I.** To begin with—TRUE GOSPEL PREACHING IS FULL OF JESUS. Jesus is the most notable figure in Christian testimony. The Apostle Paul, whom we may regard as a model in preaching, exercised a ministry which was always full of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Following the historical connection of the verse before us, we note that he preached “Jesus to multitudes unknown.” Festus evidently knew not Jesus, for he speaks of Him as “one Jesus.” He mentions the name as belonging to some obscure individual of whom he knew nothing and cared less. The great ones of the earth know nothing of the King of kings. Beloved, to this day this is the wonder of wonders, that the incarnate God is not known. The world which He made knows Him not. He came at first to His own nation, who had been studying the prophecies concerning Him. Even to the jots and tittles had they studied those prophecies and yet, when He came, who was the clear fulfillment of them all, they knew Him not. For had they known Him, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.

When He was born into the world, there was no room for Him in the inn, where there is room for everybody. No palace gave welcome to the more than royal child. He was of the house and lineage of David but they did not perceive in Him the answer to their question, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” His birth is the starting point of the age. And yet it was almost unanimously ignored by those who wielded the recording pen of history. His was the most extraordinary life that ever passed before mortal eyes. And yet how little notice was taken of it! Beyond Palestine it seems not even to have awakened curiosity. He died and then to the people most concerned in Him He became “one Jesus, which was dead.”

The new Roman procurator and myriads like he, well informed upon other matters, hardly knew His name, and only mentioned half of it when they spoke of “one Jesus, which was dead.” Brethren, this is why we must keep on preaching Jesus Christ—because He is still so little known. The masses of this city are as ignorant of Jesus as Festus was. You can never have a congregation in any of our places of worship and feel sure that they all know Jesus. If you gather in the outsiders from the street you may be sure that the story of Jesus will be news to them. We call this a Christian country. But it would be very difficult to prove that it is so. If we took certain lines of observation as to the moral and religious conduct of our fellow men, we should logically arrive at the conclusion that we live in a heathen, rather than in a Christian, city.

Still the world knows Him not. As a sun He shines on all eyes and yet men do not see Him. As an atmosphere He surrounds all life and yet men do not perceive Him. Let this sad fact constrain us to fill our teaching with

Christ. As Gideon's fleece dripped with dew, so let us saturate our ministry with Christ. Be it ours truthfully to say, "We preach Christ crucified." We do this always and evermore. Not by accident but by continual design. Paul preached Jesus, who was despised by many. The language of Festus is not only that of ignorance but in a measure that of contempt. He speaks of "one Jesus, which was dead." Jesus is evidently nothing to Festus and Festus does not imagine that Jesus is very much to King Agrippa. Probably he was quite right—Jesus was nobody among the rank and fashion and culture of the period.

Behold the unlearned of the day, if you speak to them of the great Sacrifice and the wondrous atonement made by blood, they scarcely hearken to you, for such high things are not for them—they are so hardly pressed with daily labor and slender pay that they cannot think of sin and sacrifice and salvation. But they ask, "What has the poor working man to do with religion?" Alas, that this folly should be so prevalent! Then you turn to the learned and hope that here, at any rate, due attention will be given to the great marvel of reconciling love. Alas, it is not so. To these more educated ones the doctrine of the Cross is foolishness. They ask for something new. Something more philosophical. Substitution and sacrifice?—they will have none of them.

The story of the league of justice with Divine Grace—the reconciling of holiness with mercy—is beneath their notice. They are too cultured to believe the common faith, too wise to accept that which God has revealed unto babes. Beloved Brethren, it should never cause us doubt when we see many despising our Lord, for this is nothing new, and nothing unexpected. Did He tell us that if we preached in His name all men would receive us? No, He warned us that the contrary result would follow.

Did not His Apostles assure us that the offense of the Cross had not ceased? Is not Christ crucified a stumbling block and foolishness to carnal men? If all men had received our message with a ready gratitude, we might have questioned the Truth of Scripture. But inasmuch as they fight against it, we may see in this an argument for its truth since we were told of old that "the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God—for they are foolishness unto him."

Gospel preaching is also full of Jesus Christ in this respect—we do not conceal His death. Festus notes that the conflict was concerning "one Jesus, which was dead." The Jews said He was dead and Paul also confessed that He was dead—there was no disagreement between them over that matter. Hear, then, the debate. "What? Did your Leader die?" "Yes—He was crucified." "Did you not say He was Divine?" "Yes." "Yet is He dead?" "It is even so." "Yet you spoke of His leading you on to victory?" "So we did." "Yet He is dead?" "Yes, He died at Calvary." "How, then, can your boasting stand?" "We believe that by His death He has gained the victory and accomplished His great purpose."

"But how did He die?" He died the death of a felon upon a gibbet. His enemies nailed Him to a Cross and put Him to a death which was reserved for slaves. We confess this. Yes, we glory in it! We tell you, too, that He not only died that which was a penal death externally but He actually

and truly died such a death. "He was made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." Isaiah said of Him, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all," and again, "He was numbered with the transgressors and He bare the sin of many." His death was the equivalent to that penal death which was our just desert.

Hear how He cries—"Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger." We glory that our Lord Jesus was put to death as bearing the sin of many. This we hold and teach. Not defending it, nor apologizing for it. But affirming it with all boldness, with the desire that we may be understood. If any object to this teaching, we do not therefore conceal it. We expected that it would be objectionable. We desire more and more to obtrude this Truth of Substitution whenever we preach and to make it the head and front of our Gospel.

As the brazen serpent was lifted up upon the pole and was by no means concealed, even so would we set forth plainly the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus, that sinners may look to Him and live. This is the hope of men—the sacrifice of Jesus proclaimed with great plainness of speech. Jesus is to be believed in as the sin-bearing Lamb of God. Believed in as dying the death of the Cross, that we might live through Him. That only is Gospel preaching which has this for its subject and spirit. A Christless Gospel is a useless Gospel. Our sermons should be so perfumed with Jesus that never should a congregation gather and separate without perceiving a savor of Christ.

Even people who are not saved by it should yet be made to know that we preach Christ crucified. In such a case, we have done our work successfully, even if souls are not saved. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ as well in them that perish as in them that are saved, if we have exalted the Lord Jesus and borne witness to His power to save.

Beloved, I would have you further note that true Gospel preaching will be full of Jesus as He is revealed in the Old Testament. Our Apostle, when he spoke before King Agrippa, went on to declare that he had said "none other things than those which the Prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead and should show light unto the people and to the Gentiles." Evidently it was this astounding statement about Jesus having risen from the dead and being yet alive that was uppermost in the mind of Festus, so that when Paul re-asserted it, he cried with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself; much learning does make you mad."

The learning he referred to was his study of the ancient books of the Jews, the writings of Moses and the Prophets. Paul's teaching paid as much deference to the ancient Scriptures as did that of the Jewish rabbis who were opposed to him—no, in very truth—Paul paid a far more real homage to the Bible than they did. As for us, the Old Testament is prized by us as much as the New. We do not preach Jesus as a fresh arrival, the inventor of a new religion, the founder of a novel way of salvation. No. We preach the Messiah of the Old Testament, whose Gospel is set forth in the

types and in the teachings of Moses and the Prophets—“Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today, and forever.”

Do not imagine that the religion of Abraham was one thing and ours another—ours is but the continuation of that Gospel which was revealed to all the faithful from the days of righteous Abel until now. All who have spoken in the name of God have borne witness to the same Truth. If you would see a suffering Savior I need not refer you to the Gospels but in the twenty-second Psalm behold the full-length portrait of Messiah in His agony. Hear him cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Mark how they part His garments among them and cast lots upon His vesture after they have pierced His hands and His feet!

No Evangelist, even though he were an eyewitness, could have drawn the picture more accurately. Read also the fifty-third of Isaiah. Where can you find a better description of the Messiah’s sufferings than when you see Him cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of His people? Beloved, the New Testament is the key to the Old, but the lock is not superseded by the key—no, it is made more useful. We have not received a new religion—we worship the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob—for He is the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Our Gospel has threads of many colors in it—both the Old and New Testaments are set forth in it to the glory of the one Christ who is the sole Revelation of God. Every Gospel sermon should set forth Jesus scripturally. For it is not the Christ of fancy but the Christ of fact that saves the souls of men. Let me add that where the Gospel is faithfully preached the reproach of Christ will not be shunned by the preacher. Read in the fifth verse of the twenty-fourth of Acts how Paul won this reproach. His adversaries said—“We have found this man a pestilent fellow and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.”

This was the reputation of Paul. Well did Mr. Whitefield say, “There is no going to Heaven as a minister except in a fool’s cap and a fool’s coat.” There is no hope of preaching Christ faithfully without being called by disrespectful titles, regarded as a fool and reckoned among the vulgar and ignorant. Some kind of ugly name will always be appended to the preacher of the true Gospel. Brethren, expect it and accept it! Bid farewell to a quiet life, if you resolve to be true to Jesus. Nothing excites such animosity as the preaching of Jesus. The carnal mind rages at the Cross of Christ. That which would be to men the greatest comfort and the greatest joy if they were in their right minds is their direst hate because sin has perverted their judgments.

Do not, I beseech you, imagine that it is possible, fairly and squarely, to preach Jesus Christ and His Gospel without raising opposition. I know a minister of whom one said, “He is a truly good man and nobody ever says a word against him.” Upon enquiry I heard a judicious person say, “He preaches no error but he avoids the obnoxious side of the Truth of God. What he preaches is true enough, no doubt, but it is not easy to say what it is. Nine out of ten of his hearers could not say what his precise opinion

may be, but he has a fine flow of words. Those who do know what he is preaching about usually say that, “take it for granted, there is nothing in it.”

Of course nobody opposes an indistinct, colorless, please-everybody Gospel—it is not worth anything. But speak clearly and distinctly the doctrine of the great Sacrifice and you will bring upon your head a shower of opposition—you will be “a pestilent fellow” and “a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.” Gospel preaching does not cry, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace. But it is the sword which the Lord Jesus came to send upon the earth.

Once more—Jesus Christ must be preached in the Gospel as the sum and substance of it all. For we note concerning Paul, in this connection, that whoever might be his hearer, his theme was the same—he preached Jesus. If he speaks to Felix, he does not only preach to him of “righteousness, temperance and judgment to come,” as some remind us—but in the twenty-fourth verse of the twenty-fourth chapter we are told that, “after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.”

The faith in Christ was the first thing that Paul preached and then he “reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come.” The foundation of Christian morality is Christ Himself. And though we do preach moral duties most earnestly and press them home upon the conscience, yet first of all we preach the faith of Jesus Christ. When Paul spoke to Festus in the twenty-sixth chapter at the twenty-third verse, he told him that, “Christ should suffer and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead.” It was this that made Festus cry out, because he was amazed at this strange Truth of God concerning Jesus.

So was it with Agrippa. Agrippa is forced to feel that Paul is preaching Christ, for he cries, “You almost persuaded me to be a Christian.” Paul did not merely persuade him to justice and righteousness but he pressed him to yield himself to Christ. Indeed the whole of Paul’s address goes to prove the power and glory of the Jesus by whom Paul had been called to be an Apostle.

Now, Beloved, as I resolve, God helping me, in my preaching to preach to you nothing else save Jesus Christ, so I beseech you, in your schools, in your families, in your public ministries of any and every kind, begin and end with Jesus, who was dead and is alive. Declare His blessed name and proclaim the glory of His Cross! God forbid that you should place anything in front of your testimony save Jesus crucified! Your Gospel is a golden frame, let Jesus be the portrait which is hung up in it.

**II.** Secondly—GOSPEL PREACHING AFFIRMS THE RESURRECTION. Please notice that Paul did not argue the resurrection but affirmed it. He did not prove it philosophically but he affirmed that Jesus rose from the dead because such-and-such persons saw Him alive after He had risen. He did not merely say that it was probable, that it was possible, that it was reasonable—but that it was so—for witnesses proved it. Two saw Him, eleven saw Him, four hundred saw Him. He dealt with the resurrection as common-sense persons deal with any other fact of history.

He quoted his authorities and affirmed that it was so. His witnesses were honest and true men who dared to go to prison and even to die on account of their statements. They had nothing whatever to gain and everything to lose by their testimonies. They stated that Jesus, whom they knew to have been dead, had risen again and had given clear proofs that He was alive. This cornerstone of our faith is sure and upon the certainty of it we build our faith.

Paul asserted that the Savior had the pre-eminence in resurrection and, "that He should be the first that should rise from the dead." Several persons rose from the dead before our Savior but not in the sense which Paul intended. Those mentioned in the Old Testament were quickened for a time but they died after all and saw corruption. They lived anew but they lived not evermore, as Jesus does. A miracle was worked but it gave them only a temporary prolongation of life. They went back to the grave again in due time. Whether it was the child of the woman in the Old Testament, or the brother of Mary and Martha in the New, they were not so raised from the dead as to have attained to immortality.

But our Savior finally rose from the dead and rose from the dead by His own power. He was the first fruits of the resurrection harvest. He was the first sheaf of that wheat which will one day be gathered in bulk—He was the first fruits to be presented unto the Lord to sanctify the whole. Jesus is the pattern, the proof, the pledge, the earnest, the guarantee of the resurrection of all the rest. This Paul asserted and declared as a Revelation of God. From this he inferred the general resurrection. He says in another place that if there is no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen and the whole faith of the Gospel falls to the ground.

To you and to me this is full of comfort—the dead must rise. Our beloved ones have been taken from us but they shall come again from the land of the enemy. We have a glorious hope concerning our own bodies. "I know that my Redeemer lives: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." We shall rise, for Jesus has risen. This is the constant assertion of Scripture. There would be no proof of the resurrection of the dead if Jesus had not risen. But as He has risen from the dead, our resurrection is secured. Now has death lost its sting—the grave may receive us but it cannot retain us, since Jesus has burst its bars.

Moreover, Paul—and he, I say, is a model among Gospel preachers—teaches us to preach in our Gospel all the sweet inferences which flow from the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Here they are: He rose from the dead and therefore His sacrifice has been accepted. God has brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. The work He has done has pleased the Father and therefore He has brought Him back from among the dead. His acceptance is ours—we are "accepted in the Beloved."

Next, Jesus Himself is clear. He had, as our sponsor, become our hostage. Sin was laid on Him and He was laid in the grave. But now the sinner's surety is as clear as the sinner himself—for the Lord Jesus is released from the prison of the tomb. He was delivered for our offenses but

He rose again for our justification. Now, also, we live unto God. Our Lord Jesus died unto sin once. But in that He lives, He lives unto God—so is it with us. This is our joy—His work is accepted, His bearing of our curse is finished, life in us is made manifest.

And now, Beloved, we see in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead that He is Divine. He is “declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” So says Paul in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. Jesus raised Himself from the dead by His own will. “I have power to lay down My life,” said He, “and I have power to take it again.” Who could possess and exercise such a power but a Divine Being?

I must repeat what I have said already, that from the resurrection of our Lord we draw the comfortable inference of the resurrection unto eternal life of all who are in Christ. We said farewell, a little while ago, to him whom we loved so well but we shall see the honored one again. We laid our sister in the grave with many tears. Oh, how we miss her! But we shall meet her again when the trumpet shall sound. We preserve a long list of departed ones, of which we scarcely dare to think, for tears drown our eyes. Yet will we refrain from weeping, for as the dew of herbs causes them to spring up again, so the rising again of our Lord restores to us the beloved ones who have fallen asleep. The broken circle of our fellowship shall be renewed, for Jesus, its center, has risen again.

**III.** But now, alas for me! I have scant time for the point which I wanted most fully to discuss—GOSPEL PREACHING AFFIRMS THAT JESUS IS ALIVE. We do not preach to you a dead Christ but one who is able to save to the uttermost, seeing He ever lives.

Jesus died, Jesus rose again, Jesus is now alive. Paul knew that Jesus lived, for He had spoken to him out of Heaven. Paul had both seen and heard the Lord Jesus and thus he had been turned from a persecutor into an Apostle. We do not need to see Jesus, nor to hear His voice, for we are well satisfied with the witness of a man so true as Paul, in whom a change so remarkable was worked by what he saw. His entire being was transformed by what he saw and heard—assuredly he was no deceiver and he was not the sort of person to have been deceived.

Jesus Christ is then alive, for Paul saw Him. No, not only once did he see Him but on several other occasions. He saw the Lord when he was in the temple in a trance and heard Him say, “Depart, for I will send you far hence unto the Gentiles” (Acts 22:17-21). Even when he lay in prison in Jerusalem the Lord stood by him and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul: for as you have testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must you bear witness also at Rome.” Jesus had thus spoken to Paul, once, twice and many times. And so He was to him most assuredly alive. Ah, dear Friends, if the Lord Jesus has had gracious dealings with any of us and we have had Him revealed within us, we also shall affirm that He is alive.

Beloved, receiving the witness of our Apostle and remembering many other infallible proofs which we have not time to mention, we also believe that Jesus, who was dead, is alive. What follows from this? Why, first, He is alive to bestow the Holy Spirit. Many blessings come from our Lord’s

death but the Holy Spirit was an early gift of His resurrection life—especially was it the outcome of His ascended life. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the ascension gift of our living Lord. When we think of His resurrection life, we couple with it the outpouring of the Spirit of God.

Oh, that this same Spirit would work among us more manifestly just now! And why not? He is with us because Jesus lives. No Spirit of life could proceed from a dead Christ. Jesus, if He were not alive, could not send the Comforter to us. The life and light and liberty of the Spirit are with us, because Jesus lives. Beloved, do you think the times are dark and dreary? Be not afraid—while Jesus lives the Holy Spirit is always obtainable—the Holy Spirit is always ready to work in and with us. What more do we want? Error will fall and the Truth of God will be established by the Holy Spirit. This is our battle-axe and weapon of war. O living Christ, we praise and bless Your name. For out of You shall come abundance of life and power through Your Spirit!

Jesus is alive. Dwell on that thought. He is alive, to claim Heaven for His redeemed. He has gone up before us to occupy our inheritance for us. When He first put His feet within the golden gate He took possession of eternal glory for every soul that He represents. He is our forerunner and representative. Brethren, Heaven is yours, Heaven is mine, because Jesus is, “the Man in possession,” on our behalf. That pierced hand has taken hold of eternal bliss on the behalf of those for whom He shed His blood.

Jesus is also in Heaven making preparation for our coming. What has to be done to make Heaven ready I am sure I do not know, though I have often tried to guess. But Jesus says, “I go to prepare a place for you.” Heaven, when we get there, will prove to be the exact place for us. It has taken Jesus all these years to make it ready for us. He that with a Word made earth fit for created man, did not with a Word make Heaven fit for His regenerated but went to Heaven Himself as a living Christ to see everything set in order for them. I think I hear Him say, “This will not do for My Beloved. There is something yet needed. These fruits are not quite mellow enough, these flowers are not full-blown enough for My Beloved, whom I desire to entertain to the utmost of their capacity.” Jesus is living—living on purpose to keep Heaven for us and make it in all respects ready for us.

Furthermore, lay hold of this thought—that Jesus is alive to *intercede* for us. I am most rich, Beloved, when I have your prayers. If I might have a part in the prayers of all the saints on earth I would not envy a Kaiser his dominions. Yet what are all the prayers of saints compared with the prayers of the King of saints? When He prays—He of the pierced hands and feet—when He prays whom the Father loves so well—who has such deservings of Jehovah for His obedience unto death, even the death of the Cross? What a prevalence must dwell in His intercession! We trust not in a dumb, dead Christ, who could not speak for us but we rest in an Advocate whose eloquent pleadings before the Throne of God can never be denied.

Observe also that our Lord lives to rule all things on our behalf. His enemies put Him to an ignominious death but the Father has delivered all

things into His hands. He whom they spat upon wears majesty in His face. The despised and rejected of men has all power in Heaven and in earth. Jesus lives to control all events and overrule them for the highest purposes of Divine Grace. Trust in Him for His kingdom cannot fail, neither can anything go amiss while He is to the front. Paul affirmed that He was alive. And alive He is in the fullest sense, so that nothing escapes His government. Hallelujah!

“Ah,” you say, “you have now put Him far away from us by reason of His adorable majesty.” Then let me bring Him near to you. He is not only alive Godward, that the Father may delight in Him but alive towards you, that He may have the fellowship of kinship with you. He is touched with a feeling of your infirmities. He sympathizes with all your griefs, even as a loving husband shares the pangs and sorrows of his spouse. He is most near to you, for He is one with you. We may not think of our Lord as One whose shadow flitted over the historic page and left a faint photographic trace. But He lives as truly in the present as in the past.

He is not Jesus of the mist but of this day’s light. He is the same in heart, the same in tenderness, the same in living feeling and union as ever He was. Did you ever reflect that something of Christ remained on earth and was not taken to Heaven? I mean those drops of blood which fell from Him in Gethsemane and that other stream which gushed from His pierced heart on Calvary. I see that his heart’s essence is with us still. It was after death that His heart poured forth for us its treasure of water and blood. And now, long after death His whole heart is as truly ours as it was when He bare our sins in His own body on the tree.

O child of God, I would have you further remember that Jesus is still alive to commune with you. You bend not over His corpse but you sit at His feet. Carnal men would think me dreaming if I were to tell of our spiritual relationship with our living Lord. Still does He speak to our hearts. Pearls may not be cast before swine, nor the love secrets of our souls declared in the streets. But we have been conscious at times of influences other than those which are natural and common. Jesus has made Himself known to us—He has stood behind us and His shadow has fallen over us. He has manifested Himself to us as He does not to the world.

Many a time has He cast a spell over us and bathed us in mystic influence. We have been raised from the valley of weeping to the mountains of joy by a Word from Himself laid home to the heart. You know what I mean. Jesus does not forget us. He has not allowed a great gulf to open between us and Himself. He is still the loving, living, active Jesus to us and with us. How I wish that every child of God here who is in trouble would go at once with that trouble to the living Christ! Oh, that every sinner who is crushed beneath his load of sin would bow at once before the living Christ, whose voice speaks pardon!

You cannot perceive Jesus but He is present where His Gospel is preached. Eyes cannot see Him, nor hands touch Him but He is visible and tangible to faith. Bow before Him. I know you have often thought, “If, instead of seeing Mr. Spurgeon on the platform, I could see Jesus, I would confess my sin to Him and ask His pardon.” I pray you do so even though

you see Him not, for He sees you. Gladly would I cease to be seen of you that your hearts might see my Lord, for He is here. Bow before Him, confess to Him and trust Him.

“Oh,” cries a loving one, “if Jesus were visibly here, I would take Him home with me and entertain Him.” Do so, I pray you, though you do not see Him. Constrain Him to abide with you. Treat the Lord Jesus, not as a phantom but as a real Christ. Paul affirmed that He was alive—believe Paul’s affirmation and speak to the living Jesus. I will give you a text, “Whom having not seen, you love.” You cannot love a dead person as a dead person. You may love the memory of the dead. But if you love them, you regard them as living. Love is for life. It cannot dwell with death. We have not seen Jesus but we love Him and this proves that to our hearts He lives.

Let us view Him in the light of life at this very hour. I beseech my Lord Jesus to let me personally realize His august Presence. My Lord, are You really here? Hear, then, my prayer—I beseech You, enable me to serve You with my whole being and to count reproach for Your sake to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. Will you not, my Beloved, each one of you, think of your Lord as with you at this moment? Behold Him and speak to Him in the silence of your hearts. Will you now renew your dedication vow and be the Lord’s forever?

Oh that our Lord would now appear! Oh that His silver trumpets would ring out while yet I speak to you! Oh that His feet would once more touch this earth! The second coming of our living Lord is the ultimatum of our faith. He is alive and as surely as He lives, He will open wide the golden gate and come again to take His people up to be with Him forever. Has He not said, “I will come again and receive you unto Myself”? They that have been faithful to Him in this evil generation, through the dark as well as through the light and have followed at His heels through mire and slough—these shall partake of His glory.

“These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes.” Who is on the side of the living Christ at this hour? Let him come out and boldly say so. Hold not back lest you be found traitors. Confess your Lord, take up your cross and by God’s grace be the living servants of the living Jesus. Amen.

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# THE RESURRECTION CREDIBLE

## NO. 1067

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 25, 1872,  
 BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?”***  
***Acts 26:8.***

CONCERNING the souls of our believing friends who have departed this life we suffer no distress, we feel sure that they are where Jesus is and behold His Glory according to our Lord's own memorable prayer. We know but very little of the disembodied state, but we know quite enough to rest certain beyond all doubt that—

***“They are supremely blest,  
 Have done with sin,  
 And care, and woe,  
 And with their Savior rest.”***

Our main trouble is about their bodies, which we have committed to the dark and lonesome grave. We cannot reconcile ourselves to the facts that their dear faces are being stripped of all their beauty by the fingers of decay and that all the insignia of their manhood should be fading into corruption. It seems hard that the hands and feet and all the goodly fabric of their noble forms should be dissolved into dust and broken into an utter ruin.

We cannot stand at the grave without tears—even the perfect Man could not restrain His weeping at Lazarus' tomb. It is a sorrowful thought that our friends are dead, nor can we ever regard the grave with love. We cannot say that we take pleasure in the catacomb and the vault. We still regret, and feel it natural to do so, that so dreadful a ban has fallen upon our race as that it should be “appointed unto all men once to die.” God sent it as a penalty and we cannot rejoice in it. The glorious doctrine of the resurrection is intended to take away this cause of sorrow! We need have no trouble about the body any more than we have concerning the soul.

Faith being exercised upon immortality relieves us of all trembling as to the spirits of the just. And the same faith, if exercised upon *resurrection*, will, with equal certainty, efface all hopeless grief with regard to the body, for though apparently destroyed, the body will live again—it has not gone to annihilation. That very frame which we lay in the dust shall but sleep there for awhile and, at the trump of the archangel, it shall awaken in superior beauty, clothed with attributes unknown to it while here. The Lord's love to His people is a love towards their entire manhood—He chose them not as disembodied spirits, but as men and women arrayed in flesh and blood. The love of Jesus Christ towards His chosen is not merely an affection for their better nature but towards that, also, which we are apt to think their inferior part.

In His Book all their members were written—He keeps all their bones and the very hairs of their head are all numbered. Did He not assume our perfect manhood? He took into union with His Deity a human soul, but He also assumed a human body—and in that fact He gave us evidence of His affinity to our perfect manhood, to our flesh and to our blood, as well as to our mind and to our spirit. Moreover, our Redeemer has perfectly ransomed both soul and body. It was not partial redemption which our Kinsman effected for us.

We know that our Redeemer lives, not only with respect to our spirit but with regard to our body so that, though the worm shall devour its skin and flesh, yet shall it rise again because He has redeemed it from the power of death and ransomed it from the prison of the grave. The whole manhood of the Christian has already been sanctified. It is not merely that with his spirit he serves his God, but he yields his members to be instruments unto righteousness to the glory of his heavenly father. “Know you not,” says the Apostle, “that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit”? Surely that which has been a temple of the Holy Spirit shall not be ultimately destroyed!

It may be taken down, as the tabernacle was in the wilderness, but taken down to be put up again! Or, to use another form of the same figure, the tabernacle may go but only that the temple may follow. “We know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” My Brothers and Sisters, it would not be a complete victory over sin and Satan if the Savior left a part of His people in the grave! It would not look as if He had destroyed all the worlds of the devil if He only emancipated their spirits. There shall not be a bone, nor a *piece* of a bone of any one of Christ’s people left in the grave at the last. Death shall not have a solitary trophy to show—his prison shall be utterly rifled of all the spoil which he has gathered from our humanity.

The Lord Jesus in all things shall have the pre-eminence and even as to our materialism He shall vanquish death and the grave, leading our captivity captive. It is a joy to think that as Christ has redeemed the entire man and sanctified the entire man, He will be honored in the salvation of the entire man, so our complete manhood shall have it in its power to glorify Him! The hands with which we sinned shall be lifted in eternal adoration. The eyes which have gazed on evil shall behold the King in His beauty. Not merely shall the *mind* which now loves the Lord be perpetually knit to Him and the spirit which contemplates Him delight forever in Him, and be in communion with Him—but this very *body* which has been a clog and hindrance to the spirit and an arch rebel against the sovereignty of Christ—shall yield Him homage with voice, and hands, and brain, and ears and eyes! We look to the time of resurrection for the accomplishment of our adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body!

But, this being our hope and though we believe and rejoice in it in a measure, we have, nevertheless, to confess that sometimes questions suggest themselves and the evil heart of unbelief cries, “Can it be true? Is it possible?” At such times the question of our text is exceedingly necessary, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should

raise the dead?" This morning I shall first ask you, dear Brethren, to look the difficulty in the face. And then, secondly, we will endeavor to remove the difficulty—there is but one way of doing so—and that a very simple one. And then, thirdly, we shall have a word or two to say about our relation to this Truth of God.

**I.** First, then, LET US LOOK THIS DIFFICULTY IN THE FACE. We shall not, for a moment, flinch from the boldest and most plain assertion of our belief in the resurrection, but will let its difficulties appear upon the surface. Attempts have been made at different times by misguided Christians to tone down or explain away the doctrine of the resurrection and kindred truths in order to make them more acceptable to skeptical or philosophical minds. But this has never succeeded.

No man has ever been convinced of a Truth of God by discovering that those who profess to believe it are half ashamed of it and adopt a tone of apology. How can a man be convinced by one who does not, himself, believe? For that, in plain English, is what it comes to. When we modify, qualify and attenuate our doctrinal statements, we make concessions which will never be reciprocated and are only received as admissions that we do not believe, ourselves, what we assert. By this cutting and trimming policy we shear away the locks of our strength and break our own arm. Nothing of that kind affects me, either now, or at any time. We do, then *really* in very truth believe that the very body which is put into the grave will rise again! And we mean this *literally* and as we utter it.

We are not using the language of metaphor, or talking of a myth. We believe that, in actual fact, the bodies of the dead will rise again from the tomb! We admit and rejoice in the fact that there will be a great change in the body of the righteous man—that its materialism will have lost all the grossness and tendency to corruption which now surrounds it—that it will be adapted for higher purposes. Whereas now it is only a tenement fit for the soul or the lower intellectual faculties, it will then be adapted for the spirit or the higher part of our nature. We rejoice that though sown in weakness it will be raised in power—though sown in dishonor it will be raised in glory! But we nevertheless know that it will be the *same* body. The *same* body which is put into the grave shall rise again!

There shall be an absolute identity between the body in which we die and the body in which we rise again from the dust. But, let it be remembered that identity is not the same thing as absolute sameness of substance and continuance of atoms. We do not mention this qualification at all by way of taking off the edge from our statement, but simply because it is true. We are conscious, as a matter of fact, that we are living in the same bodies which we possessed 20 years ago. We are told and we have no reason to doubt it, that perhaps not one single particle of the matter which constitutes our body now was in it 20 years ago! The changes our physical forms have undergone from infancy to manhood are very great, yet we have the same bodies.

Admit the like identity in the resurrection and it is all we ask. The body in which we die will be the same body in which we were born—everybody admits that, though it is certainly not the same as in all its particles—no, every particle may have been exchanged and yet it will remain the same.

So the body in which we rise will be the same body in which we die—it will be greatly changed, but those changes will not be such as to affect its *identity*. Now, instead of mentioning this statement in order to make the doctrine appear more easy to believe, I assure you that if I saw it taught in Scripture that every single fragment of bone, flesh, muscle and sinew which we put into the ground would rise again, I should believe it with the same ease as I now accept the doctrine of the identity of the body in the manner just stated.

We are not at all wishful to make our beliefs appear philosophical or probable—far from it! We do not ask that men should say, “That can be supported by science.” Let the scientific men keep to their own sphere and we will keep to ours. The doctrine we teach neither assails human science, nor fears it, nor flatters it, nor asks its aid. We go on quite another ground when we use the words of the passage, and say, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?” We look for a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. The literal rising again of the human body is our firm belief.

Now this hope is naturally surrounded with many difficulties, because, first of all, in the great mass of the dead *decay* has taken place. The large majority of dead bodies have rotted and been utterly dissolved and the larger proportion of all other bodies will probably follow them. When we see bodies that have been petrified, or mummies which have been embalmed, we think that if all bodies were preserved in that way it were easier to believe in their restoration to life. But when we break open some ancient sarcophagus and find nothing there but a little impalpable brown powder—when we open a grave in the churchyard and find only a few crumbled pieces of bone—and when we think of ancient battlefields where thousands have fallen, where, notwithstanding, through the lapse of years there remains not a trace of man, since the bones have so completely melted back into earth, and in some cases have been sucked up by the roots of plants and have passed into other organizations, it certainly does seem a thing incredible that the dead should be raised!

Moreover, corpses have been destroyed by quicklime, burned, devoured of beasts, and even eaten by men—how shall *these* arise? Think how widely diffused are the atoms which once built up living forms. Who knows where the atoms may now be which once composed Cyrus, Hannibal, Scipio, or Caesar? Particles once wedded through a man’s life may now be scattered wide as the poles asunder—one atom may be blowing across the Sahara and another may be floating in the Pacific! Who knows amidst the revolutions of the elements of this globe where the essential constituents of any one body may be at this time? Where is the body of Paul? Where is the body of Festus, who sent Paul to Rome, or of the emperor who condemned him to die? Who can even guess an answer?

What wonder, then, if it seems an incredible thing that all men should rise again! The difficulty increases when we come to reflect that the doctrine of the resurrection teaches that *all* men will rise again—not a certain portion of the race, not a few thousand persons—but all men! It might be easier to believe in an Elijah, who should raise a dead man occasionally, or in a Christ who should call back to life a young man at the gates of

Nain, or raise a Lazarus, or say, "Tabtha cumi," to a little deceased girl. But it is difficult for the reason the doctrine teaches that all shall rise—the myriads before the Flood, the multitudes of Nineveh and Babylon, the hosts of Persia and of Media—the millions that followed at the feet of Xerxes, the hosts which marched with Alexander—and all the innumerable millions that fell beneath the Roman sword.

Think of the myriads who have passed away in countries like China, swarming with men, and conceive of these throughout 6,000 years fattening the soil. Remember those who have perished by shipwreck, plague, earthquake and, worst of all, by bloodshed and war. And remember that all these will rise without exception—not one born of woman shall sleep on forever—but all the bodies that ever breathed and walked this earth shall live again. "O monstrous miracle," says one, "it wears the aspect of a thing incredible!" Well, we shall not dispute the statement, but give even yet more reason for it.

The wonder increases when we remember in what strange places many of these bodies now may be. For the bodies of some have been left in deep mines where they will never be reached again. They have been carried by the wash and swell of tides into deep caverns of the ancient main. There they lie, far away on the pathless desert where only the vulture's eyes can see them—or buried beneath mountains of fallen rock. In fact, where are man's remains *not*? Who shall point out a spot of earth where the crumbling dust of Adam's sons is not? Blows there a single summer wind down our streets without whirling along particles of what once was man? Is there a single wave that breaks upon any shore which holds not in solution some relic of what was once human? They lie beneath each tree. They enrich the fields. They pollute the brooks. They hide beneath the meadow grass. Surely from anywhere, from everywhere, the scattered bodies shall return, like Israel from captivity. As certainly as God is God, our dead men shall live and stand upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

And, moreover, to make the wonder extraordinary beyond conception, they will rise at once, or perhaps in two great divisions. There is a passage (Rev. 20:5, 6,) which apparently teaches us that between the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked there will be an interval of a thousand years. Many think that the passage intends a spiritual resurrection but I am unable to think so. Assuredly the words must have a literal meaning. Hear them and judge for yourselves. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

Yet, granted that there may be this great interval, yet what a mass will be seen when the righteous rise, a "multitude that no man can number"—an inconceivable company known only to God's enumeration shall suddenly start up from "beds of dust and silent clay." The break of a thousand years shall be as nothing in the sight of God and shall soon be over, and then the unjust shall also rise. What teeming multitudes! Where shall they stand? What plains of earth shall hold them? Shall they not cover all the solid earth even to the mountaintops? Shall they not need to use the

sea itself as a level floor for God's great assize? In a moment shall they stand before God when the trumpet of the archangel shall ring out clear and shrill the summons for the last assize!

No years shall be needed in order that in God's great workshop bone shall be fitted to its bone and the wondrous mechanism be refitted—a *moment* shall suffice to rebuild the ruins of centuries! Curiously worked as our bodies were at first in the lowest parts of the earth, their restoration from the dead shall be effected in the twinkling of an eye! Man needs time, but God is the Creator of time and needs it not. Ages of ages are no more to Him than moments—in an instant His greatest marvels are accomplished. Matchless marvel! We marvel not that to many it seems a thing incredible that God should raise the dead. But then, do not think that this resurrection will not be a mere restoration of what was there, but the resurrection in the case of the saints will involve a remarkable advance upon anything we now observe.

We put into the ground a bulb and it rises as a golden lily. We drop into the mold a seed and it comes forth an exquisite flower, resplendent with brilliant colors—these are the same which we put into the earth, the same identically, but oh, how different! Even thus, the bodies which are sown in burial, are so many seeds, and they shall spring up by Divine power into outgrowths surpassing all imagination in beauty! This increases the wonder, for the Lord Jesus not only snatches the prey from between the teeth of the Destroyer but that which had become worm's meat, ashes, dust, He raises in His own sacred image!

It is as though a tattered and moth-eaten garment were torn to shreds, and then by a Divine Word restored to its perfection and in addition made whiter than any fuller on earth could make it, and adorned with costly fringes and embroideries unknown to it before—and all this in a moment of time! Let it stand as a world of wonders, marvelous beyond all things! We will not, for a moment, attempt to explain it away or pare down the angles of the Truth of God. One of the difficulties of believing it is this—that there are positively no full analogies in Nature by which to support it. There are phenomena around us somewhat like it so that we can compare, but I believe that there is no analogy in Nature upon which it would be at all fair to found an argument.

For instance, some have said that sleep is the analogy of death and that our awaking is a sort of resurrection. The figure is admirable, but the analogy is very far from perfect since in sleep there is still life. A continuance of life is manifest to the man himself in his dreams and to all onlookers who choose to watch the sleeper, to hear him breathe, or to watch his heart beat. But in death the body has no pulse or other signs of life left in it—it does not even remain entire as the body of the sleeper does. Imagine that the sleeper should be torn limb from limb, pounded into mortar and reduced to powder—and that powder mixed up with clay and mold. And then see him awoken at your call and you would have something worth calling an analogy—but a mere sleep from which a man is startled—while it is an excellent comparison, is far enough from being the counterpart or prophecy of resurrection.

More frequently we hear mentioned the development of insects as a striking analogy. The larva is man in his present condition. The chrysalis is a type of man in his death and the image or perfect insect is the representation of man in his resurrection. An admirable simile, certainly, but no more, for there is life in the chrysalis. There is organization, there is, in fact, the entire fly. No observer can mistake the chrysalis for a dead thing. Take it up and you shall find everything in it that will come out of it—the perfect creature is evidently dormant there. If you could crush the chrysalis, dry up all its life juices, bruise it into dust, pass it through chemical processes, utterly dissolve it—and then afterwards call it back into a butterfly—you would have seen an analogy of the resurrection. But this is unknown to Nature as yet.

I find no fault with the picture. It is most instructive and interesting. But to argue from it would be childish to the last degree. Nor is the analogy of the seed much more conclusive. The seed, when put into the ground dies, and yet rises again in due season, hence the Apostle uses it as the apt type and emblem of death. He tells us that the seed is not quickened except it dies. What is death? Death is the resolution of an organization into its original particles, and so the seed begins to separate into its elements, to fall back from the organization of life into the inorganic state. But still a life germ always remains and the crumbling organization becomes its food from which it builds itself up again.

Is it so with dead bodies of which not even a trace remains? Who shall discover a life germ in the putrid corpse? I shall not say there may not be some essential nucleus which better instructed beings might perceive, but I would demand where in the corrupted body it can be supposed to dwell. Is it in the brain? The brain is among the first things to disappear. The skull is empty and void. Is it in the heart? That also has a very brief duration, far briefer than the bones. Nowhere could a microscope discover any vital principle in bodies disinterred from the sod. Turn up the soil where the seed is buried, at anytime you will, and you will find it where you placed it, if indeed it will ever rise from the ground.

But such is not the case with the man who has been buried a few hundred years—of him the last relic has probably passed beyond all recognition. The generations to come are not more undiscoverable than those which have gone. Think of those who were buried before the Flood, or drowned in that general deluge. Where, I ask, have we the smallest remnant of them? Grind your corn of wheat to fine flour and throw it to the winds and behold corn fields rising from it, and then you will have a perfect analogy. But as yet I do not think that Nature contains a parallel case.

The resurrection stands alone! And concerning it the Lord might well say, "Behold, I do a new thing in the earth." With the exception of the resurrection of our Lord and those granted to a few persons by miracle, we have nothing in history that can be brought to bear upon the point. Here, then, is the difficulty, and a notable one it is. Can these dry bones live? Is it a credible thing that the dead should be raised?

**II.** How are we to meet the demands of the case? We said that in the second place we would REMOVE THE DIFFICULTY. We made no empty

boast—the matter is simple. Read the text again with due emphasis and it is done. “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that GOD should raise the dead?” It might seem incredible that the dead should be raised, but why should it seem incredible that GOD, the Almighty, the Infinite, should raise the dead? Grant a God and no difficulties remain. Grant that God is and that He is Omnipotent—grant that He has said the dead shall be raised and belief is no longer hard but inevitable!

Impossibility and incredulity—both vanish in the Presence of God! I believe this is the *only* way in which the difficulties of faith should be met. It is of no use to run to reason for weapons against unbelief—the Word of God is the true defense of faith! It is foolish to build with wood and hay when solid stones may be had. If my heavenly Father makes a promise or reveals a Truth, am I not to believe Him till I have asked the philosophers about it? Is God’s Word only true when finite reason approves of it? After all, is man’s judgment the ultimatum and is God’s Word only to be taken when we can see for ourselves and therefore have no need of Revelation at all?

Far from us be this spirit! Let God be true and every man a liar! We are not staggered when the wise men mock at us, but we fall back upon, “thus says the Lord.” One Word from God outweighs for us a library of human lore. To the Christian, God’s ipse dixit stands in the stead of all reason. Our logic is, “God has said it,” and this is our rhetoric, too. If God declares that the dead shall be raised, it is not a thing incredible to us. Difficulty is not in the dictionary of the Godhead. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Heap up the difficulties, if you like. Make the doctrine more and more hard for reason to compass—so long as it contains no self-evident contradiction and inconsistency—we rejoice in the opportunity to believe great things concerning a Great God!

When Paul uttered our text he was speaking to a Jew. He was addressing Agrippa, one to whom he could say, “King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you believe!” It was, therefore, good reasoning to use with Agrippa, to say, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?” For first, as a Jew, Agrippa had the testimony of Job—“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”

He had, also, the testimony of David, who, in the 16<sup>th</sup> Psalm, says, “My flesh also shall rest in hope.” He had the testimony of Isaiah in the 26<sup>th</sup> chapter and the 19<sup>th</sup> verse, “Your dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, you that dwell in dust: for your dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.” He had the testimony of Daniel in his 12<sup>th</sup> chapter, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> verses, where the Prophet says, “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.”

And then again, in Hosea 13:14 Agrippa had another testimony where the Lord declares “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be your plagues; O grave, I will be your destruction: repentance shall be hid from My eyes.” Thus God had plainly promised resurrection in the Old Testament Scriptures and that fact should be quite enough for Agrippa. If the Lord has said it, it is no longer doubtful. To us as Christians there has been granted yet fuller evidence. Remember how our Lord has spoken concerning resurrection—with no bated breath has He declared His intention to raise the dead. Remarkable is that passage in John 5:28, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

And so in chapter 6:40, “And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.” The Holy Spirit has spoken the same Truth of God by the Apostles. In that precious and most blessed 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans, we have a testimony in the 11<sup>th</sup> verse, “But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you.” I read you just now the passage from First Thessalonians which is very full, indeed, where we are bid not to sorrow as those that are without hope.

And you have in Philippians the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter and 21<sup>st</sup> verse, another proof, “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.” I scarcely need remind you of that grand chapter of massive argument, Corinthians Fifteen. Beyond all doubt the testimony of the Holy Spirit is that the dead shall rise, and granted that there is an Almighty God, we find no difficulty in accepting the doctrine and entertaining the blessed hope. At the same time it may be well to look around us and note what helps the Lord has appointed for our faith.

I am quite certain, dear Friends, that there are many wonders in the world which we should not have believed by mere report if we had not come across them by experience and observation. The electric telegraph, though it is but an invention of man, would have been as hard to believe a thousand years ago as the resurrection of the dead is now. Who in the days of packhorses would have believed in flashing a message from England to America? When our missionaries in tropical countries have told the natives of the formation of ice and that persons could walk across frozen *water*, and of ships that have been surrounded by mountains of ice in the open sea, the water becoming solid and hard as a rock all around them—the natives have refused to believe such absurd reports!

Everything is amazing till we are used to it, and resurrection owes the incredible portion of its marvel to the fact of our never having come across it in our observation—that is all. After the resurrection we shall regard it as a Divine display of power as familiar to us as Creation and Providence are now. I have no doubt we shall adore and bless God and wonder at Resurrection forever, but it will be in the same sense in which every de-

vout mind wonders at Creation now. We shall grow accustomed to this new work of God when we have entered upon our longer life. We were only born but yesterday and have seen little as yet. God's works require far more than our few earthy years of observation—and when we have entered into eternity and are out of our minority and have come of age—that which astounds us now will have become a familiar theme for praise.

Will Resurrection be a greater wonder than Creation? You believe that God spoke the world out of nothing. He said, "Let it be," and the world was. To create out of nothing is quite as marvelous as to call together scattered particles and refashion them into what they were before! Either work requires Omnipotence, but if there is any choice between them, Resurrection is the easier work of the two. If it did not happen so often, the birth of every child into the world would astound us. We should consider a birth to be, as indeed it is, a most transcendent manifestation of Divine power. It is only because we know it and see it so commonly that we do not behold the wonder-working hand of God in human births and in our continued existence. The thing, I say, only staggers us because we have not become familiar with it as yet—there are other deeds of God which are quite as marvelous.

Remember, too, that there is one thing which, though you have not seen, you have received on credible evidence, which is a part of historic truth, namely, that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead. He is to you the *cause* of your resurrection, the type of it, the foretaste of it, the guarantee of it! As surely as He rose you shall rise. He proved the Resurrection possible by rising, no, He proved it *certain* because He is the representative Man. And, in rising He rose for all who are represented by Him. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The rising of our Lord from the tomb should forever sweep away every doubt as to the rising of His people. "For if the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised," but because He lives, we shall live also.

Remember also, my Brothers and Sisters, that you who are Christians have already experienced within yourselves as great a work as the Resurrection—for you have risen from the dead as to your innermost Nature. You were dead in trespasses and sins and you have been quickened into newness of life! Of course the unconverted here will see nothing in this. The unregenerate man will even ask me what this means, and to him it can be no argument, for it is a matter of experience which one man cannot explain to his fellow. To know it you must yourselves be born-again. But, Believers, you have already passed through a resurrection from the grave of sin and from the rottenness and corruption of evil passions and impure desires—and this resurrection God has worked in you by a power equal to that which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

To you the quickening of your spiritual Nature is an assured proof that the Lord will also quicken your mortal bodies. The whole matter is this—that our persuasion of the certainty of the general resurrection rests upon *faith* in God and His Word. It is both idle and needless to look elsewhere. If men will not believe the declaration of God, they must be left to give an account to Him of their unbelief. My Hearer, if you are one of God's elect,

you will believe your God, for God gives faith to all His chosen. If you reject the Divine testimony, you give evidence that you are in the gall of bitterness, and you will perish in it unless Grace prevents it. The Gospel and the doctrine of the Resurrection were opened up to men in all their glory to put a division between the precious and the vile. "He that is of God," says the Apostle, "hears God's Words."

True faith is the visible mark of secret election. He that believes in Christ gives evidence of God's Grace towards him, but he that believes not gives sure proof that he has not received the Grace of God. "But you believe not," said Christ, "because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." Therefore this Truth of God and other Christian Truths are to be held up, maintained and delivered fully to the whole of mankind to put a division between them—to separate the Israelites from the Egyptians—the seed of the woman from the seed of the serpent. Those whom God has chosen are known by their believing in what God has said—while those who remain unbelieving perish in their sin, condemned by the Truth of God which they willfully reject.

**III.** Thus much upon these points. Now let us consider, lastly, OUR RELATION TO THIS TRUTH. Our first relation to this Truth is this—Children of God, comfort one another with these words. You have lost those dear to you—amend the statement—they have passed into a better land and the body which remains behind is not *lost*, but put out to blessed interest. Sorrow you must, but sorrow not as those that are without hope! I do not know why we always sing dirges at the funerals of the saints and drape ourselves in black. I would desire, if I might have my way, to be drawn to my grave by white horses or to be carried on the shoulders of men who would express joy as well as sorrow in their habiliments, for why should we sorrow over those who have gone to Glory and inherited immortality?

I like the old Puritan plan of carrying the coffin on the shoulders of the saints and singing a Psalm as they walked to the grave. Why not? What is there, after all, to weep about concerning the glorified? Sound the glad-some trumpet! Let the shrill clarion peal out the joyous note of victory! The Conqueror has won the battle! The King has climbed to His throne. "Rejoice," say our Brethren from above, "rejoice with us, for we have entered into our rest." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors and their works do follow them." If we must keep up the signs of woe, for this is natural, yet let not your hearts be troubled, for that were unspiritual. Bless God evermore that over the pious dead we sing His living promises.

Let us, in the next place, cheer our hearts in prospect of our own departure. We shall soon pass away. My Brothers and Sisters, we, too, must die. There is no discharge in this war. There is an arrow and there is an archer—the arrow is meant for my heart—and the archer will take deadly aim. There is a place where you shall sleep, perhaps in a lone grave in a foreign land. Or, perhaps, in a niche where your bones shall lie side by side with those of your ancestors—but to the dust you must return. Well, let us not repine! It is but for a little while—it is but a rest on the way to

immortality. Death is a passing incident between this life and the next—let us meet it not only with equanimity but with expectation, since it is not death now but resurrection to which we aspire!

Then again, as we are expecting a blessed resurrection, let us respect our bodies. Let not our members become instruments of evil. Let them not be defiled with sin. The Christian man must neither, by gluttony nor drunkenness, nor by acts of uncleanness in any way whatever defile his body, for our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. “If any man defiles that temple of God, him will God destroy.” Be pure! In your Baptism your bodies were washed with pure water to teach you that henceforth you must be clean from all defilement. Put away from you every evil thing. Bodies that are to dwell forever in Heaven should not be subjected to pollution here below.

Lastly, and this is a very solemn thought, the ungodly are to rise again but it will be to a resurrection of woe. Their bodies sinned and their bodies will be punished. “Fear Him,” says Christ, “who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.” He will cast both of them into a suffering which shall cause perpetually enduring destruction to them—this is terrible, indeed. To slumber in the grave would be infinitely preferable to such a resurrection—“the resurrection of damnation,” so the Scripture calls it. A rising “to shame and everlasting contempt,” so Daniel styles it. That is a dreadful resurrection, indeed—you might be glad to escape from it.

Surely it were dreadful enough for your soul to suffer the eternal wrath of God without the body having to be its companion, but so it must be. If body and soul sin, body and soul must suffer, and that forever. Jeremy Taylor tells us of a certain Acilius Aviola who was seized with an apoplexy and his friends, conceiving him to be dead, carried him to his funeral pile, but, when the heat had warmed his body, he awoke to find himself hopelessly encircled with funeral flames. In vain he called for deliverance! He could not be rescued but passed from lethargy into intolerable torment.

Such will be the dreadful awakening of every sinful body when it shall be aroused from its slumber in the grave. The body will start up to be judged, condemned, and driven from God’s Presence into everlasting punishment! May God grant that it may never be your case or mine, but may we believe in Christ Jesus now and so obtain a resurrection to life eternal. Amen.

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# THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS NO. 202

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 27, 1858,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.”*  
*Acts 26:14.*

HOW marvelous the condescension which induced the Savior to take notice of such a wretch as Saul! Enthroned in the highest heavens, amidst the eternal melodies of the redeemed and the seraphic sonnets of the cherubim and all the angelic hosts, it was strange that the Savior should stoop Himself from His dignity to speak to a persecutor. Engaged as He is both day and night in pleading the cause of His own Church before His Father's Throne, it is condescension indeed which could induce Him, as it were, to suspend His intercessions in order that He might speak personally to one who had sworn himself His enemy.

And what grace was it that could lead the Savior's heart to speak to such a man as Saul, who had *breathed out* threats against His Church? Had he not hauled men and women to prison? Had he not compelled them in every synagogue to blaspheme the name of Jesus Christ? And now Jesus Himself must interpose to bring him to his senses! Ah, had it been a thunderbolt which quivered in its haste to reach the heart of man, we should not have marveled. Or had the lips of the Savior been heaving with a curse we should not have been astonished. Had He not Himself in His own lifetime cursed the persecutor? Did He not say, whosoever shall offend one of the least of these My little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were cast in the sea?

But now the man that is cursed by that language is yet to be blessed by Him whom he had persecuted. Who though he had stained his hand in blood and had now the commission in his hands to drag others to prison—though he had kept the clothes of those who had stoned Stephen—yet the Master, the King of Heaven, must Himself speak from the upper skies to bring him to feel the need of a Savior—and to make him partaker of precious faith. I say this is marvelous condescension and matchless grace.

But, Beloved, when we come to recollect the Savior's Character, it is but little wonder that He should do this for He has done far more than this. Did he not in Person leave the starry thrones of Heaven and come down to earth to suffer—and bleed and die? When I think of Bethlehem's manger, of the cruel Garden of Gethsemane and the yet more shameful Calvary, I do not wonder that the Savior should do any act of grace or condescension. That being done, what can be greater? If He has stooped from Heaven into Hades, what greater stoop can He accomplish? If His own Throne must be left empty, if His own crown must be relinquished, if

His Godhead must be veiled in flesh and the splendors of His deity clothed in the rags of manhood, what wonder, I say, that He should stoop to speak even to Saul of Tarsus, to bring his heart to Himself?

Beloved, some of us do not wonder either, for although we have not had greater grace than the Apostle himself we have had no less. The Savior did not speak out of Heaven to us with a voice that others might hear, but He spoke with a voice that our conscience heard. We were not bloodthirsty, it may be, against His children, but we had sins both black and heinous. Yet He stopped us. Not content with wooing us or with threatening us, not content with sending His ministers to us and giving us His Word to warn us of duty, He would come Himself. And you and I, Beloved, who have tasted of this grace, can say it was matchless love that saved Paul—but not love unexampled. For He has saved us also and made us partakers of the same grace.

I intend, this morning, to address myself more particularly to those who *fear not* the Lord Jesus Christ, but on the contrary, oppose Him. I think I may be quite certain that I have none here who go the length of desiring to see the old persecution of the Church revived. I do not think there is an Englishman, however much he may hate religion, who would wish to see the stake again in Smithfield and the burning pile consuming the saints. There may be some who hate them as much, but still not in that fashion. The common sense of the age reviles against the gibbet, the sword and the dungeon. The children of God, in this country at least, are quite safe from any political persecution of that kind. But it is highly probable that I have here this morning some who go to the full length of their tether and who endeavor as much as lies in them to provoke the Lord to anger by opposing His cause.

You will perhaps recognize yourselves if I try to paint a picture. It is seldom that you ever go into the house of God—in fact you have a contempt for all the gatherings of the righteous. You have a notion that all saints are hypocrites, that all professors are cants and you do not at times blush to say so. However, you have a wife, and that wife of yours has been impressed under the sound of the ministry. She loves to go to the house of God—and Heaven and her heart alone know what grief and agony of mind you have caused her. How often have you taunted and jeered her on account of her profession?

You cannot deny but that she is a better woman for it. You are obliged to confess that although she cannot go with you in all your sports and merriments, yet as far as she can go she is a loving and affectionate wife to you. If anyone should find fault with her, you would right manfully defend her character. But it is her *religion* that you hate. And it is but lately that you threatened to lock her up on Sunday. You say it is impossible for you to live in the house with her if she will go up to the house of God.

Moreover there is a little child of yours. You had no objection to that child going to the Sunday-School, because she was out of your way on the Sunday when you were smoking your pipe in your shirt sleeves. You did not want to be bothered with your children, you said, and therefore you were glad to pack them off to the Sunday-School—but that child has had her heart touched. And you cannot help seeing that the religion of Christ

is in her heart—therefore you do not like it. You love the child, but you would give anything if she were not what she is. You would give anything if you could crush the last spark of religion out of her.

But perhaps I can put your case yet. You are a master. You occupy a respectable position, you have many men under you and you cannot bear a man to make a profession of religion. Other masters you know have said to their men, “Do as you like, so long as you are a good servant, I do not care about your religious views.” But perhaps you are a little the reverse. Although you would not turn a man away because of his religion you give him a jeer every now and then. And if you trip him up in a little fault, you say, “Ah, that is your religion! I suppose you learned that at Chapel.” You grieve the poor man’s soul, while he endeavors as far as he can to discharge his duty to you.

Or, you are a young man, employed in a warehouse or a shop and there is one of your shop mates who has lately taken to religion. He is to be found on his knees in prayer—what fine fun you have made of him lately, haven’t you? You and others have joined in like a pack of hounds after a poor hare and he being of rather a timid turn of mind, perhaps is silent before you. Or if he speaks, the tear is in his eye because you have wounded his spirit. Now this is the self-same spirit that kindled the fire-brand of old—that stretched the saint upon the rack—that cut his body in pieces and sent him to wander about in sheep skins and in goat skins. If I have not exactly hit your character yet, I may do it before I have done. I wish to address myself especially to those of you, who in word or deed or in any other manner, persecute the children of God—or if you do not like so hard a word as “persecute”—laugh at them, oppose them—and endeavor to put an end to the good work in their hearts.

I shall in the name of Christ, first put the question to you, “*Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?*” In the second place, I shall in Christ’s name expostulate with you—“*It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.*” And then if God shall bless what is said to the touching of your heart, it may be that the Master shall give you a few words of comfort, as he did the Apostle Paul, when he said, “Rise and stand upon your feet. I have appeared unto you for this purpose—to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen and of those things in the which I will appear unto you.”

I. In the first place, then, we will consider THE QUESTION WHICH JESUS CHRIST PUT OUT OF HEAVEN TO PAUL.

First, notice what a personal question it was, “Saul, Saul, why do *you* persecute Me?” When I preach to you, I am obliged to address you all as an assembly. It is not possible for me, except on rare occasions, to single out an individual and describe his character, although under the hand of the Spirit it is sometimes done. But in the main I am obliged to describe the character as a whole and deal with it in the mass. But not so our Master. He did not say out of Heaven. “Saul, why does the synagogue persecute Me? Why do the Jews hate My religion?” No—it was put more pertinently than that—“Saul, Saul, why do *you* persecute Me?”

If it had been put in general terms, it would have glanced off from the heart of the Apostle—it could have been like an arrow which had missed

the mark and barely grazed the skin of the man in whose heart it was intended to find a home. But when it came personally—"Why do *you* persecute Me?"—there was no getting off it. I pray the Lord to make the question personal to some of you. There are many of us here present who have had personal preaching to our souls. Do you not remember, dear Brother in Christ, when you were first pricked in the heart, how personal the preacher was? I remember it well. It seemed to me that I was the only person in the whole place, as if a black wall were round about me and I were shut in with the preacher—something like the prisoners at the Penitentiary—who each sit in their box and can see no one but the Chaplain.

I thought all he said was meant for me. I felt persuaded that someone knew my character and had written to him and told him all—that he had personally picked me out. Why, I thought he fixed his eyes on me. And I have reason to believe he did, but still he said he knew nothing about my case. Oh, that men would hear the Word preached and that God would so bless them in their hearing, that they might feel it to have a personal application to their own hearts!

But note again—the Apostle received some information as to the persecuted one. If you had asked Saul who it was he persecuted, he would have said, "Some poor fishermen, that had been setting up an impostor. I am determined to put them down." Why, who are they? "They are the poorest of the world. The very scum and draff of society. If they were princes and kings we perhaps might let them have their opinion. But these poor miserable ignorant fellows—I do not see why they are to be allowed to carry out their infatuation—and I shall persecute them."

"Moreover, most of them are women I have been persecuting—poor ignorant creatures. What right have they to set their judgment up above the priests? They have no right to have an opinion of their own and therefore it is quite right for me to make them turn away from their foolish errors." But see in what a different light Jesus Christ puts it. He does not say, "Saul, Saul, why did you persecute Stephen?" or "Why are you about to drag the people of Damascus to prisons?" No—"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *Me*?"

Did you ever think of it in that light? You have got a poor man who works for you, who wears a fustian jacket. He is nobody. You may laugh at him. He will not tell anybody, or even if he does, you will not be called to book about it, because he is nobody. You dare not laugh so at a duke or an earl. You would mind your behavior if you were in such company as that—but because this is a poor man, you think you have a license given you to laugh at his religion. But remember, that beneath the fustian jacket there is Jesus Christ Himself.

Inasmuch as you have done this unto one of the least of His Brethren, you have done it unto Him. Has the thought ever struck you that when you laughed you were laughing, not at him, but at his Master? Whether it struck you or not it is a great truth that Jesus Christ takes all the injuries which are done to His people as if they had been done to Him. You locked your wife out the other night, did you, because she would frequent the house of God? When she stood there shivering in the midnight air, or entreating you to let her in, if your eyes had been wide open, you would have

seen the Lord of Life and Glory shivering there. And He might have said to you, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *Me*?" And then you would have seen it to have been a very much greater sin than you imagine it now to be.

You laughed at a little child the other day, because the child sang its simple hymn and evidently sang it from its heart. Did you know—or if you did not know it then, know it now—did you know that you were laughing at Christ? That when you mocked her you were mocking her Master, and that Jesus Christ has set down that laugh in His great book, as an indignation done to His own real Person. "Why do you persecute *Me*?" If you could see Christ enthroned in Heaven, reigning there in the splendors of His majesty, would you laugh at Him? If you could see Him sitting on His great Throne coming to judge the world, would you laugh at Him?

Oh, as all the rivers run into the sea, so all the streams of the suffering Churches run into Christ. If the clouds are full of rain they empty themselves upon the earth—and if the Christian's heart is full of woes it empties itself into the breast of Jesus. Jesus is the great reservoir of all His people's woes and by laughing at His people you help to fill that reservoir to its brim. And one day it will burst in the fury of its might and the floods shall sweep you away. And the sand foundation upon which your house is built shall give way and then what shall you do when you shall stand before the face of Him whose Person you have mocked and whose name you have despised?

We will put the question in another way. It is a very reasonable one and seems to demand an answer. "Saul, Saul, *why* do you persecute *Me*?" "Saul," the Master might have said, "what have I done to hurt you? When I was on earth did I say a word against your character—did I damage your reputation—did I injure your person—did I ever grieve you—did I ever say a hard word against you? What hurt have I ever done you? Why are you so provoked against *Me*? If I had been your bitterest enemy and had spit in your face, you could not have been more angry with me than now.

"But why, man, will you be angry against One who has never hurt you—who has never done you a displeasure? Oh, why do you persecute *Me*? Is there anything in My character that deserves it? Was I not pure and holy and separate from sinners? Did I not go about doing good? I raised the dead, I healed the lepers. I fed the hungry. I clothed the naked. For which of these works do you hate *Me*? Why do you persecute *Me*?" The question comes home to you in the same manner this morning. Ah, Man, why do you persecute Christ? What hurt has He ever done you? Has Christ ever despoiled you, robbed you, injured you in any way whatever? Has His Gospel in any way whatever taken away the comforts of life from you, or done you any damage? You dare not say that.

If it were the Mormonism of Joe Smith, I wonder not that you should persecute it, though, even then, you would have no right to do so, for that might take the wife of your bosom from you. If it were a filthy and lustful system that would undermine the foundations of society, you might think yourself right in persecuting it. But has Christ ever taught His disciples to rob you, to cheat you, to curse you? Does not His doctrine teach the very

reverse and are not His followers, when they are true to their Master and themselves, the very reverse of this?

Why hate a man who has done you no injury? Why hate a religion that does not interfere with you? If you will not follow Christ yourself, how does it injure you to let others do so? You say it injures your family. Prove it, Sir. Has it injured your wife? Does she love you less than before? Is she less obedient? You dare not say that. Has it hurt your child? Is your child less reverent to his father because he fears God? Is he less fond of you because he loves his Redeemer best of all? In what respect has Christ ever hurt any of you?

He has fed you with the bounties of His Providence. The clothes you wear today are the gifts of His bounty. The breath in your nostrils He has preserved for you and will you curse Him for this? It was but the other day that an avenging angel seized the axe and the Master said, "Cut it down, why cumberst it the ground?" And Jesus came and put His hand upon the auger's arm and said, "Stay, stay yet another year until I have dug about it and fed it." Your life was spared by Him and you curse Him for this? You blaspheme Him because He has spared your life—and spend the breath which His own grace has given you in cursing the God that allows you to breathe?

You little know from how many dangers Christ in His Providence protects you. You can little guess how numerous the mercies which, unseen by you, are poured into your lap every hour. And yet, for mercies innumerable, for grace that cannot be stopped by your iniquity, for love that cannot be overpowered by your injuries, do you curse the Savior for all this? Base ingratitude! Truly, you have hated Him without a cause. You have persecuted Him though He has loved you and has done nothing to injure you.

But let me picture the Master to you once more and methinks you will never, never persecute Him again, if you do but see Him. Oh, if you could but see the Lord Jesus, you must love Him. If you did but know His worth you could not hate Him! He was more beautiful than all the sons of men. Persuasion sat upon His lips, as if all the bees of eloquence had brought their honey there and made His mouth the hive. He spoke and so did He speak, that if a lion had heard Him, it would have crouched and licked His feet. Oh, how roving was He in His tenderness! Remember that prayer of His when the iron was piercing His hand—"Father, forgive them."

You never heard Him, all His life long, once say an angry word to those who persecuted Him. He was reviled, but He reviled not again. Even when He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, He was dumb before His shearers and He opened not His mouth. But though fairer than the sons of men, both in Person and in character, yet He was the Man of Sorrows. Grief had plowed His brow with her deepest furrows. His cheeks were sunken and hollow with agony. He had fasted many a day and often had He thirsted.

He toiled from morning to night. Then spent all night in prayer. Then rose again to labor—and all this without reward—with no hope of getting anything from any man. He had no house, no home, no gold, no laver. Foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but He, the Son of

Man, had not where to lay His head. He was the persecuted man, hunted by His enemies from place to place, with scarce a friend to help Him. Oh, had you seen Him! Had you seen His loveliness and His misery united, had you seen His kindness—and yet the cruelty of His enemies—your hearts must have melted!

You would have said, “No, Jesus, I cannot persecute You! No, I will stand between You and the burning sunshine. If I cannot be Your disciple, yet at any rate I will not be Your opposer. If this cloak can shelter you in Your midnight wrestlings, here it is. And if this water pot can draw You water from the well, I will let it down and You shall have enough. For if I love You not, since You are so poor, so sad and so good, I cannot hate You. No, I will not persecute you!” But though I feel certain if you could see Christ, you must say this—yet you have still persecuted Him in His disciples, in the members of His spiritual body—and I therefore put to you the question, “Saul, Saul, *why* do you persecute Me?” God help you to answer that question and the answer must be shame and confusion of face.

**II.** This shall bring me to the second point—EXPOSTULATION. “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.” There is a figure here. There is an allusion to the ox goad. When the ox was yoked for plowing, if he did not move on in as sprightly a manner as was desired, the husbandman pricked him with a long rod that ended with an iron point. Very likely, as soon as the ox felt the goad, instead of going on, he struck out as hard as he could behind him. He kicked against the goad, sending the iron deep into his own flesh.

Of course the husbandman who was guiding him kept his goad there still. And the more frequently the ox kicked, the more he was hurt. But go he must. He was in the hand of man who must and will rule the beast. It was just his own option to kick as long as he pleased—he did no harm to his driver—only to himself. You will see that there is a beauty in this figure, if I pull it to pieces, and ask you a question or two.

It is hard for you to kick against the goad. For, in the first place, you do not really accomplish your purpose. When the ox kicks against the goad it is to spite the husbandman for having goaded him onward. But instead of hurting the husbandman it hurts itself. And when you have persecuted Christ in order to stop the progress of His Gospel, let me ask you—have you ever stopped it at all? No. And ten thousand like you would not be able to stop the mighty onward rush of the host of God’s elect. If you think, O Man, that you can stop the progress of Christ’s Church, go and first bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades and bid the universe stand still instead of circling round those fair stars!

Go, stand by the winds, and bid them cease their wailing, or take your station upon a hoary cliff and bid the roaring sea roll back when its tide is marching on the beach. And when you have stopped the universe—when sun, moon and stars have been obedient to your mandate, when the sea has heard you and obeyed you—then come forth and stop the omnipotent progress of the Church of Christ. But you can not do it. “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us.”

But what said the Almighty? He did not even get up to combat with them. "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion." The Church cares not for all the noise of the world. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though waters thereof roar and be troubled, and though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Ah, in your hosts you have not prevailed. Think you, O puny Man, that one by one, you shall be able to conquer? Your wish may be strong enough, but your wish can never be accomplished. You may desire it anxiously, but you shall never attain thereto.

But put it as a personal matter—have you ever succeeded in stopping the work of grace in the heart of anyone? You tried to laugh it out of your wife, but if she really was converted, you never would laugh it out of her. You may have tried to vex your little child. But if grace is in that child, I defy you and your master the devil to get it out. Yes, young man, you may laugh at your shop mate, but he will beat you in the long run. He may sometimes be abashed, but you never will turn him. If he is a hypocrite you will—and perhaps there will be no great loss—but if he is a true soldier of Christ, he can bear a great deal more than the laugh of an empty-headed being like yourself.

You need not for a moment flatter yourself that he will be afraid of you. He will have to endure a greater baptism of suffering than that. And he will not be cowed by the first shower of your poor, pitiful, malicious folly. And as for you, Mr. Merchant, you may persecute your man, but see if you will get him to yield. Why, I know a man whose master had tried very hard to make him go against his conscience. But he said, "No, Sir." And the master thought, "Well, he is a very valuable servant. But I will beat him if I can."

So he threatened that if he did not do as he wished he would turn him away. The man was dependent on his master and he knew not what he should do for his daily bread. So he said to his master honestly at once, "Sir, I don't know of any other situation. I should be very sorry to leave you, for I have been very comfortable, but if it comes to that, Sir, I would sooner starve than submit my conscience to anyone." The man left and the master had to go after him to bring him back again. And so it will be in every case. If Christians are but faithful they must win the day. It is no use your kicking against them. You cannot hurt them. They must, they shall, be conquerors through Him that has loved them.

But there is another way of putting it. When the ox kicked against the goad, he got no good by it. Kick as he might, he was never benefited by it. If the ox had stopped and nibbled a blade of grass or a piece of hay, why, then he would have been wise, perhaps, in standing still. But to stand still simply to be goaded and to kick—simply to have iron stuck into your flesh—is a rather foolish thing. Now, I ask you, what have you ever got by opposing Christ? Suppose you say you don't like religion—what have you ever got by hating it? I will tell you what you have got. You have got those

red eyes sometimes on the Monday morning, after the drunkenness of the Sunday night.

I will tell you what you have got, young man. You have got that shattered constitution, which, even if you had now turned it to the paths of virtue, must hang about you till you leave it in your grave. What have you got? Why, there are some of you who might have been respectable members of society, who have got that old broken hat, that old ragged coat, that drunken, slouched manner about you—and that character that you would like to let down and run away from, for it is no good to you. That is what you have got by opposing Christ.

What have you got by opposing Him? Why, a house without furniture—for through your drunkenness you have had to sell everything of value you had. You have got your children in rags and your wife in misery. And your eldest daughter, perhaps, running into shame—and your son rising up to curse the Savior, as you yourself have done. What have you got by opposing Christ? What man in all the world ever got anything by it? There is a serious *loss* sustained—but as for gain—there is nothing of the sort.

But you say though you have opposed Christ, still you are moral. Again I will put it to you. Have you ever got anything even *then* by opposing Christ? Has it made your family any the happier, do you think? Has it made you any the happier yourself? Do you feel after you have been laughing at your wife, or your child or your man, that you can sleep any sounder? Do you feel *that* to be a thing which will quiet your conscience when you come to die? Remember, you must die. And do you think that when you are dying, it will afford you any consolation to think that you did your best to destroy the souls of other people? No. You must confess it is a poor game. You are getting no good by it. You are doing yourself a positive injury.

Ah, drunkard, go on with your drunkenness—remember that every drunken fit leaves a plague behind it—and you will have to feel one day. It is pleasant to sin today, but it will not be pleasant to reap the harvest of it tomorrow. The seeds of sin are sweet when we sow them, but the fruit is frightfully bitter when we come to house it at last. The wine of sin tastes sweet when it goes down, but it is as gall and vinegar in the bowels. Take heed, you that hate Christ and oppose His Gospel, for as certainly as the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God and His religion is true—you are heaping on your head a load of injury, instead of deriving good. “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.”

But kick as the ox might, it had to go forward at last. We have seen a horse stand still in the street and the driver, who had not very much patience with him, has so belabored him that we wondered how the poor horse could stand still under such a torrent of blows. But we have observed at last that the horse is obliged to go on and we wondered what he got by standing still. It is just the same with you. If the Lord means to make a Christian out of you, you may kick against Christianity, but He will have you at last. If Jesus Christ intends your salvation you may curse Him, but He will make you preach His Gospel one day, if He wishes you to

do so. Ah, if Christ had willed it, Voltaire who cursed Him, might have made a second Apostle Paul.

He could not have resisted Sovereign Grace if Christ had so determined. If anyone had told the Apostle Paul when he was going to Damascus, that he would one day become a preacher of Christianity, he would no doubt have laughed at it as ridiculous nonsense. But the Lord had the key of his will and He wound it up as He pleased. And so it will be with you—if He has determined to have you as one of His followers—

***“If, as the eternal mandate ran  
Almighty grace arrest that man,”***

almighty grace will arrest you. And the bloodiest of persecutors will be made the boldest of saints. Then why do you persecute Him? Perhaps you are despising the very Savior you will one day love. Trying to knock down the very thing that you will one day try to build up. Maybe you are persecuting the men you will call your Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

It is always well for a man not to go so far that he cannot go back respectably. Now do not go too far in opposing Christ. For one of these times it may be you will be very glad to come crouching at His feet. But there is this sad reflection—if Christ does not save you, still you must go on. You may kick against the pricks, but you cannot get away from His dominion. You may kick against Christ but you cannot cast Him from His Throne—you cannot drag Him out of Heaven.

You may kick against Him, but you cannot prevent His condemning you at last. You may laugh at Him, but you cannot laugh away the Day of Judgment. You may scoff at religion. But all your scoffs cannot put it out. You may jeer at Heaven. But all your jeers will not take one single note from the harps of the redeemed. No, the thing is just the same as if you did not kick. It makes no difference except to yourself. Oh how foolish must you be, to persevere in a rebellion which is harmful to none but your own soul—which is not injurious to Him whom you hate—but which, if He pleases, He can stop, or if He does not stop, He can and will revenge.

**III.** And now I close up by addressing myself to some here whose hearts are already touched. Do you this morning feel your need of a Savior? Are you conscious of your guilt in having opposed Him and has the Holy Spirit made you willing now to confess your sins? Are you saying, “Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner”? Then I have GOOD NEWS for you. Paul, who persecuted Christ, was *forgiven*. He says he was the very chief of sinners, but he obtained mercy. So shall you. No, more—Paul not only obtained mercy—he obtained honor. He was made an honored minister to preach the Gospel of Christ—and so may you. Yes, if you repent, Christ may make use of you to bring others to Him. It strikes me with wonder when I see how many of the very greatest of sinners have become the most useful of men.

Do you see John Bunyan yonder? He is cursing God. He goes into the belfry and pulls the bell on Sunday, because he likes the bell ringing, but when the Church door is open, he is playing bowls upon the village green. There is the village tap. And there is no one that laughs so loud there as John Bunyan. There are some people going to the meeting house. There is no one curses them so much as John. He is a ringleader in all vice. If there is a hen roost to be robbed, Jack’s your man. If there is any iniquity

to be done, if there is any evil in the parish—you need not guess twice—John Bunyan is at the bottom of it.

But who is it stands there in the deck before the magistrate? Who is it I heard just now say—“If you let me out of prison today, I will preach the Gospel tomorrow, by the help of God”? Who was it that lay twelve years in prison? And when they said he might go out if he would promise not to preach, replied, “No, I will be here till the moss grows on mine eyelids, but I must and will preach God’s Gospel as soon as I have liberty”? Why, that is John Bunyan, the very man who cursed Christ the other day! A ring-leader in vice has become the glorious dreamer, the very leader of God’s hosts! See what God did for him! And what God did for him He will do for you, if now you repent and seek the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. “He is able, He is willing, doubt no more.”

Oh, I trust I have some here who have hated God, but who are nevertheless God’s elect. Some that have despised Him, but who are bought with blood. Some that have kicked against the pricks, but yet Almighty Grace will bring them onward. There are some here, I doubt not, who have cursed God to His face, who shall one day sing hallelujahs before His Throne. Some that have indulged in lusts all but bestial, who shall one day wear the white robe and move their fingers along the golden harps of the glorified spirits in Heaven. Happy is it to have such a Gospel to preach to such sinners! To the persecutor, Christ is preached. Come to Jesus whom you have persecuted—

**“Come and welcome, Sinner, come.”**

And now bear with me one moment if I address you yet again. The probability stares me in the face that I may have but very few more opportunities of addressing you upon subjects that concern your soul. My Hearer, I shall arrogate nothing to myself, but this one thing—“I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.” And God is my witness with how many sighs and tears and prayers, I have labored for your good. Out of this place I believe thousands have been called. Among you whom I now see there is a large number of converted persons. According to your own testimony you have had a thorough change and you are not now what you were.

But I am conscious of this fact—there are many of you who have attended here now almost these two years who are just what you were when you first came. There are some of you whose hearts are not touched. You sometimes weep, but still your lives have never been changed. You are yet “in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.” Well, Sirs, if I never address you again, there is one favor that I would crave of you. If you will not turn to God, if you are determined to be lost, if you will not hear my rebuke nor turn at my exhortation, I ask this one favor at least—let me know and let me have this confidence—*that I am clear of your blood.*

I think you must confess this. I have not shunned to preach of Hell with all its horrors, until I have been laughed at, as if I always preached upon it. I have not shunned to preach upon the most sweet and pleasing themes of the Gospel, till I have feared lest I should make my preaching effeminate, instead of retaining the masculine vigor of a Boanerges. I have not shunned to preach the Law. That great Commandment has wrung in your ears, “You shall love the Lord your God and you shall love your

neighbor as yourself.” I have never feared the great, nor have I courted their smile. I have rebuked nobility as I would rebuke the peasantry and to every one of you I have dealt a portion of meat in due season.

I know that this much can be said of me—“Here stands one that never feared the face of man yet.” And I hope never will. Amidst contumely, rebuke and reproach I have sought to be faithful to you and to my God. If then, you will be damned, let me have this one thing as a consolation for your misery, when I shall think of so frightful a thought—that you are not damned for the want of calling after. You are not lost for the want of weeping after—and not lost, let me add—for the want of praying after in the name of Him who shall judge the quick and dead according to my Gospel. And of Him that shall come in the clouds of Heaven and by that fearful day when the pillars of this earth shall totter, and the heavens shall fall about your ears—by that day when, “Depart, you cursed,” or “Come, you blessed,” must be the dread alternative—I charge you, lay these things to heart!

And as I shall face my God to account for my honesty to you and my faithfulness to Him, so remember—you must stand before His bar to give an account of how you heard and how you acted after hearing. And woe unto you if, having been lifted up like Capernaum with privileges you should be cast down like Sodom and Gomorrah, or lower still than they, because you repented not. Oh, Master! Turn sinners to Yourself. For Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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# GOD'S WORK UPON MINISTER AND CONVERT NO. 1774

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 6, 1884,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“But rise, and stand upon your feet: for I have appeared unto you for this purpose to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in which I will appear unto you; delivering you from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send you, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me.’ Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.”*  
**Acts 26:16-20.**

BEHOLD an amazing sight! Saul of Tarsus at the feet of Jesus of Nazareth! Listen! The persecutor's voice is changed into that of an enquiring disciple. He asks, "What will You have me to do?" If angels sang with delight over a new-made world, their song must have been seven times as joyous over a new-made Apostle! The change was miraculous. At this distance of time we can hardly appreciate it, but if we had been living in daily fear of our lives—if we had seen our father or our brother dragged off to death by this ferocious enemy of the Cross—and then had suddenly heard that he was converted to the faith which he opposed, we would have cried, "Incredible!" For the Ethiopian to change his skin, or for the leopard to lose his spots would be little compared with this cruel Pharisee bowing himself in lowly penitence before the Lord Jesus whom He had persecuted!

Do you wonder that when Saul came to Jerusalem and assayed to join himself to the disciples, they were all afraid of him and believed not that he was a disciple? My Brothers and Sisters, as in history, so in the Grace of God, it is the unexpected which frequently occurs! The men and women whom I expected to confess Christ long ago have not yet come. I have seen Felix tremble, but I have not seen him converted. I have seen Agrippa almost persuaded, but he is not yet a Christian. Meanwhile, I have beheld a Saul of Tarsus, who, before, raged against the Cross, bowing himself submissively before the Lord Jesus! Let us never be discouraged, but let us *expect* to see signs and wonders in the world of Divine Grace!

Though priestcraft is far too dominant in our land, we may yet hear that "a great company of the priests" has believed in Christ. Though free

thought rides roughshod over everything, we may yet hear that the boldest freethinkers have been made truly free and have felt the power of His thoughts, which are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth! Who knows, good Brother, but that son who has caused you the greatest grief may yet give you the greatest pleasure? Who knows but that one among your relatives who seems most decidedly to take the wrong side may yet become a leader in the armies of Christ? Hope on! Hope always!

Note with care how men are converted. I shall show you God's preparation for it, *in a work worked upon the minister*, making him a fit witness for the Truths of God. Then I shall speak upon *God's work worked in the convert* in opening his eyes and turning him from darkness to light. And, lastly, I shall call your attention to *a work which must be worked by the convert, himself*, for Paul preached that they should repent and turn to God and do works meet for repentance.

**I.** First, let us notice A WORK WORKED BY GOD UPON THE MINISTER. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." "Faith comes by hearing." "How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they are sent?" In order to the conversion of the hearer, many processes must be experienced by the preacher—he must be made, called, sent and, afterwards, delivered. All the work of the Lord upon him is a work of Grace on behalf of those who shall be converted by his means. The minister whom God sends is, first of all, *himself subdued* and made to be obedient to the will of his Lord.

While a man is a rebel, the Lord does not appoint him to act as an ambassador. While he is dead in sin, He does not commission him to preach the way of life. Paul was struck down to the earth—if he had not, himself fallen, he would not have known how to lift up others whom the Lord has laid low. There flashed into his face a Light above the brightness of the sun. He declares, "I could not see for the glory of that light." He remained blind for three days and this, also, was necessary—for if he had not been shut up in that darkness, he would not have been qualified to deal with others on whom the darkness of conviction had settled. An experience of breaking down and of soul-horror is necessary to prepare a man for later usefulness among the convicted, the desponding and the despairing.

It may be that some young man present, this morning, is undergoing a singularly severe discipline at the hands of the Holy Spirit. His sins are exceedingly heavy upon him and relief does not come. A companion of his who was awakened at the same time has found rest and is already rejoicing in the Light of God—but this young Brother finds the darkness thicken about him. Dear Friend, it may be that your deeper conviction and more oppressive sense of sin are necessary because in your future life you are to be made largely helpful to troubled hearts. Do not think that everybody is blind for three days, as Paul was when he did neither eat nor drink during all that time—but conclude that some peculiar end is to be served by this remarkable experience.

Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened to receive the Truth of God, was not thus blinded and troubled—but then she was not called to be an Apostle to preach the Gospel from Jerusalem to Spain! The weapon which is to be most used in battle must be more completely hardened than that

which is for peaceful service! Discipline in our own spiritual life is a part of ministerial education which the chosen of the Lord shall not miss. See then, how God may be working for the conversion of generations yet unborn in the deep and painful experience of individuals who are now being turned from darkness to His Light. See, my dear Hearer, what God may have done already in the hearts of His chosen ministers to fit them to become the means of *your* conversion! In order to slay *your* sins, the shaft has been polished!

Another has groaned and wept and cried out in bitter agony, in order that he may know how to speak a word in season to you. Each of the best locks made by our eminent locksmiths is unique and by itself. And when this is the case, each lock needs its own special key. So is it with human minds—there is a peculiarity about each one. Certain minds will never be reached until they come in contact with other minds constituted *on purpose* to touch them! I know that there is a suitability in my experience to affect many of my fellow men—and they open to me when the Lord takes me in His hands and uses me as His key. But I also feel that in all probability I shall never move certain other individuals because my mental conformation excites prejudice in them—I do not fit them and they will not permit me to be of use to them. Thank God, He has other servants and by these, I trust, He will accomplish good for those to whom I am an unsuitable instrument. Assuredly I know that much of the experience through which I have passed has not been with a view to *myself*, but with a view to those persons to whom the Lord will make me His channel of blessing! Consider, then, how gracious is the Lord thus to be working upon His own servants with the design of saving some of you who are far from Him.

The next preparation for the Lord's minister was that *he should be encouraged*. The Lord Jesus said to him, "Rise, and stand upon your feet." As much as to say—"You are forgiven, you are chosen, you are beloved—therefore lie no longer prostrate, overwhelmed with fear. Give not way to despondency. Resign yourself into My hands and be prepared, with activity and diligence, to spend the rest of your life in doing good. Arise, stand on your feet, for work is to be done at once which will need all your courage and might!"

Men can hardly be very useful till they cease to be despondent, diffident, depressed and become energetic and hopeful. Even good men need to be braced up that they may rise to bold attempts and believing labors for their Lord. Many are slow to take the encouragement which is offered them and need to hear a voice, saying, "Shake yourself from the dust, O captive! Rise and serve your God." I wish that I could speak to any Brother here whose heart is true and right, and who has the power to be exceedingly useful, but who has not yet the courage to proceed to his proper work. O my Brother, rise and stand upon your feet!

"Alas," you say, "I have tried to do good, but I have seen no effects following my endeavors. I have spoken to one or two about their souls, but I have not yet won a heart for Christ." Did you really expect to do so? I have noticed that those who do not believe that they will be successful seldom are so—but those who rise and stand upon their feet and manfully expect that God will bless them are not disappointed. We are not to hope for success because there is anything in *us*, but because God has promised that

His Word shall not return unto Him void! And if we, therefore, sow in faith, a harvest will assuredly follow. Faith receives promises—unbelief goes empty-handed. Arise, then, and stand upon your feet!

Who knows but somebody who shall receive encouragement this morning will, from this day, become the messenger of God to open the blind eyes of others? The strengthening of the worker is as necessary a part of God's work as the immediate operation of the Spirit with the message. The vessel must be prepared for the Master's use and Grace is to be clearly seen in the making and fitting of that vessel for so Divine a purpose. The uplifting work being done, it remained that Paul should now be *made, constituted and ordained a minister*—and to this end he must see the Lord for himself. The Lord said, "I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness."

It is plain from these Words that the right way to make ministers is for the Lord Jesus Christ to appear to them. We have heard of making men into ministers, but we have no belief in the result of such a manufacture. If one man makes another man a minister, he will be very badly made—and the sooner he is broken up, again, the better! The fabrication of man is not fit to be an instrument for the Lord! All the laying on of hands and all the fitness that can be given in College or University cannot *possibly* make a minister apart from the Revelation of the Son of God to the heart. If God intends to use any man, he must be as much the creation of God as are the heavens and the earth.

The means which the Lord uses for the true preacher's education and ordination are here displayed before us. It is by *Christ's appearing to the man* that he is prepared to preach the Lord Christ among men. Our Lord's appearing to a man operates two ways—first, it makes him willing to be a servant, for that is the meaning of the word, "minister." When the renewed mind beholds the Lord, it adores Him and cries out, "What will You have me do?" A sight of the Glory of Christ, of the love of Christ, of the sufferings of Christ forces a Believer to render unto the Lord all that lies in his power of cheerful service. Who that has beheld the unrivalled beauties of Jesus can refuse Him honor? Having seen You, O my Lord, I become, forever, Your servant, and feel it a *privilege* to minister to the very least of Your redeemed according as You may appoint!

The same heavenly vision qualifies the Believer to act as a witness for Jesus. We cannot bear witness to that which we have never seen. Hearsay is of small value—we must see for ourselves. Christ must appear to His elect servant or he will not be able to go forth and tell what he has seen. The true Prophet is a Seer—he sees and, therefore, speaks. "We speak what we know, and testify what we have seen." If you have had no vision, hold your tongue, for you have no message. But if you have seen, then tell carefully only what you have seen, adding *nothing* to it and taking nothing from it. Your message is that which God has revealed to you by His Holy Spirit in *His Word* and in your own spiritual experience.

See then, dear Friends, that in order to the conversion of those who are not yet saved, the Lord Jesus has been at work upon others, making them fit to be servants and witnesses. And He has used, as His chief means of instruction, the revealing of Himself. This is instructive, for it gives us a clear indication as to the best method of accomplishing the salvation of

those around us. Beloved, if you want to win souls, follow up this line of things. Soul-winning is generally accomplished not by argument, but by *testimony*. The best minister is a witness-bearer. "Butler's Analogy" is one of the most notable works in defense of Revelation and it is eminently calculated to impress the student with the truthfulness of our holy religion.

But I should like to know whether there ever was a man, woman, or child truly converted to the Lord Jesus by "Butler's Analogy." I do not think so! Nor do I depreciate the work on that account, for it has other uses which it admirably serves. This, however, I am certain of, that a little book like the "Dairyman's Daughter," by Leigh Richmond, which is not worthy, for a moment, to be compared with "Butler's Analogy" as a display of intellectual power, has led *thousands* to saving faith in the Lord Jesus! That little biography of a peasant girl, a mere *nothing* as to thought compared with the wonderful, "Analogy," has brought tens of thousands to the Savior's feet, where the other has brought few, if any!

What is the reason? The "Analogy" is a very clear and admirable argument, but the "Dairyman's Daughter" is a *witness* of what has been seen, tasted and handled by one like ourselves. Heads are won by reasoning, but hearts are won by witness-bearing. Our line of thought should be that of David—"I will declare what the Lord has done for my soul." Paul frequently repeated the story of his own conversion, for he knew of nothing more likely to convince and convert. I do not believe that people will ever be converted by gaudy rhetoric. Poetical expressions are too fine to draw men away from sin to holiness—men do not come to Christ on the back of Pegasus!

Argument which appeals only to the intellect is poor fuel with which to kindle the fire of love to Christ! Even sound *instruction* will not suffice without personal witness to vivify and support it. To convince men of the truth of a statement is one thing—to convict them of *personal sin* is another thing—and to *convert* them is a step still higher! Bear witness to what you know, to what you feel, to the power of Christ to pacify the conscience and to change the life! Bear, I say, your witness to Jesus, and you will have done that which God will bless to the opening of the eyes of the spiritually blind.

Further, dear Friends, the man who is to win a soul for Christ *must be continuously instructed of God*. He is to be a witness not only of those things which he has seen, but also of those things in the which the Lord will yet appear unto him. The discipline and intuition which our Lord vouchsafes to His servant, when he begins his witness, will not suffice him for the whole of his life—he must continue to be taught that he may continue to teach. You who wish to win souls for Jesus—and I know many of you do—must always sit at His feet, yourselves. Your eyes must always be fixed upon your Master, so that His dear Image may photograph itself perpetually upon your heart.

Our message, if it is to daily win souls for Jesus, must come to us daily. The manna of last year, where is it if we have hoarded it? In a day it bred worms—where is it after *many* days? As the manna fell fresh and fresh each morning, so must we, each day, learn more and more of Him. We should strive each day to obtain a closer, more tender, more experimental view of Him. We must feel our sinnership more deeply and, there-

fore, recognize more fully the power of His precious blood. We must grieve over our corruption more bitterly and, therefore, understand better the power of the renewing Spirit who cleanses the heart. We need to live upon Jesus hourly so that we may talk of the Tree of Life with the flavor of its fruit upon our palates.

It is poor work to talk of a Savior whom we have not communed with for months—but it is blessed to come forth from His Presence to describe His beauties! Oh to live in Christ and love Christ—and then to preach live sermons from live texts! Even the dead in sin will feel the force of so vital a ministry! God the Holy Spirit must work all this in those whom He prepares to be the implements of His gracious work. Herein He shows much love to sinners who as yet care nothing for His operations.

But where all this is done, there yet remains something more, namely, *that God should constantly preserve His messenger*; as He said to Paul, “Delivering you from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send you.” Paul’s life was always in danger and yet never in real peril, for the Lord was His Keeper. He was daily delivered unto death and yet he was *immortal* till his life-work was complete! They stoned him and supposed that he was dead—but he rose up and began to cheer the Brethren! Till his time came and his work was finished, the stormy sea could not drown him! The beasts of Ephesus could not devour him! The mob could not kill him—even sworn conspirators could not slay him!

When he had finished his course, he submitted his neck to the headsmen’s sword. But till that moment, he was delivered out of the mouth of the lion and guarded from perils of robbers, perils of rivers and perils by false brethren. So shall every true servant of Christ be kept as with a garrison from all evil. We do not, nowadays, run risks of the kind which beset the Apostle, but ours are more subtle and insinuating—yet the true servant of God shall be preserved from all evil. He shall be kept from the pride which comes of visible success and from the despondency which comes of apparent failure. He shall be delivered from the temptations common to man and from the peculiar temptations which compass him as a minister of Christ. He shall be delivered from the strife of tongues and from the tumult of the people.

If God has sent him, the devil cannot withstand him—he shall perform his mission in the conversion of those whom the Lord intends to save. I earnestly invite you to look at this portion of the machinery of Grace, for some entirely overlook it. Conversion is a very simple business and yet if I were to say that the heavens, the earth and all things that are, and are to be, are made subservient to its accomplishment, I should not go too far! Everything is laid under commission to save the chosen! Each elect soul might say, “You have given commandment to save me.”

I have known the Lord bring men to Himself not only by His ministers, but by the simplest things and most common events. A young woman, utterly careless and godless, returned to her room one night where she had left her lamp burning, but, lo, it had gone out and she was in darkness! As she sought for the lamp she remembered the parable of our Lord and the cry of the foolish virgins, “Our lamps have gone out.” She reflected that her lamp had gone out because she had forgotten to put oil in it that morning—and then and there, under the power of the Word of God—she

knelt down and gave her heart to Christ! A funeral knell, a tempest, a faded flower, a picture—have all been God's means of bringing His banished home to Himself!

I am constantly meeting with instances of individuals who, for years, were careless, irreligious, dissipated and vicious. And yet, though they rose one Sabbath morning to waste the day as usual—by some circumstance or other they were induced to hear Mr. Moody, or to turn in here, or to attend a theater service—and then and there the Lord met with them! That God who could control the crowing of a cock to work conversion in His servant, Peter, has servants everywhere—from the highest angel to the tiniest insect! It is delightful to think that God can put any man or any creature into commission to carry out His purposes of love!

Is it not a wonderful proof of His great love, that He thus makes all things subservient to the salvation of men, and especially that He creates ministers—and leads, trains and fits them to become the spiritual parents of others? Oh, Sinners, how glad I should be if you would think of yourselves, for you see how practically God thinks of you!

**II.** And now, secondly, we come to describe THE WORK WHICH IS WORKED IN THE HEARER when God is saving him. It usually begins *by illumination*—the Lord sends His servant “to open their eyes.” Men are born blind and continue blind till, by the power of Jesus, sight is given to them. Opening the eyes of the *mind* is not an operation which usually demands much time. In Paul's case we read, “Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.”

The mind sees the Truth of God all of a sudden. The aspect of everything is altered and the man has obtained a new faculty. What a blessing it will be if the Lord has sent me to any of you this day, that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit! A film shuts out the light from your souls, so that you grope as blind men, but the Lord can remove it at once. Perhaps you are ignorant. If you did but know the Truth, you would see by its light. Oh, that the Holy Spirit may teach you! Or your education and your surroundings have placed a film of prejudice over your eyes—if a candid, child-like spirit were given you, you would speedily see! Or possibly some favorite sin is like a cataract upon the eyes of your conscience and you cannot see the evil of sin, or the beauty of holiness, or the desirableness of being renewed. The Lord can take away these scales! Oh, that the Lord would cause you to see sin in its true colors and holiness in its own splendor!

Or it may be that unbelief darkens your soul. Those who will not believe cannot see the salvation of God. What a difference is made by Divine illumination! A moment ago the man was in the dark, but now he is brought into marvelous light! He was not in the dark because the sun was set or the shutters were closed, but because he was *blind*. What matters how bright the day when the eyes are sealed? If the light that is in us is darkness, no outside light can be of use to us. Jesus came on purpose to give eyes to the blind and by a single word of the preacher, or a text of Scripture, or a verse of a hymn, the Lord can cause the darkened mind to enter upon the life of light and discernment—“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.”

The next thing which the minister is made to do is *conversion*—Paul was sent “to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Much depends upon the direction in which a man’s face is turned. Here stands a blind man with his face to the darkness—if he goes forward, he advances into blacker night! How necessary, then, is that work of the blessed Spirit by which men are turned completely round and their front is reversed! The darkness is now *behind* the convert and the light is ahead, so that every step he takes, he advances towards the Light of God which increases upon his vision as he nears it! He loves the Light! He seeks it! He sighs to get nearer and nearer to it—he runs towards it that he may read everything by its aid—and he turns away from darkness, which is now dreaded by him as an Egyptian plague. He has not received all the Light he desires, but one thing he knows—whereas he was once blind, he now sees!

What a blessed turning is that which makes us face truth, goodness, God and Heaven—and leave ignorance, sin and Hell behind! The soul is brought into a new element—the Light of God is its life in which alone it flourishes and bears fruit—darkness is its death in which it shivers, pines and withers. As the soul is brought into a new element, so is it also brought under a new government. Translation has taken place. The man is translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son, or, as our text has it, “from the power of Satan unto God.” Notice the man is turned “from the power of Satan,” the tyrannical dominion and crushing grasp of the evil, cunning, malicious, hateful Prince of fallen angels. Once he was hopelessly under that power, but now he has clean escaped from the slavery of the devil and has come into the liberty of a child of God!

To the Lord whom he had forgotten, he has turned, so that he thinks of Him, cares for Him, trusts in Him. His heart, his desire, his longing, his hope all look toward his Savior! He longs to become more and more like his God and to enjoy more and more the favor of the great Father! What a blessed turning this is—from the power of Satan to the power of God! Happy are the men who are the means of converting their fellows in this fashion! Somebody says, “Well, I know there is such a fact as conversion, but I do not understand how it can be performed in a minute.” I reply that I do not understand how regeneration, which is the secret cause of conversion, could occupy so *long* as a minute! Should not goodness rule at once?

Two men are fighting and we beg them to stop. Do you recommend them to stop gradually! Shall they take an hour or two over it? Why, they might kill one another in that time! A fire is about to consume your house—do you say to the firemen, “Put it out gradually”? If my house were on fire, I should long to see the flame quenched at once! If anybody held a pistol at my head I should not say, “Take it away by degrees.” I would wish him to remove the revolver at once. Yet all these things are matters which could be prolonged over a space of time without such risk as would be involved in a slow process of conversion! Changes of mind such as are necessary to conversion had need be quick when sin is to be forsaken, for every moment deepens the guilt.

I grant you that in many persons, conversion appears to be gradual, and many things lead up to it as by an inclined plane, but as to the new birth and the reception of the Divine life, there is a distinct line of demarcation—on that side of the line all is death—and on this side of it all is life. I cannot tell you when any one man crosses that line, but there must be an instant when he does so! It may seem a very gradual process by which a man who was dead comes to life, but, for certain, there is a point at which he left the dead and became alive—and that point God sees very clearly even though we do not. Life to the body may at first be perceived only by some painful tingling sensation, or a gentle attempt at breathing—but there is a sharp division between life and death though we may not perceive it. The outward appearance of life may become gradually visible, but there must be an *instant*—and no more—in which life enters and death ends.

Conversion may be effected by the power of the Holy Spirit in less time than it takes me to tell you of it. The man being regenerated straightaway turns to his God. Oh, that the Lord would work such a marvel of power here under our eyes! It can be done! I preach with the full conviction that it *will* be done! He who turned me to Himself has sent me to turn others in the name of Jesus by the power of His Spirit. Together with conversion comes *complete forgiveness*. Read the passage—“that they may receive forgiveness of sins.” When a man turns to God, it is a proof that God has turned to him! When he hates his sins, the Lord has put them away—as soon as ever he confesses and forsakes them, they are blotted out forever. The complete turning of his mind from darkness to the Light of God is a proof to the convert that God, the righteous Judge, has turned away His wrath from him.

When the love of sin has gone, the guilt of sin has gone, also. Full conversion carries with it full pardon. The same moment that we receive Christ, we “receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified.” Think of that! Oh, that you may all know what it means! What a blessing to become an heir of God! Yet in the moment of forgiveness, we receive power to become the *sons* of God. We are put among the children—and the children’s portion is our portion. All that belongs to the sanctified belongs to you, poor Sinner, the moment you turn to God, through faith in Christ Jesus—yes, all that belongs to the glorified belongs to you, for, though as yet you cannot pass the golden gate, nor join in the celestial song—yet the glory is yours, reserved for you till the day of God’s appointment!

Be of good cheer, if you are, indeed, turned from darkness to light—you have obtained an inheritance among them that are sanctified! What more do you need? To what choice company is a sinner introduced when he believes in Jesus! He, alas, was only fit to herd with the profane, or to make his bed in Hell with devils! But now he obtains an inheritance among all them that are sanctified! He is a freeholder among the burgesses of the New Jerusalem! What a wonderful procession it would be if all those who are sanctified could pass before us now! Martyrs—their noble army! Confessors—their goodly fellowship! Prophets and Apostles and ministers of the Word, of whom the world was not worthy! What a joy to be numbered among them!

We *are* so numbered as soon as we take upon ourselves to trust ourselves with Jesus. We are akin to the perfect! Where they dwell we dwell! Where they die we shall die and where they live forever we shall live, for our inheritance is with all them that are sanctified! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, it is worth living, is it not, to become servants of God in any form, so as to introduce our poor sinful fellows into such society as this? May the Lord prepare *all* Believers to deliver the life-giving message, that they may bring many heirs of wrath to be heirs of Heaven! And all this has for its certificate and mark of genuineness these words—“*By faith that is in Me.*” Those words are not merely appended to sanctification, though it is worth noticing that sanctification is by faith, since so many look at it as if it were by effort rather than by believing. But the whole process of salvation is by *faith!*

The preacher is to preach in faith. Dear Friends, you that teach in the Sunday school, do you always teach in faith, believing that God will save your children? You, dear Brothers, who are going to hold a service in the streets, are you going to do it in faith? If not, you need not do it at all, because nothing will come of it. Without faith it is impossible to please God—and if He is not pleased with what you do—no saving result can follow. All work is true when it is worked by faith in Jesus. Men's eyes are opened through their believing in Jesus—that is the great means of illumination. They are turned from darkness to light by God's giving them faith in Jesus. By faith they receive forgiveness of sins and the Divine inheritance. It is all of faith from first to last.

May God work it in your souls! I feel pleased, at times, to dig down to the old granite formation which underlies the Gospel. You know there are certain topsoil Truths which we have to plow, and out of which we raise harvests for the Lord. But every now and then, when things go rather hard with our little farm, I like to dig down to the underlying rock. Salvation is of the Lord and He is Omnipotent and works out His eternal purposes. The child of God can get oil out of this flinty rock, for God will save His own elect, and all the skeptics in the world cannot prevent the operations of the Holy Spirit from being effectual!

His purpose shall stand and He will do all His pleasure. His miracles of Grace shall be worked and all the devils in Hell shall not be able to prevent them. Neither skeptics nor fiends can hinder, even for a moment, the eternal purpose of God which must and shall be fulfilled—and this is it—“He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” This work in the hearts of men He must and will carry on to His own praise and Glory—let who will, say no to Him.

**III.** Now, I close by the last point, which is A WORK WHICH MUST BE DONE BY THE HEARER HIMSELF. This text speaks of Paul being an instrument in the hands of God of opening men's eyes and turning them to God, that they may receive pardon and so forth—in all of which they seem to be passive. But in this later verse they are called upon to be active—“That they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.” Paul was commanded to go and do such-and-such things in the power of the Spirit, but when he commenced to do them, it was by telling men that they should *repent*.

God *gives* repentance, but men must, themselves, repent. We are created thinking, intelligent beings and we are saved as such. If we were blocks of wood or masses of iron, God could carve or mold us most readily, and then He would have done no more than men commonly do with such materials. But if we remain free agents and yet the Lord works His will upon us, it is an amazing miracle—worthy of the Lord who works it! Never let us forget either the free agency of man or the purposes of God! God leaves us free agents and yet, in Infinite Wisdom, He accomplishes His purposes and fulfils His decree! Grace reigns not over slaves, but over obedient children. The will of the Lord is done and yet the responsibility and freedom of men are left untouched!

How the Lord does this I do not know. He has never deigned to explain His Infinity to us, nor need we desire that He should. It is a great blessing to have something to wonder about. I had rather have reasons for adoration than temptations for indulging my pride! Dear Hearer, if you would be saved, you must repent! It is not the work of God the Holy Spirit to repent *for* you, but to *lead* you to repent. The Holy Spirit has nothing to repent of and it is not a work which can be done by proxy. We cannot give you repentance as a doctor may inject morphine under the skin—it must be your own act and deed, your own feeling and emotion. You cannot be saved unless you *personally* turn from sin—it is the work of God's Holy Spirit to bring you to do so, but you have to repent with your own heart and mind.

Observe this carefully. You have sinned and you must repent of it and turn from it. You must undergo a change in your mind about everything. You think little of sin—you must thoroughly change your mind on that matter! You think little of Christ—your mind must be totally changed upon that point! You must loathe sin and grieve over it! There can be no forgiveness unless there is a confessing and forsaking of sin. Remember your child's verse and attend to it—

***“Repentance is to leave  
The sins we loved before  
And show that we, in earnest, grieve  
By doing so no more.”***

This is demanded of you by the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. “The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.”

The next thing necessary is that you turn to God. Your prayer may be, “Turn me, and I shall be turned,” but the command is, “Turn you, turn you, why will you die?” God will turn you, but you have to willingly yield and thus turn yourself! A number of texts indicate that there can be no turning of a man's heart to God by any force put upon him—the turning which God grants us is a perfectly willing and delighted turning on our part—we do it as freely as if there were no such thing as the Grace of God operating upon us! And yet we do it because Grace is sweetly working in us to will and to do. We cannot take you by the ears and drag you into Heaven. No person can be unwillingly holy, or unwillingly happy, or go to Heaven unwillingly! The great turn needed is to turn to God.

Now you turn away from Him. You do not like to think of Him—this morning you have heard quite as much as you can bear—and you will try and forget it and so turn away from God. Would not it be grand news for

some of you if there were no God, no Law, no judgment to come, no Heaven, no Hell? It would create in you a sense of liberty, would it not? But as for some of us, it would be slavery to us and the worst calamity that could possibly happen, for we should have lost our joy, our comfort, our all! O Sirs, you *must* turn to God—thinking of Him, trusting Him, loving Him, longing for Him, living for Him, delighting in Him! Your aversion must be removed by *conversion*—God the Holy Spirit will work this in you, but you must become willing in the day of His power. What do you say to this? If you live and die without this turning, you must be turned into Hell! I dare not set before you any other prospect.

And then, to conclude, it is added they must *do works meet for repentance*, for wherever there is true faith there will be corresponding works. Now what are, “works meet for repentance”? They are such as these—restitution if you have wronged anyone. Reconciliation if you are at enmity with anyone. Acknowledgment if you have spoken falsely. Giving up of evil habits and an earnest endeavor to be pure and holy. If you run into temptation *willfully*—that is not a work fit to go with repentance! If you commit, again, the sin which you have committed before, and return to it as a dog to its vomit—that is not a work meet for repentance! If you live in neglect of the means of Grace. If you disregard the Sabbath. If you neglect prayer. If you omit the study of God's Word—these are all *not* works that will agree with repentance! If you live wholly for yourself and your own personal aggrandizement, that is not a work meet for repentance.

But if you do, indeed, repent, you must pray the Lord to change your whole life. “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature”—that is the whole of it—you must be new from head to foot, new in every thought and word and deed. The saved man is a creation and none can create him but God, Himself! Oh that we may, each one of us, feel His transforming power, that we may henceforth, “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.”

After all, it comes to this, *Will you have Christ or not?* Dear Hearers, I would like to press that question home upon you. I pray that you may be enabled to say, “I will put my trust in Him. I will at once accept Him as my Lord and Savior.” I am afraid you get so used to my voice that it does not strike you, now, as it used to do. But still, the Truth of God is the same, whoever speaks it. If I talk nonsense, forget it! But if this is the Truth of God to which you are listening, I implore you to attend to it! Do not hear it and say, “Oh, yes,” and then go away and think no more of it!

May God grant you Grace, at once, to really repent, to turn to God and to do works meet for repentance, through faith which is in Christ, for His dear name's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 26.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—84 (PART II), 448, 489.**

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# TO THOSE WHO ARE “ALMOST PERSUADED” NO. 871

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 16, 1869,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, You almost  
persuade me to be a Christian.”  
Acts 26:28.*

NOTWITHSTANDING his bonds, Paul is to be envied that he had an opportunity of addressing himself to kings and rulers and that once, at least, in his life he stood before the great master of the Roman world, the Emperor himself. To reach the ignorant who sit on thrones is no mean feat for benevolence. Alas, the Gospel seldom climbs the high places of rank and dignity. It is a great act of mercy towards nobles and princes, when they have the opportunity of hearing a faithful Gospel discourse. Highly favored was Edward VI to have such a preacher as Hugh Latimer, to tell him to his face the Truth of God as it is in Jesus!

And much favored was Agrippa, though he scarcely appreciated the privilege, to listen to so earnest an advocate of the Gospel of Jesus as Paul the Apostle. We ought to pray much more than we do for men in high places, because they have many bewitching temptations and less gracious opportunities than even the humblest paupers. There is less likelihood of the Gospel ever affecting their hearts than of its converting the poor and needy. We should make them, therefore, especially the subjects of supplication and then we might hope to see consecrated coronets far more frequently. Should a preacher be called to address himself to kings, he could not follow a better model than the Apostle Paul whom we may fitly call the king of preachers and the preacher to kings.

His speech is extremely forcible and yet exceedingly courteous. It is powerful in matter, but graceful in manner. It is bold, but remarkably unobtrusive—never cringing, but never impertinent. The Apostle speaks much of himself, for so his argument required, but still, nothing *for* himself, nor by way of self-commendation. The whole address is so adroitly shaped with such a sacred art and yet with such a holy naturalness, that if any human persuasion could have converted Agrippa to the faith, the address of the Lord’s prisoner was most likely to have done so. The line of argument was so suited to the prejudices and tastes of Agrippa as to be another instance of Paul’s power to become “all things to all men.”

Now, it may be, this morning, while we are speaking upon the Apostle’s teaching and the results of it, that a great blessing may rest upon us so that many of you may be persuaded to be Christians by the very arguments which failed with the Herodian king. Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are called—but this assembly is of another order

and, O may the Lord extend His Sovereign Grace along our ranks, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

I. This morning I shall ask you to spend a little time in considering THE GREAT OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S PERSUASIONS. Agrippa said, "You almost persuade me *to be a Christian*." I do not recollect a single sermon from this text that is fairly upon the words as they stand. They are all discourses upon being almost Christians, which, begging the pardon of the venerable divines, has nothing to do with the text, for the Apostle never persuaded Agrippa to be an "almost-Christian"—but he almost persuaded him to be a Christian!

Agrippa certainly never was an almost-Christian! His life and character displayed a spirit very far removed from that condition. He was not like the young man in the Gospel to whom the name "almost-Christian" is far more applicable, although I gravely question its propriety in any case. There is a great difference between being almost a Christian and being almost *persuaded* to be a Christian. A man may be almost a Calvinist and so may hold most of the Doctrines of Grace, but another who has been on a certain occasion almost persuaded to be a Calvinist, may be, as a matter of fact, a complete Arminian. A man who is almost an artist knows something of painting, but a man almost persuaded to be an artist may not even know the names of the colors.

Now the great drift of Paul's preaching, according to Agrippa's confession, was to persuade him to be a Christian. And the Apostle himself acknowledges the same design in his concluding sentence, "I would to God, that not only you, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am." In that parting word of goodwill he unveiled the desire of his heart—he sought not release from his chains, but the deliverance of the souls of his hearers from the bondage of sin.

My Brethren, the preaching of the Gospel minister should always have soul-winning for its object. Never should we seek that the audience should admire our excellency of speech. I have in my soul a thousand times cursed oratory and wished that the arts of elocution had never been devised, or at least had never profaned the sanctuary of God. Often, as I have listened with wonder to speech right well conceived and sentences aptly arranged, I have yet felt as though I could weep tears of blood that the time of the congregation on the Sabbath should be wasted by listening to wordy rhetoric, when what was needed was a plain, urgent pleading with men's hearts and consciences. It is never worth a minister's while to go up his pulpit stairs to show his audience that he is adept in elocution.

High-sounding words and flowery periods, are a mockery of man's spiritual needs. If a man desires to display his oratory, let him study for the bar, or enter Parliament, but let him not degrade the Cross of Christ into a peg to hang his tawdry rags of speech. The Cross is only lifted up aright when we can say, "Not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Every minister should be able to say with Paul, "Seeing, then, that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech." No, my dear Hearers, may it never be in any measure or

degree an object of ours to flash and dazzle and astonish—but may we keep this one aim in view—to persuade you to be Christians!

Neither would the Apostle have been content if he could have persuaded Agrippa to take the *name* of a Christian, or to be baptized as a Christian. His object was that he might in very deed *be* a Christian. To seem is nothing, but to *be* is everything. I grant you that the Apostle would have been glad enough to see Agrippa avowedly a Christian. Why should he not take the name if he had received the essential Grace? He would have rejoiced to have baptized him! Why should he not, if he believed in Jesus? But the Apostle was not anxious to confer misleading names. Nominal Christians he had no desire to create. To be or not to be was his great question—names and rites were secondary matters.

It would not be worth the snap of a finger to Christianize a nation after the manner in which the zealous Francis Xavier made converts by sprinkling their heathen foreheads with a brush of holy water! It were scarcely worth rising from one's bed to persuade an avowed son of Belial to put on the cloak of a religious profession and practice his vices in decorous secrecy. No, the persuasion of the Apostle aims at Agrippa being a Christian, indeed, and of a truth! Thus should *we* labor in seeking converts—the adoption of a certain dress or mode of speech is little. Union with our denomination is almost as unimportant—the true embracing of Jesus as the Savior of men is the vital matter. To bring men to be Christians, “this is the work, this the labor.”

The Apostle does not appear to have aimed at merely making the man a convert as to his *judgment*, or a trembler as to his *feelings*, or an enthusiast as to his *passions*. Is it not sometimes evidently the drift of Christian ministers to make men weep for weeping's sake? Funeral rites are paraded and sepulchers unveiled—mournful memories are awakened and half-healed wounds ruthlessly torn open—and this laceration of the natural feelings is supposed to be a process peculiarly conducive to conversion! I have no faith in such appeals! I want men's tears for other sorrows than those connected with the dead! I beg their heart's regard to a far more important occupation than garlanding the memories of the departed.

Is it not very possible to work up a congregation to the highest possible state of excitement upon their bereavements, and yet, after all, have gained no step in advance in the direction of their eternal salvation? The deaths of the Herod family might have been worked into a touching appeal to Agrippa, but Paul was too manly to attempt the sentimentalist's effeminate discoursing. Neither did the Apostle excite Agrippa's patriotic sensibilities by rehearsing the glorious deeds of ancient Jewish valor with which the world had rung! No glowing stanzas of heroic verse or thrilling legend of chivalry were embossed upon his address—but in all simplicity the Apostle aimed at this one thing—to convince the monarch's judgment as to change his *heart*. He wished to affect Agrippa's passions as by the power of the Holy Spirit to make a new man of him! This, this only, would content the Apostolic orator—that his hearer might *be* a Christian! That he might be such a one as Paul also was, the Lord's *servant*, relying upon Christ's righteousness and living for Christ's Glory.

Now, it is well for the preacher to know what he is at and it is well for the hearers to know what the preacher desires to have them do or be. Why, Brothers and Sisters, I trust my heart's desire is precisely that which ruled the Apostle. I long that every one of you may be a Christian! Ah, my Lord, I pray You bear me witness that the one thing I strive after is that this people may know Your Truth and trust Your Son and be saved by Your Holy Spirit—saved in their outward lives and eternally saved in the day of Your appearing!

Brothers and Sisters, whatever else shall come out of my preaching, though your liberality should be superabundant, though your morality should be untarnished, though your assembling together should never decrease in numbers, though your enthusiasm should never abate in intensity, yet if you are not altogether Christians, made so by the new birth and by the power of the Holy Spirit, I shall regard my ministry as a miserable failure—a failure full of grief to me and of confusion to you! O may God grant that many here may be altogether and at once persuaded to be Christians, for nothing but this will content me!

If you desire a definition of a Christian, the Apostle has given it to you in the 18<sup>th</sup> verse of the chapter from which the text is selected. He there gives a fivefold description of the true Christian. He is one whose eyes are opened, who has been turned from darkness to light—that is to say, he knows the Truth of God and perceives it in quite a different manner from any knowledge of it which he possessed in the past. He sees his sins and feels their heinousness. He knows the plan of salvation and rejoices in its all-sufficiency. His knowledge is not superficial and a thing of the head, but internal and a matter of the *heart*. He knows now truly what he only knew theoretically before.

Knowledge is essential to a Christian. Romanism, that owl of night, may delight in ignorance, but true Christianity prays evermore for light. “The Lord is my light and my salvation”—light, first, and salvation afterwards. May you all have the opened eye, which is the Spirit's early gift. But the next point of the Christian is conversion, “To turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God.” The Christian is emancipated from the tyranny of evil and is free to follow after holiness and to delight in the commands of God. He is a citizen of a new world, alienated from his former loves and desires, made a fellow citizen of a city with which he had no acquaintance before. He owes no more service to the flesh and the lusts thereof, but the Lord is his Lawgiver and his King.

Thirdly, he has received forgiveness of sin. He is pardoned through the precious blood of Christ and rejoices in the full remission of his sins. Faith has brought him to the foot of the Cross. Faith has led him to the fountain filled with blood. The Holy Spirit has applied the Atonement, his conscience is clear—he has received redemption, to wit, the forgiveness of sins. The next and, indeed, the *essential* point in a Christian is faith—“By faith that is in Me,” says the Lord. Faith in the crucified and risen Savior. From this root will spring all the other characteristics of the genuine Christian.

Once again, the Christian is a man who is *sanctified*—that is, set apart, a separated man, a holy man, a sin-hating man—one who loves the commandments of God and counts it his pleasure to be obedient to them. Such a man has salvation. He has already a part of the inheritance of saints and he is on his way to that blessed place where he shall receive its full fruition. It is after this that the Christian minister is always striving, that his hearers may be Christians—be enlightened, be converted, have real and true faith—be sanctified by the Spirit, be forgiven all their sins and made heirs of immortality.

Has the ministry which you have attended effected, under God, this for you? If not, is this great failure the fault of the ministry or your own? O dear Hearers, if the blame lies in the ministry, if it is not such preaching as God will really bless, forsake it and attend some other! But if you are conscious that it is a Gospel ministry to which you have listened, because it has been blessed to others by the Holy Spirit, then I ask you, how will you answer for it at the bar of God, that so great a blessing of Heaven has been slighted and how will you excuse yourself for resisting cogent, earnest, affectionate persuasions, all intended to lead you to be a Christian?

O confess your sin, that you still halt between two opinions and remain in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity despite the pleadings of the Word and the rebukes of your conscience! God grant that such enquiries may have the practical result of humbling and arousing you.

**II.** Secondly, let us spend two or three minutes in considering THE APOSTOLIC MANNER OF PERSUADING. Read carefully the notes of Paul's sermon as given in the chapter before us. In what way did he endeavor to persuade the king? I reply it is noteworthy that Paul made *constant appeals to Scripture*. We say not that he quoted one or more passages, but he insisted from first to last that he spoke no other things than Moses and the Prophets wrote and nothing but what the 12 tribes were looking for.

My dear Hearers, this ought always to be a powerful argument with *you*. You are as yet unconverted, you are not yet persuaded to be Christians, but yet you believe the Bible to be true. From your childhood you have accepted with reverence the Book of God as being inspired. Now, if this Book is of God, it is your highest wisdom to be a follower of Christ! And as you dare not reject the Book—you have not yet come to that—I ask you how you make it consistent with reason, how you reconcile it with conscience and with sound sense that you remain *disobedient* to its high behests? That Book declares that no foundation can be laid for our eternal hopes but in Christ Jesus and yet you have not built on that foundation!

This Book testifies that those who reject the Lord Jesus and His Atonement must perish without mercy! Are you prepared to so perish? It also invites you to build on the foundation of Christ's sacrificial work and it promises you infinite security in so doing. Are you willing to reject so great a blessing? If you did not believe the Bible, no argument drawn from it could have any force with you, and therefore the Apostle did not quote Scripture to the philosophers on Mars' Hill. But granted that you accept the Scriptures as God's Word, as Agrippa did, the Apostolic form of reasoning from that Word ought not merely to convince your judgments, but

to persuade your hearts! And it would do so, if there were not something radically wrong in your hearts—something to be repented of, something to be removed by the power of God’s Holy Spirit!

Observe next, the Apostle’s persuasion of Agrippa lay mainly in his *personal testimony to the power of Divine Grace in his own soul*. We need not repeat the story of Paul on the road to Damascus and the bright light and the sacred voice and the sinner rising up converted to go forth to bear witness to others of Jesus and of His Grace. Personal testimony ought always to weigh with men. Convince me that a man is honest and then, if he bears witness to facts which are matters of his own personal consciousness, not merely the gleanings of hearsay, but things which he has tasted and handled, I am bound to believe him. And especially if his testimony is backed up by others, I dare not deny it—I could not be so unjust.

A great part of the preaching of every Christian minister should lie in his bearing his personal testimony to what Christ has done for him. It was my privilege only last Thursday night to tell you over again for perhaps the thousandth time, how the Grace of God has converted, consoled, supported and benefited me. I did not hesitate to tell how the Holy Spirit led me to the foot of the Cross and by one *look* at the crucified Redeemer, banished all my guilty fears. I know I speak the truth! My conscience witnesses that I lie not when I declare that trust in Jesus Christ has changed me so totally that I scarcely know my former self! It has unbound my sackcloth and girded me with gladness! It has taken the ashes of sorrow from my head and anointed me with the oil of joy!

Moreover, my testimony does not stand alone, but there are hundreds and thousands who consistently and without hesitation declare that faith in Christ has blessed and saved them. Such testimony ought to weigh with you and it would convince you, were you not desperately set against the Lord’s Truth and so fond of sin. Our testimony to the joy, peace, comfort and strength, which faith in Jesus brings, ought to be accepted, being corroborated by the witness of thousands of men of undoubted truth and unblemished character. O that men were wise and would not resist the counsel of God against themselves!

The Apostle added to this twofold reasoning, *a clear statement of the facts of the Gospel*. Notice how he piles precious Truths of God together and compresses them as with an hydraulic press, in the 23<sup>rd</sup> verse—“That Christ should suffer and that He should be the first to rise from the dead and should show light unto the people and to the Gentiles.” He was about to complete this summary of Christian divinity when Festus interrupted him. In that verse you have most of the grand Truths of the Gospel. It is a ready way to convince men, so far as instrumentality can do it, to tell them clearly that God became Incarnate in Christ Jesus—that the Incarnate God bore the sin of Believers and suffered in man’s place that justice might be vindicated. That Jesus rose again and ascended into Heaven to plead the cause of Believers before the Throne of God and that pardon, free and full, is proclaimed to every sinner who will simply come and trust in the sufferings of Jesus.

Where the Gospel statement is clearly given, even if no reasoning is used, it will, under God, frequently convince, for it is so marvelously self-evident, indeed, it would convince men universally were not the human heart harder than the nether millstone and carnal reason deaf as the adder that will not hear the wisest charmer! The Apostle did not close his sermon until he had made *a home appeal to Agrippa*. "King Agrippa," said he (in something like the style of Nathan when he said, "You are the man!") "King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you believe." He looked him through and through, and read his heart—and to escape that glance the king suddenly complimented him—and to avoid such close applications of unpalatable Truth withdrew from the place of hearing.

Oh, but this is the way to preach! We must not only argue from the Scriptures, relate our experience, and give clear statements of Gospel Truth, but we must also carry the war into the heart! The minister of Christ must know how to take the scaling ladder and fix it against the wall of the conscience and climb it, sword in hand, to meet the man face to face in sacred duel—for the capture of his heart he must not flinch to tell the faults he knows, or deal with the errors he perceives. There must be a consecrated self-denial about the preacher, so that it matters not to him, even though he should draw down the wrath of his hearer upon his head. One thing he must aim at, that he may persuade him to be a Christian and for this he must strike home, coming to close quarters, if perhaps by God's Grace, he may prick the man in his heart, slay his enmity and bring him into captivity to Jesus!

Thus have I shown you the modes of persuasion which the Apostle used, and the object for which he used them. O that such pleadings would persuade you!

**III.** Thirdly, consider THE DIFFERING DEGREES OF SUCCESS ATTENDING SUCH PERSUASIONS. How did Paul succeed? We can hardly expect to persuade more successfully than he, for we have neither his ability nor his Apostolic authority. Note, then, that he failed with Festus, a rough soldier, an officer of decent character—one of the most respectable of the Roman governors who ruled Judea (as a whole a wretched band). He was an administrator of stern, ready justice—very apt, according to Josephus—in the art of hunting down robbers and generally a shrewd, vigorous, independent, but severe ruler of the province entrusted to him.

He was the type of those commonsense, business people who are very practical, very just, very fond of facts, but who consider nothing to be worth their thoughts that has anything like sentiment in it or that deals with abstract truth. "You are beside yourself," is the way in which Festus puts Paul down. And as if he noticed in Agrippa's face some little sympathy with the captive Jew, for the monarch's sake he tones down the roughness of his remark, by adding, "Much learning has made you mad."

The rough legionary neither knew nor cared much about learning himself, but he felt it a nuisance to be worried with Jewish trivia concerning rites and dogmas, and questions about one Jesus that was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. He put such speculations all aside, saying to

himself, “People who attach importance to such romantic speculations must assuredly be crazed or imbecile.” Wherever the Gospel is preached there are people of that kind. “By all means,” say they, “toleration—by all means, and if people like to believe this, or that, or the other, well—let them believe it. Of course, you know, we men of the world do not care a button about such matters! We know too much to commit ourselves to any set of dogmas—we have more practical and rational business to attend to.”

As to investigating the claims of the Truth of God—as to asking what is Divinely revealed, as to giving themselves the trouble to study—no, no, no! Everlasting matters are by them, (so wise are they), thought to be trifles. Time is everything! Eternity is nothing! This transient life is all—the life everlasting is a thing to be sniffed at! Well, if such men bring grief to the preacher nowadays, he must not marvel, for such was Paul’s burden in his day.

Now let us turn our gaze upon the young scion of the house of Herod, a man of very different mold. He listened attentively. He had always taken an interest in religious questions. He was sprung of a family that, with all their frightful vices, had trembled before the voice of prophecy and Scripture and like the Herod who heard John gladly, he listened with great attention and interest to Paul. As he weighed the arguments in his mind, he felt that there was a great deal to be said for Paul’s view of the question. He did not half-know but what Paul might be right. Still he had an “if.” He would rather not think that the prisoner before him was better informed than he, or that such stern teaching demanded obedience from him and, therefore, he closed the discourse with a remark intended to be pleasing to the orator and he went his way.

Oh, but these Agrippas! These Agrippas! I would almost sooner deal with Festus, for I know what Festus means and I am not disappointed! And one of these days it may be the Lord will direct an arrow between the joints of Festus’s harness. But this Agrippa utterly deceives me! He is a fair blossom that never knits and so turns not to fruit! He is almost persuaded. Yes, and therefore he takes a sitting at our chapel and he attends the ministry and look, he even drops a tear—but then he would do the same if he sat in a smoke-filled room! He will remember what is said, too, and when he hears a pungent remark he will repeat it at the dinner table and commend the speaker—but then he would have done the same if he had been gratified by an actor at the theater.

We are told that he is a good fellow and well inclined! It may be so, but alas, he is almost persuaded and not quite and so he is no Christian. He is not in *any* measure a Christian, although he listens to Christian preaching. He is almost persuaded, yet nothing more. I wonder whether in Paul’s congregation there was a third sort of hearer! I hope there was—for there were present not only Festus and Bernice and Agrippa, but doubtless many of the attendants and certainly, according to the 23<sup>rd</sup> verse of the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter, the chief captains and principal men of the city were there. Perhaps—though we are not so informed—while Paul was failing with Festus and disappointed with Agrippa, there sat somewhere in the

back seats a centurion, or a private soldier, or a Jewish ruler upon whom the Truth of God was falling like soft dew, and into whose heart it was being received as the ocean absorbs the falling shower!

Surely he was not left without witness! The seed he was casting on the waters was found again—and though he came up from his dungeon to preach on that occasion bearing precious seed with many tears, doubtless in Heaven he rejoices over sheaves which sprang up from that morning's preaching! Blessed be God, our labor is not in vain in the Lord!

**IV.** We will now enquire WHY THE HALF-CONVINCED HEARER WAS ONLY "ALMOST PERSUADED"! Look at Agrippa again. Fix your attention fully upon him, for with some of you he is a photograph of yourselves. The arguments which Paul drew from Scripture and his own personal experience were very appealing to the intellect. His way of putting these arguments was exceedingly forcible and therefore, if Agrippa were not altogether persuaded, it was not the fault of the preacher's matter or manner. Nothing could have been more powerful in either case.

Where, then, did the fault lie? I stand now in the court and I look around and I ask myself, "What is the reason why Agrippa is not persuaded?" The argument seemed feasible to me, why not to him? As I look around I notice on the right hand of Agrippa a very excellent reason why he is not convinced, for there sat Bernice, of whom there were very unsavory stories afloat in Josephus's day. She was Agrippa's sister and is accused of having lived in incestuous communion with him. If so, with such a woman at his right hand, I marvel not that Paul's arguments did not fully persuade. The reason why sinners are not persuaded is, in 99 cases out of a 100, their *sin*—their *love* of sin!

They see, but they will not see—for if they did see, they would have to tear out that right eye sin or cut off that right arm lust—and they cannot consent to that. Most of the arguments against the Gospel are bred in the filth of a corrupt life. He makes the best reasoner as an infidel who is most unholy, because the devil and his soul together will never keep him short of the fiery arrows of Hell. If it were true that Agrippa lived in such degrading sin, it is no wonder that when Paul reasoned so soberly and so truthfully, Agrippa was almost, but not altogether, persuaded! If the charge brought against Bernice as to her brother was not altogether true, yet she was beyond all question a shameless woman. She had been originally married to her own uncle, Herod, and was therefore both his niece and his wife. And her second marriage was soon broken by her unfaithfulness.

Now Agrippa's public and ostentatious associating with her, proved at least that he was in evil company. This is quite sufficient to account for his never being altogether persuaded to be a Christian. Evil company is one of Satan's great nets in which he holds his birds until the time shall come for their destruction. How many would gladly escape, but they are afraid of those around them whom they count to be good fellows, and whose society has become necessary to their mirth! Oh, you know it, some of you! You know it! You have often trembled while I have told you of your sins and of the wrath to come—but you have met your bad companion at

the door, or you have gone home and attended parties of gaiety—and every godly thought has been quenched and you have gone back like a dog to his vomit and like a sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Ah, you Agrippas, your Bernices will lead you down to Hell!

But if Agrippa has his Bernice, Bernice has her Agrippa! And so men and women become mutual destroyers. The daughters of Eve and the sons of Adam assist each other in choosing their own delusions. Now that I am in the court, I look around again and think I notice that Agrippa is easily influenced by Festus. Festus is a commonsense rough-and-ready governor and such men always have power and influence over gentlemen of taste like Agrippa, for somehow the greater the diversity of character the more influence a man will have upon another.

The rough Festus appears to the gentle Agrippa to be his superior and if he sneers and calls Paul mad—well, Agrippa must not go the length of being persuaded, although he may demonstrate his expertness in Jewish questions by giving a favorable opinion on the case, which may, a little, put Festus down—yet how could he go and dine with the governor if he became quite convinced? What would Festus say? “Ah, two madmen! Is Agrippa, also, beside himself?” The king can hardly put up with the sarcasms which he foresees. Some people’s sneers he could bear, but Festus is a man of shrewdness and common sense and is so prominent a ruler that a sneer from *him* would cut him to the quick.

Alas, how many are influenced by fear of men! Oh, you Cowards, will you be damned out of fear? Will you sooner let your souls perish than show your manhood by telling a poor mortal that you defy his scorn? Dare you not follow the right though all men in the world should call you to do the wrong? Oh, you cowards! You cowards! How you deserve to perish who have not soul enough to call your souls your own, but cower down before the sneers of fools! Play the man, I pray you, and ask God’s Grace to help you to do the right as soon as you are convinced, let Festus scoff as he will.

Do you not think, too, that Paul himself had something to do with Agrippa’s not being convinced? I do not mean that Paul had one grain of *blame* in the case, but he wore decorations during his preaching which probably were not of a pleasing and convincing character to a man of Agrippa’s taste for pomp and ease. Though better than golden ornaments were his *chains*, Paul seems to have perceived that Agrippa was shocked at Christianity in that peculiar garb, for Paul said, “Except these bonds.” It often happens that looking abroad upon the sorrows of God’s people, ungodly men refuse to take their portion with them. They find that righteous men are frequently sneered at and called names. Their self-love can hardly run the risk of such inconvenience.

Be a Methodist? No! Presbyterian? No! Truth is all very well, but gold, they say, can be bought too dearly. Men are so moved by the fear of contempt and poverty that they turn aside from the narrow path and no reasoning can convince them to follow it, for they are unwilling to encounter the dangers of the heavenly pilgrimage. O that men were wise enough to see that suffering for Christ is honor! That loss for the Truth of God is

gain! That the truest dignity rests in wearing the chain upon the arm rather than endure the chain upon the soul!

The *great* reason why Agrippa was not convinced lay in his own heart—partly in the love of pomp, partly in the dread of his master Nero at Rome, partly in his superficial and artificial character—but mainly in his love of sin and in the struggling of his passions against the Divine restraints of the Gospel. The main reason why men are not persuaded to be Christians lies in their own *hearts*. It is not a flaw in the preacher's logic. It is a flaw in the hearer's *nature*. It is no mistake in the logic—it is an error in the hearer's will. It is not that the reasonings are not powerful—it is that the man does not wish to feel their power and so endeavors to elude them. I ask your consciences, you who are not convinced, whether I have not fairly stated some of the causes which create and prolong your halting between two opinions and, if I have, may God's Grace help you to confess them, and then may it deliver you from their power.

**V.** Lastly, I have to show THE EVIL THAT WILL FOLLOW UPON BEING ONLY ALMOST PERSUADED. The first evil is that if a man is only almost convinced, *he misses altogether the blessing* which being fully persuaded to be a Christian would have brought him. A leaky ship went out to sea and a passenger was almost persuaded not to trust his life in it, but he did so and he perished. A bubble speculation was started in the city and a merchant was almost persuaded not to have shares in it, but he bought the scrip and his estate went down in the general shipwreck. A person exceedingly ill heard of a remedy reputed to be most effectual and he was almost persuaded to take it, but he did not and therefore the disease grew worse and worse. A man who proposed to go into a subterranean vault in the dark was almost persuaded to take a candle, but he did not and therefore he stumbled and fell.

You cannot have the blessing by being almost persuaded to have it! Your hunger cannot be appeased by almost eating, nor your thirst quenched by almost drinking. A culprit was almost saved from being hanged, for a reprieve came five minutes after he was hung, but alas, he was altogether dead despite the almost escape. A man who has been almost persuaded to be saved, will at the last be altogether damned! His being almost convinced will be of no conceivable service to him. This seems so grievous, that the life of God and the light of God and the Heaven of God should glide by some of you and you should be almost persuaded and yet should miss them through not being Christians.

Worse still, in addition to the loss of the blessing, there certainly comes *an additional guilt* to the man who, being almost persuaded, yet continues in his sin. A person has rebelled against the government—in hot haste he has taken side with the rioters. But he is afterwards very sorry for it and he asks that he may be forgiven—let mercy have free course. But another offender has been reasoned with. He has been shown the impolicy of treason. He has seen clearly the evil of taking up arms against the commonwealth and he has been almost persuaded to be loyal.

I say when he becomes a rebel, he is a traitor with a vengeance to whom no mercy can be shown! The man who is almost persuaded to be

honest and yet deliberately becomes a thief, is a rogue ingrain. The murderer who almost saves his victim's life in the moment of passion, pausing because almost persuaded to forego revenge and, after all, deliberately kills his enemy, deserves death beyond all others. The man who is deliberately an enemy to Christ. Who presumptuously rejects the offer of peace. Who in calm moments puts from him the precious blood. Who is almost persuaded, but yet by desperate effort overcomes his conscience—such a man shall go down to the Pit with a millstone about his neck that shall sink him to the lowest Hell! You almost persuaded ones, I pray you look at this and tremble!

Once more. To have been almost persuaded and yet not to be a Christian *will lead to endless regrets* for will not this thought bubble up in the seething soul amidst its torments forever—"I was almost persuaded to repent. Why did I go on in my sin? I was almost persuaded to put my trust in Jesus. Why did I cling, still, to my self-righteousness and vain ceremonies? I was almost persuaded to forsake my evil companions and to become a servant of God—but I am now cast away forever—where no more persuasions can melt my heart. Oh, my cursed sin! Alas, that I should have been fascinated by its temporary sweetness and for the sake of it should have incurred this never-ending bitterness! Oh, my madness! Oh, my insanity, that I should have chosen the lies which did but mock me and suffered my Savior and His salvation to pass me by!"

I dare not attempt to picture the remorse of spirits shut up in the cells of despair. Suffice it to say the dread truth is clear—a man cannot come so near to the verge of persuasion and yet with desperate obstinacy start back from the great salvation without incurring the hot displeasure of the God of Mercy—without bringing upon himself, also, the doom of a suicide in having destroyed his own soul and put from him the mercy of Jesus Christ! How I wish I knew how to plead with you this morning! How earnestly I would persuade those of you who are halting between two opinions! Some of you have but a little time to be halting—your wavering will soon be over—for your death warrants are signed and the Angel of Death has spread his wings to the blast, to bring the fatal summons down!

The grave is appointed for some of you within a few weeks or months. You shall not trifle with God long. O, I pray you, I beseech you! If you have any concern for yourselves and have any sound reason left, seek that your peace may be made with God through the precious blood of Christ! Seek that you may be ready to stand before your Maker's bar, for stand there you must and will, before many days are past. If you should live another 30 or 40 years, how short that time is and how soon will it pass!

Consider your ways now. Today is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation! The Lord persuade you. I have done my best. He can do it. The Lord the Holy Spirit create you anew and make you Christians and His shall be the Glory forever. Amen and Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 26.**

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# PAUL IN THE TEMPEST

## NO. 3145

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 20, 1909.

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

***“And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete, and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul, you must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God has given you all them that sail with you. Therefore, Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.”***  
**Acts 27:18-25.**

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, upon parts of this passage, are as follows—Sermons #1070, Volume 18—WRECKED, BUT NOT RECKLESS; #2952, Volume 51—THE CHURCH—THE WORLD’S HOPE and #1355, Volume 23—A CHEERY WORD IN TROUBLOUS TIMES—  
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

HERE we see a Believer full of comfort cheering others. The words of good cheer now before us are from a man, but inasmuch as he does but repeat what the Lord had spoken to him, they are none the less precious. And they may be all the more profitable if they move us, by their example, to speak words of cheer to others.

The Believer is sure to come to the front. He may be hidden away in the crowd and his condition and circumstances may put him in the rear rank for a time, but his light will by some means rise out of obscurity. Paul is nothing but a prisoner all the time the ship sails safely. He is courteously entreated, yet he holds rank among others who are being carried to Rome for trial. But the storm comes on and the ship is driven before the tempest—and he who was only a prisoner becomes practically the chief man in the ship! The owner, the captain, the centurion—these are very small figures in the picture. You scarcely notice them in the group huddled together in the laboring boat. Paul is the center of the whole company, the observed of all. He is as much the master of the ship as Caesar was when, in the tempest, he encouraged the mariners with the words, “Fear not, you carry Caesar and all his fortunes.” Paul is greater than Caesar, for he says less of himself and more of the Eternal God. He is evidently revered and esteemed even by those who hold him in chains.

Paul on board that vessel was strikingly like the Lord Jesus when He came into the ship upon the Galilean Lake. There are many parallels between every true Believer and his Lord. Albeit that He is great and everything about Him is colossal, we, if we follow Jesus, are like He—and in this world we are as He was—we are miniatures of His life-size portrait, shadows of His glorious Substance! When Paul, on board the ship, sees the fears of those about him and he lovingly cries, “Be of good cheer,” his voice has a consoling ring borrowed from his Master’s. If you, dear Friend, are thoroughly and strongly a Believer, you will find a place in which you shall illustrate to others the Character of your Lord. If I might so speak, on board that ship Paul was prophet, priest and king. In our text he spoke prophetically, for he declared to them their perfect safety. He acted like a priest in his prayers for them all and I had almost added that in his breaking of bread, he was dimly like Melchizedek—blessing men and refreshing them with bread and wine. As for the kingly office, was not Paul truly royal? No mortal brow was ever more worthy of a crown! Amid that crowded ship he was more imperial than Caesar—and all on board acknowledged it. They felt constrained to obey him, for he stood superlatively above them all—unassuming, modest, gentle, self-denying, sympathetic, yet evidently a superior being. If we had more faith, we would sink in our own esteem, but we would greatly rise in our influence upon others, for we, too, would dwell among men as prophets, priests and kings! Are not the saints the twice-born of a higher lineage and a nobler race—the excellent of the earth in whom is the delight of holy men?

Let us think for a while of the Apostle’s character as set forth in his cheery speech and view him under three aspects. First, let us see in him *the avowed believer*. Secondly, let us consider him as *the bold prophet*. Thirdly, as *the sympathetic comforter*. May we, by God’s good Spirit, be made to bear each of these characters!

**I.** First, as we read our text, the Apostle will be seen as THE AVOWED BELIEVER. Hear him as he says, “*I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.*”

He commences his statement of his faith by saying that *he believed God*. We cannot have a better basis of faith than that! We must settle in our minds that there is a God, that the Word of God must certainly be true, absolutely infallible, and beyond all question. “I believe God”—if a man can say no more than this, it means, in the very mildest sense of it, he is on the way towards faith. But he who can say, “I believe God,” in such a sense as the Apostle intended has reached to an eminent height of faith and has obtained the elements of spiritual strength.

“I believe God.” Sometimes it quite staggers me that it should be difficult for us to believe God. Dear Friend, do you not sympathize with me in my wonder? If our hearts and minds were as they should be, faith in God would be a matter of course! And even now, imperfect as we are, it ought to need a crushing argument to persuade us to entertain the slightest doubt of God. It is most of all surprising that God’s children should ever doubt Him—especially those who have been so highly favored as some of us have been. Let preacher and hearer be amazed that we should ever

dare to say that we find faith in God to be difficult. It is a grievous imputation upon God when we talk about faith as difficult!

If we were to say of a neighbor, "I find it hard to believe him," I do not know what worse we could say of him. If a child were to say of his father, "You know my father—he is in high repute but I find it quite a struggle to believe him." What rumors would get abroad! What whispers! "That man's own child confesses that he finds it hard to believe him!" Will not this bring forth from us the blush of shame and the tear of repentance, to think that we would ever have spoken thus of God, our Father? Is there any proof of our fall more conclusive than this? Is there any token of the natural depravity of our heart more glaring than that we should be so out of order as to doubt the living God? Why do we not trust Him altogether and implicitly? How is it that when we get a great promise, we begin to say, "And is this true?" When we come into deep trouble, how is it that we mistrust His goodness? How is it that we do not rest in God in all things great or small? He that is true to His Covenant and to His oath will be true in the very jots and tittles of His promises! He that is true to Christ will be true to every member of Christ's body. He cannot lie! It is impossible that He should deny Himself—ought it not to be impossible for us to suspect Him? The Apostle is worthy to be called "the master of the sentences" in this brave utterance, "I believe God." Take this one line to heart, Beloved, and repeat it for yourself full many a time, "I believe God." Whatever else you question, always believe God!

*Paul's firm faith was grounded upon Revelation*, for he says, "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." He believed, then, *that God had told him something*. He says of a certain, "it," that it was told him. An angel had told him, but we need not envy him the channel of communication, since the written Word of God is a more sure word of testimony than anything else can be! Even the word which came on the holy mount in the Transfiguration, when Peter and James and John saw Christ in His Glory, though it was a true and pure and bright word, yet is it spoken of by Peter as second to the Scriptures! He says, "We have a more sure word of prophecy"—more sure, even, than speech heard by the ear! Nothing is so sure as the Revelation of the Inspired Book! The man who quibbles at the Inspiration of the Word of God has given up the very foundation of faith! You and I, kind Friend, at any rate, are able to say that we believe that God has told us something, for we accept the Bible as His Word to us—even to us! We are not of those who say of a certain Chapter, "That is for the Jews," for in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile, but all the promises are yes and amen in Christ Jesus to the glory of God *by us*. We are the true Israel who worship God in the spirit and have no confidence in the flesh—and the promises are sure to all the Seed. We believe in Inspiration and Revelation—and we ground our faith thereon, even as Paul did. "I believe that it was told me," is our unmistakable avowal.

Observe carefully that Paul's faith, grounded upon God and the fact of a Revelation, went on to *a conviction of the absolute certainty of that Revelation*—"it shall be even as it was told me." "It shall be." You can apply

this to everything that God has told you. Whatever promise He has made. Whatever declaration He has set forth in His Holy Word, *it shall be even as it was told you!* Just as when the press comes down upon the paper, the type leaves its own impression in each line and letter, so shall the eternal purpose and promise of God leave its impression in your life and mine, fulfilling in actual fact all that the Lord God has promised! We shall try the Word and we shall prove it true. We shall expect the promise to be faithful and we shall find it so. “It shall be *as it was told me.*” There shall be no errata at the end of the Chapter, no emendations and obliterations. What God has written, He has written, and it must be even so. Augustine wrote confessions and retractions at the close of his life—but not so Augustine’s God! At the Last Day, when the roll of history shall be complete and, “*finis,*” shall be put to it, it will tally with the forecasts of God’s Word in every respect! Has He said and shall He not do it? Has He spoken and shall it not come to pass? Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God’s Word shall never pass away! Here is the joy of the Believer—he can say, “I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.”

*The faith of Paul was most blessedly comprehensive.* I want you all to note that fact, for God had told him that He had given him all them that sailed with him—and Paul believed it for their comfort. It is a great thing for faith to make a sweep as wide as God’s Word. I have known some to whom God has said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, *and your house.*” But they have only gone as far as, “you shall be saved,” and according to their faith it has been to them! As yet, they have not believed the other three words, “*and your house.*” And when their children grow up and grieve their hearts by their ill manners, what is the cause of it but the parents’ unbelief? If we have not prayed believingly for our children, is it any marvel that they are not saved?

It often comes to pass that by clipping a promise, we shear off a blessing which we might have had if our faith had accepted the Sacred Word in its entirety. Oh, for a comprehensive faith as to all that is in the gracious Covenant! Have you looked long enough at the promise to see all that is in it? What sheaves of blessing are tied up in a single promise, though it may only consist of a dozen words! I like to make up my troubles into bundles. Do you ever do that? If a man has nine, ten, twelve, 14 parcels to carry, they may be all little ones, but what a worry they are to him! Here are some in this pocket, and some in that—and they are more than he can manage, for they drop about everywhere! If he is a wise man, he finds a bag and puts the separate items together. True, they are no lighter, but they are much easier to carry! Bind your troubles into one burden and then roll it upon the Lord! With your mercies, do just the opposite—cut the string and open the package—they will be no more, but they will give you more joy as you count them and examine them one by one. Take care that your faith grasps the whole mass of blessing stored away in the promise—and mind that you believe that it shall be even as God has told you.

Further, note that Paul believed this when, to outward appearances, “all hope that they should be saved was taken away.” *Paul’s faith hoped against hope.* When Hope mourns, “I cannot find rest for the sole of my

feet," Faith cries, "Use your wings." When there seems nothing for Faith to rest on but the bare Word of God, then Faith is glad, for now she can commune with her Creator without being entangled by outward means and instrumentalities! Did not the Lord hang the world upon nothing but His Word? And cannot we hang our souls there, too? It is grand to stand like the arch of Heaven, unpillared and yet unmoved, resting only upon the invisible God! Did I say, *only*? Is not that resting upon everything that is worth trusting since God is All-in-All?

Before we leave this point we ought to notice that while Paul thus believed God, that it would be as it was told him, *he very plainly and boldly expressed this faith*. He did not conceal his confidence, but he proclaimed it even before those who did not share his belief. No matter whether they could sympathize with him or not, he spoke out boldly. He did not cast pearls before swine by needlessly parading his faith, but as it was necessary to speak of it for the comfort of others, he did not hesitate for a single moment, but confessed, in the hearing of soldiers and sailors, "I believe God."

Nowadays, people are so dreadfully modest that they are afraid to glorify God. God save us from such cowardice! Infidelity brawls in every street—shall faith be dumb? If you believe, there is at this time a grave necessity that you should declare your faith, for unbelief is rampant. Look at the high-class reviews, look at popular literature—these things reek with unbelief of the worst kind! Alas that it should ever come to this—that men who call themselves Christians should lend their pens to suggest and spread infidel principles and even enter into pulpits to insinuate mistrust of the Truths of God which they were ordained to preach! Honesty seems to have fled from the earth and men have lost all conscience. Let us who believe in God speak out at once, though men will call us narrow-minded, destitute of culture, incapable of enlarged views and other pretty things! What does it matter what they say? All that they say or insinuate should only make us the more vehemently declare, "I believe God." Why it has become a rare thing to meet a man who believes *anything* now, for the reputed wise man of the period is he who says, "I do not believe in anything in particular. I hold certain views, but I am quite prepared to change them, for there is a great deal to be said on the other side." This is not after the manner of Christ, nor according to the ways of the faithful in the olden time, who held fast the form of sound words and were ready to die for the Truths of God which had taken possession of their souls. It is time now, if ever in the world's history, for those who are Believers to speak with all confidence. Fear nothing! Can there be anything to fear in believing God? Can there be any shame in avowing an implicit faith in the God of Truth? For my own part, I had rather be ridiculed for bigotry than be applauded for "advanced and liberal views." I would sooner be despised with the orthodox than reign with "the intellectual."

**II.** We have thus gone over Paul's words as an avowed Believer. And now we may turn to look at him AS A BOLD PROPHET.

Far be it from any one of us to set ourselves up as prophets, for thereunto we are not called. Yet every truly-instructed Christian is in some sense a prophet and may prophesy according to the proportion of faith, if he will follow the true method. *Paul was not rash in his prophecies. He confined himself to revelation.* He said, "It shall be." But what shall be? "It shall be as it was told me." You may always go that length—and you will be to many men a wonderful personage. If you go only as far as that, they will marvel that you dare say, "It shall be even as it was told me." We speak positively where they can only guess and dream. We cannot see behind that veil which hides the future, but we know what is to come as to some matters, for God has told us and we can, therefore, prophesy that it shall be according to His declaration. Learn from Paul not to be a presumptuous dreamer, but a prudent speaker.

*On what he foretold he staked the honor of God,* for he said, "It shall be as it was told me." But why? Because "I believe God." If God is not worthy of belief, then it may not be as it was told me—but His Word must be fulfilled and His promise kept since He is a faithful God. Never recklessly compromise the honor of God by any rash assertion of your own! But you may always challenge the veracity of God as to His own promises or threats and be quite sure that He will vindicate both Himself and His servant by making it to be as He told you.

*The Apostle uttered this prophecy of his before all that were in the ship.* Most of them were unbelievers, but he boldly said to them, "It shall be even as God has told me." Some of them were his superiors in station—officers of the Roman army—but he told them, "It shall be even as it was told me." It is sometimes hard to confess Christ in polite society, in the presence of those who are considered to be superior persons, but let not any believer in Him yield to fear. Say with David—

***"I'll speak Your Word, though kings should hear,  
Nor yield to sinful shame."***

Paul made his avowal of faith in the presence of very rough men—selfish sailors, cruel soldiers and criminal prisoners, but what of that? An avowal of faith in God might be made before all the fiends of Hell and you could not say a better thing before the angels of Heaven! In no place and in no company can the testimony of faith in the living God and His Son, Jesus Christ, be out of place. Therefore fear not to make it. My Friend, make the world conscious of your solemn conviction that God is to be believed. Protest and so act as a true Protestant! Confess Christ and so be His disciple, indeed! Speak that which He has told you in His Word like a prophet in the name of the Lord, and fear no man! Let the fear of God forbid all other fear.

Paul so truly, so practically believed God that *the power of his faith told on all that were around him.* If they did not themselves believe, yet that calm face amid the storm, that practical action in bidding them take bread and eat, that common-sense proceeding in cutting away the boat that the sailors might remain to manage the ship—all this made them see that he was not a man who merely *talked* of faith, but one to whom believing was part and parcel of his life, the fountain of the common sense which fitted him to be a leader! He acted like a man who believed

in God in a business-like way. Faith was real in him and, therefore, practical. Many Christians appear to hold their religion as a pious fiction—regarding the promises of God as pretty things for sentimentalism to play with—and His Providence as a poetical idea. We must get out of that evil fashion and make God to be the greatest factor in our daily calculations—the chief force and fact of our lives! We must, each one, boldly act on the conviction that “it shall be even as He has told me.”

*Paul was all this while in trouble*, for he was in the ship with those whom he comforted, suffering the same discomforts and yet he said, “I believe God.” It is all very fine for one who has a good income, enjoys good health and is in excellent spirits to sit down by the side of some poor half-starved woman who is full of disease and near to death, and say, “My good woman, you should have faith in God.” Do you hear that landsman teaching sailors how to go to sea? That is true faith which believes God when it is *in* the sinking ship, in the same peril and trouble with others and yet unmoved where they are filled with alarm! How I wish that each of you may be able to believe this!

May God make you to be so far a prophet that you may be prophetic on several points! In the first place, always declaring that God will hear believing prayer and, next, that a wrong thing cannot have the Divine blessing resting upon it. Be prophet enough to say these two things and act upon them as downright matters of fact. You can also foretell that if the Gospel is faithfully and simply preached, with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven, it will win souls. You may prophesy that and never fail! And you may prophesy, also, that if the biggest sinner in the world will come to Christ, he shall be forgiven! That if the vilest heart will yield itself to the Savior, it shall be renewed! That if the most rebellious and obstinate man that ever lived is touched by the finger of God and is led to repentance and faith, he is capable of becoming one of the brightest of the sons of God! No one shall ever shame you by proving that you spoke falsely if you speak for God in this fashion! Speak out, then, and banish guilty silence.

**III.** The Apostle may be viewed in a third character, as A SYMPATHETIC COMFORTER.

They were all in trouble, for they were all in danger of drowning. The ship was going to pieces, death stared them in the face, dismay was written on every countenance, but Paul says to them, “Sirs, be of good cheer.” Doubtless, his cheerful tones and manly voice helped to banish their fears and to prevent a panic. Beloved Christian Friend, should it not be our effort, wherever we are, to make troubled ones happy? Next to loving God, the first duty of a Christian is to spread peace on earth and goodwill to men. Whenever we meet with a person in trouble—I do not mean only spiritual trouble—we should administer relief. Even when we meet with a child who has lost a penny, or has broken a jug, we should take pleasure in soothing its grief. His mother will scold him, so buy him another jug, if you can, and try and cheer his little heart. What a mass of happiness you can buy for a few pence, if you will spend them on poor children.

Where money is not needed, you may give sympathy and consolation, and these will be much valued. Do not reply that you are unable to act as a comforter. Learn the art. If you cannot *speak* well, there is a better way than speech. A little child once said to her mother, "Mother, I stopped with Widow Brown, for she said that I comforted her so." "Well, I daresay you did, my Dear," the mother replied. "But, Mother, I do not see that I am of any use to her, for I cannot tell her anything—but I put my cheek against hers and when she cries, I cry too—and she says that it comforts her." Exactly so. This little child shall lead us. Herein is wisdom. "Weep with them that weep." You cannot more effectually console them. Comfort others with the comfort with which you yourself are comforted of God, for Paul said, "Be of good cheer. I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." He had been comforted of the Lord and with this consolation he could cheer others. The Lord grant us Grace to be looking out for those who are in any sort of affliction, that we may cheer their hearts. But let us be doubly watchful over those in spiritual distress. Let no one in our neighborhood ever complain, "No man cares for my soul." Comfort God's people and labor at the same time to win sinners to Jesus—and the love of your heart shall bring untold blessings into your own bosom! Happiness is contagious and the cheerfulness of your piety will be so attractive that the careless and indifferent will be allured to the ways of piety. Do not run about with ill news, but make your communications joyous by mixing up the glad tidings of salvation with your cheerful daily talk! So shall you imitate your Lord and His Apostle by saying "Be of good cheer."

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 90; ACTS 27:1-26.**

Psalm 90 is entitled "A Prayer of Moses, the man of God," and it furnishes a suitable prayer for every man of God. Any men of God who have had experience as deep, trying and varied as that of Moses will be the better able to enter into the spirit of the Psalm.

**Psalm 90:1.** *LORD You have been our dwelling place in all generations.* [See Sermon #46, Volume 1—THE GLORIOUS HABITATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] "This world in which we live is no home for our immortal spirits. You give us habitations for our bodies, but there are no dwelling places for our spirits that are of a nobler order. We dwell in You, O Lord; You are our home. Beneath Your wide wings we find blessed shelter and in communion with You our hearts are kept in perfect peace. Lord, You are the home of Your people in all generations—not only in the generations that are past, when Noah, and Abraham and Moses, and David, and all Your ancient servants found a refuge in You, but even to this day You are still our strong castle and our high tower, our refuge and place of defense, our dwelling place even in this generation."

**2.** *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.* When compared with God, those hoary hills are but as infants of a day,

and the whole round world itself is but as a new-born child. "From everlasting" has He existed—when all created things slept in His Infinite mind like unborn forests sleep in an acorn cup and so on forever, "to everlasting"—when all created things shall have dissolved, when back to nothing this fair world shall have gone—God shall still be the same. He is a rock that cannot be removed. There is no *terra firma* upon this earth, but while all things are whirling around us, we find a firm dwelling place beyond the stars in the ever-living and Immutable Jehovah. No man's home is safe unless it is built on something more stable than this poor trembling earth, but he who rests on God and lives in God has the best of all habitations wherein to dwell in safety forever.

**3.** *You turn man to destruction; and say, Return, you children of men.* Man is mortal, conspicuously so. As we walk about our streets, how we miss our old companions, one by one! They have returned to the bosom of mother earth from where they first sprang. The inhabitants of this world seem to pass in procession before our eyes—those who were here a few minutes ago are gone and another rank has come, and another, and another and they will soon all be gone—and we shall be gone too. He, then, who hopes to find a home among the sons of men will miss it, but he who makes the eternal God his habitation shall still be at home in the Lord even when wife, and child, and brother, and friend all sleep in the silence of the sepulcher.

**4.** *For a thousand years in Your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.* Our measurements of time are nothing to God. There is nothing past and nothing future with Him—all things are present in the eternal NOW of God. What a wonderful Truth this is of the eternal existence of God—and what boundless comfort it brings to the man who feels that this God is his God, his Father, his Friend and his All-in-All!

**5, 6.** *You carry them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep in the morning; they are like grass which grows up. In the morning it flourishes and grows up; in the evening it is cut down, and withers.* Such is the best estate of man—a field bedecked with daisies, kingcups and other frail flowers, but the mower's scythe is near—you may hear him sharpening it! And soon along the sward, all the sons of men shall fall—and you who have found your hope, your Heaven, your confidence here—how poor will you be in the end thereof! But O you who have sent all your heart's desires upwards to your God, you who are living in the future, living in the infinite, how secure are you, for no rust shall fret your gold, no moth consume your garments! You are blessed indeed.

**7.** *For we are consumed by Your anger and by Your wrath are we troubled.* Yes, if the Lord lets even a little of His wrath out for a while against His servants, how greatly do we suffer! Blessed be His name, it never is real anger against His own chosen people. He does but hide His love under the form of wrath, just as a father never really hates his child, and even though he is angry with him for his faults, and chastises him, yet there is more love than wrath in every blow of the rod. Still, it is a sad thing to lose the sense of God's love in the heart—it consumes us and

troubles us. We could bear sickness, we could bear slander or persecution, or almost anything but the absence of the Light of God's Countenance! That is the worst of trials to His children.

**8-10.** *You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the Light of Your Countenance. For all our days are passed away in Your wrath; we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they are fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.* A long life or a short life, what a little difference it makes when the last hour comes! The patriarch as well as the child descends to the grave and all, as they sleep in their separate graves, seem only to have lived for a little moment and then to have passed away.

**11.** *Who knows the power of Your anger? Even according to Your fear, so is Your wrath.* God grant that none of us may ever know experimentally the power of His anger! But may we know it, as a matter of faith, so as to tremble concerning it, and so as to flee to Christ to be delivered from it! But what must it really be to feel the power of God's anger? I implore you never to believe any teaching that seems to make God's anger less terrible than you thought it to be. It is not possible to exaggerate here—the power of God's anger is immeasurable, and that is why the power of Christ's Atonement is infinite!

**12.** *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* That is the great matter, after all, to get the heart applied to wisdom, to learn what is the right way and to walk in it in the practical actions of daily life. It is of little use for us to learn to number our days if it merely enables us to sit down in self-confidence and carnal security! But if our hearts are applied to true wisdom, the Lord's teaching has been effectual.

**13, 14.** *Return, O LORD, how long? And let it repent You concerning Your servants. O satisfy us early with Your mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.* [See Sermons #513, Volume 9—THE YOUNG MAN'S PRAYER and #2987, Volume 52—THE "BEAU IDEAL" OF LIFE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Dear young people, here is a suitable prayer for you to present to God—"O satisfy us early with Your mercy." Believe me, there is no joy for a lad like that of loving the Lord Jesus Christ while he is yet young! And O you maidens—there is no fairer jewel that you can ever wear than that of love to Jesus Christ—

***"Twill save us from a thousand snares  
To mind religion young!  
Grace will preserve our following years,  
And make our virtues strong."***

And each one of us may pray this prayer. "Lord, now give us Your mercy! If we are unsaved, let us not remain so! If we have lost the comfort of Your Presence for a while, restore it to us now! Leave us not long in darkness, but satisfy us early with Your mercy!"

**15.** *Make us glad according to the days wherein You have afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.* [See Sermon #1701, Volume 29—GLADNESS FOR SADNESS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It is right, then, to pray for joy. Indeed, joy is so conspicuous a blessing to a Christian—it is so closely connected with the

healthfulness of all his virtues that he should seek after it until he finds it!

**16.** *Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and Your glory unto their children.* “Lord, let us see Your work here! Oh, for Your name’s sake, take Your right hand and work mightily in our midst! Withdraw not the working of the Holy Spirit from us, Your people! Let Your work of conversion, Your work of edification, Your work of the conquest of the world appear unto Your servants!”

**17.** *And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.* “Let not what we do for You fall to the ground like a badly-built wall! Let not our work be consumed in the great testing fire, ‘but establish the work of our hands!’”

**Acts 27:1-3.** *And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus’ band. And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.* Even a Roman centurion could see that Paul was no ordinary prisoner and that it was quite safe to allow him privileges which others might have abused.

**4-12.** *And when we had launched from there, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein. And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarcely were come over against Cnidus, the wind not allowing us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone and, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called the Fair Havens; near whereunto was the city of Lasia. Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul. And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart there also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete and lies toward the south west and north west.* It was quite natural that the centurion should think that the master and the owner of the ship knew more about seafaring matters than Paul did, but the sequel proved that the Apostle knew more than they did, for he had access to information that was hidden from them.

**13.** *And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.* That was not the only voyage that commenced favorably and ended disastrously.

**14.** *But not long after that arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the*

*wind, we let her drive.* Apparently that was the only thing they could do. And, at times we may find that it will be well to follow their example. When we have done our best and can make no headway, we had better commit our vessel to the care of God and “let her drive” wherever He wills.

**16-19.** *And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, struck sail, and so were driven. And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.* They used all the means in their power and evidently Paul and his companions took their full share of the work that had to be done— “we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.”

**20-22.** *And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete, and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.* Paul might well remind the officers of the wise advice he gave them in Crete, but he did not rest content with that, but went on to cheer them as far as he dared, though he again warned them that they would lose their ship. To prove that he was not speaking without due authority, he added—

**23-20.** *For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God has given you all them that sail with you. Therefore, Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.* The next Chapter tells us that the “certain island was Melita, or Malta, as it is now called. In that respect, as in all others, Paul’s prophecy was literally fulfilled, for the ship was lost, but all on board were saved.

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

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

# **WRECKED, BUT NOT RECKLESS**

## **NO. 1070**

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 9, 1872,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“All hope that we should be saved was then taken away.”  
Acts 27:20.***

HERE was a case of extreme peril, in which there seemed to be no possibility whatever of any of the lives of nearly 300 persons being preserved. In this emergency the Apostle Paul resorted to prayer. We may avail ourselves of this privilege in the worst pinch. When things are so black that they cannot be any darker we may still pray. God is good at a dead lift. Our extremities, as we well know, are always His opportunities. When we can do nothing to help ourselves, let us pray and we can get help from God in everything. Or, after we have done the little we *can* do, let us leave all with God and resort to Him in prayer.

This is one case out of many in which prayer has averted peril while faith has grappled with fear and despair has been routed from the heart by a calm dependence on the Lord. Thus Paul was enabled by his supplication to save the lives of all that were in the ship. Do not think, dear Brothers and Sisters, then, that your prayers in time of extremity will prove fruitless. God enable you to pray with faith! Remember there never was a prayer of faith that failed yet! Heaven and earth shall pass away but this Truth of God shall never cease to be true, that God is the Hearer of prayer if we will but believe in Him. He that wavers must not expect to receive an answer, but he that is confident in his God shall never be confounded.

However, I am going to take the text out of its connection—I need to use it for different reasons and purposes. We have frequently known men to be in a condition in which they have said that all hope that they should be saved was taken away. We are going to speak to such tonight. Sometimes I have been glad to hear that cry and sometimes I have deplored it. Sometimes I have heartily sympathized with it. Upon those three phases of the cry we shall speak.

**I.** Sometimes, as I have said, when we have heard a man say that all hope that he shall be saved has been taken away, we have REJOICED TO HEAR HIM SAY SO. Does that appear to be a cruel statement? It is not meant to be. Let me explain and then I hope you will understand it. Multitudes of persons are sailing in what they think to be the good ship of self-

righteousness—they are expecting that they shall get to Heaven in her. But she never did carry a soul safely into the fair haven yet and she never will.

Self-righteousness is as rapid a road to ruin as outward sin itself. We may as certainly destroy ourselves by opposing the righteousness of Christ as by transgressing the Law of God. Self-righteousness is as much an insult to God as blasphemy and God will never accept it, neither shall any soul enter Heaven by it. Now, this vessel manages to keep on her way against all the good advice of Scripture. Often men have a soft south wind blowing and things go easy with them, and they believe that through their own doings they shall assuredly find the port of Peace. I am glad, therefore, when some terrific tempest overtakes this vessel and when men's hopes, through their own doings and their own feelings, are utterly wrecked.

I am glad when the old ship parts timber from timber—when she goes aground and breaks to pieces and men find safety in some other way—for whatever seemingly safety they may have today will only delude them. It must end in destruction and it is therefore a thousand mercies when they find it out soon enough to get another and a better hope of being saved rather than this, which will certainly deceive them. I remember very well when that terrific storm blew on my vessel. It was as good a vessel as any of you have, although I would be bound to say each of you would vindicate your own. The sails needed mending and here and there she needed a little touch of paint, but for all that she was sea-worthy and fit to be registered "A.1." at Lloyd's, and entered in the first class—at least so I thought.

And I remember when the storm blew over her and she went to pieces! I bless God that she went to pieces altogether, for I should have been kept on board to this very minute if I had not been washed off. I tried to cling to it to the very last plank but I was obliged to give it up and look somewhere else for help and safety. Now, it will happen, sometimes, when God is dealing with a self-righteous person who is delighting himself with the thought that he is all right—that he is not a great sinner, that he is a religious person, that he takes the sacraments, that he says his prayers, that he is as good as most people, perhaps rather better—and that if he does not go to Heaven he wonders who will.

I say it will happen to such a man, if God loves him, (if He does not care about him He will let him go on in his own way till he is destroyed, but if He has set His eternal love on him it will so happen)—that a storm will come, perhaps on a sudden, just as the tempest did to Paul's vessel, and twist him right round and make his gallant vessel in the storm to be like a thing that has lost its mind and will not obey the rudder and cannot be

quieted and controlled. Oh, we have seen them, sometimes, when they have woke up on a sudden and said, "I never knew this! I could not have believed it! I find myself to be a sinful creature, lost and undone and up to this moment I really thought I was as right as could be and almost fit for Heaven, and quite sure of it."

A terrible awakening it has been to some! They have been bewildered—they have almost lost their reason for a time when they have seen that the Law of God is *spiritual*—that it condemns us for sins of *thought* as well as sins of action! That it never was meant to justify us and cannot do so—by it comes the knowledge of sin and nothing more! When a man has found out that his heart is evil, noxious, deceitful—that in it there are enmities, murders, filthinesses of all sorts, that it is a nest of unclean birds, a den of ravenous beasts—when he has found all that out he says to himself, "If this is true, where am I? What can I do? Where can I look?" And he drifts before the pitiless storm and the horrible tempest, all hope of being saved beginning to fail him.

Yet it is really amazing how self-righteous persons will do their best to preserve their self-righteousness as long as they can. We have seen them pull in the boat like these mariners. They had got a boat behind the vessel. So there are some who have not only good works enough, but a few to spare. They have had a little righteousness over and above what they ordinarily required, so that they could boast and rejoice in it as a kind of security against accident or misadventure. They have hauled this in very soon under stress of weather and got the boat on deck for fear of losing it altogether. And then they have set to work right mightily to run under the lee, if they could, of some favorable shore as Paul's mariners did. "If we cannot be saved by good works," they say, "we will get under the lee of some Church and get ceremonies to help us out—Baptism, Confirmation, the Lord's Supper—we will just get into a snug place there so as to escape the storm."

Or else they have thought, "Well, we will make a profession of religion. We will join with some sort of Christian people, pass through their rites and take their sacraments and then, perhaps, our vessel need not go down after all, for, good as we are, with just a little shelter of profession of religion, we shall be able to weather the tempest." And when the hurricane has blown them out to sea and they have found that there is no defense for a soul in all the rites and rituals, the ordinances and observances of the Churches—that even the rites which God ordains for a testimony have no atoning efficacy—when they discover that only the precious blood can cleanse away sin and even that must be applied through the Holy Spirit by faith to give the conscience peace—alas, poor souls, their hope of being saved has become more slender than before!

But they will take to undergird the ship like these sailors did—they passed hawsers right round the vessel. So people try to gird their self-righteousness together—they pray more, read the Bible more, go to a place of worship more often—by any means they will endeavor to keep together the timbers that the storm had begun to loosen. Oh, I remember well how I went to a place of worship three times always on the Sunday thinking that surely I should get some good by it. When I woke in the morning I began to read religious books! I would have done anything and everything if I might have found peace through my own doing and feelings! But the storm blew too severely and the vessel could not be preserved even by such appliances as these.

And then you will notice that Paul's sailors set to work cutting down all that might hamper them. They took away the sails and masts and every superfluous thing, for the wind was strong. Men convicted of sin do the same. "Oh yes," they cry, "we cannot boast any longer. We must confess we are sinners! We acknowledge we have transgressed in some respects, but, Lord, accept our confessions. Receive them and in Your infinite mercy put away our sin because we have confessed it, because we have repented of it." They have given up a good deal, you see, but they still cling to the old ship as long as they can.

She must go to pieces or you cannot get them out of her! So the Lord sends the wind and the storm again breaks over them, gives them no rest or respite. Every timber creaks and the old crazy thing is ready to go to pieces. They go to the Word of God for comfort but, like the mariners in Paul's story, they get no food—they cannot find anything that can stay their souls, for there are no promises in God's Word for people that are self-righteous. There are no consolations in the whole Bible for those who can save themselves! Plenty of good words for *sinner*s and good words for those that are righteous in the righteousness of Christ—but for you good people, you Pharisees, it is all thunder and lightning from Genesis to Revelation—not a word of comfort, but all storms and hurricanes for you! And it is a great mercy when you feel that, too, and get battered and dashed till every timber is shivered and then you give it up.

We find that the sailors on board the vessel with Paul had not only been unable to get anything to eat for a long time, but they labored hard—they tried to pump the vessel. They had been cutting the masts away and reefing the sails, and doing everything necessary in the storm. They must have been cold and wet and altogether in confusion. Meanwhile, neither sun, nor moon, nor stars appeared. They had no compass as we have now-a-days—they could not tell where they were—they were all in the dark. And that is just the condition of a self-righteous soul when the Spirit of God blows with His rough north wind upon it and it comes to see

that, "By the works of the Law there shall no flesh be justified." It is an awful condition to be in, in some respects, but it is a most blessed one in others.

Mark this, dear Hearers, I desire nothing for you unconverted persons so much as to see you thoroughly convinced that there is nothing that *you* can do which can save you! My prayer is that you realize there is no merit whatever in anything that you can do or feel—that you are lost, utterly and helplessly lost apart from the interposition of Christ! I desire that you believe that only He can save you—that you cannot save yourselves, nor help Him to save you! From top to bottom, He, alone, must be your Savior! I do not need to stir you unconverted persons to activity at first—the first thing is to slay you! After that God must make you active.

You must lie dead at Christ's feet and then He will make you alive! You must confess that you are nothing and then He will be everything to you! You are simply to be empty and He will come and fill you. I know you will cry, "Well, I would give up all trust in myself, but I do need to feel deep convictions." Yes, the fact is that is only another way of trying to *bring something* to Christ. "But I must feel," says one. Yes, you shall feel enough if you come to Christ first, but He does not need you to bring any feelings to Him. "But my heart is so hard," says one. Do you expect to soften it yourself? "But I feel so unfit." Do you know that the only fitness you have got is the fitness of being unfit?

"Oh, but I am so utterly unworthy." Do you think He came to save the worthy? Do you ever expect to have any worthiness in yourself? Did not Christ die to save "the ungodly?" Is it not written that He came into the world to save "sinners?" Now, "the ungodly" and "sinners"—these are two terms in which I cannot see anything good even if I look them through and through with a microscope! They are bad, altogether bad—"ungodly" and "sinners"—yet these are the sort of people Christ came to save! Oh, that you had Divine Grace to put yourself down in that number! It is your *badness*, not your goodness that draws Christ to you as a Savior!

You had no goodness and therefore that could not bring Him from Heaven—it was because you were vile that He died for you to make you clean! It was because you were lost that He came to save you, that you might be lost no longer! I tell you, Sinner, your righteousness will be your ruin! But your sin will never ruin you if you will come and lay it upon Christ by the simple act of dependence upon Him. Oh, for such a storm as would wreck that vessel which is sailing under the flag of self-righteousness, that all hope of being so saved might be taken away from you!

Now, in doctrine and theory, my hearers, at least my regular hearers, all believe this. But for all that, it will have to become a matter of experi-

ence to you or you will never be saved! It is one thing to say, "I know I must be empty before Christ can fill me." It's a different thing to be empty. The stripping room is a place we do not like to go to—but Christ will never robe us till He strips us. We do not like the lancet that cuts out the proud flesh, but our good Physician will never flinch our soul's sores—He will cut out all that is bad and then will He make sound work of it. We must be leveled—brought down to the condition of being utterly undone or otherwise we shall never have the hand of Christ to come and lift us up into the condition of being saved by Him!

Thus much upon the first phase. There are times when we like to hear this cry.

**II.** But we have heard this same statement at other times when we have GREATLY DEPLORED IT. "All hope that we should be saved was taken away from us." I have heard some such lamentation as this from men who had certainly no self-righteousness but who had fallen into despair. They had perhaps committed some very gross sin. Perhaps they had been guilty of stifling conscience, or, possibly, they had grown careless while hearing the Word and they had gradually worked themselves into the belief that they must be lost. I meet with many—not so very many, but still with many—whose prevalent thought with regard to religion is, "All hope that I shall ever be saved is taken away from me!"

My dear Friend, are you here tonight? I should like to take you by the hand and speak very familiarly with you, for I am very sorry to hear you talk so. And I am sorry for these reasons. First, I am afraid that you will go and do something very wrong, for when a man gives himself up in despair, he is like the sere wood that is ready for the fire. "Because there is no hope," says the man, "I do not care what I do. As the old proverb has it, 'As well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb.' I shall be damned anyway and I may as well have my full swing of sin before I go to Hell."

Ah, despair has been employed by Satan to lead many men into desperate crimes which they would never have thought of if they had had a hope left! And therefore I am very much concerned about many of you that despair, for I do not know what you may do. Some have taken their own lives. Some have committed gross acts of crime. They have thought themselves useless and they have flung themselves away. Do not believe what Satan is telling you! There is hope! The hope that you may be saved is not altogether gone—no, I will tell you the very reverse before I have done. I am also exceedingly sorry that you should think as you do because I fear that now you are very likely to leave off hearing the Gospel.

I have met with some who said that they would never go any more to the House of God because it was no good. They had been a great many years and seen a great many converted, but it had never touched them

and therefore it was no use. They were only adding to their responsibilities and they should never participate in Grace. I remember one person whose case I cannot think of without deep sorrow. I think I said one Sunday that there were some here who had heard me for many many years and if they never meant to be converted or turn to God, I almost wished they would make room for somebody else who would. And there was one who heard that who has never come again and I do not think he ever will. The word of rebuke that was only meant to startle the conscience awakened an obstinacy within the soul!

Oh, I hope it won't be so with any of you! I hope you will never say, "It is no use, and, therefore, I will not come." A dear Sister told me this afternoon a sweet instance of how useful it may become to persevere in hearing the Word of God. She says she had prayed a long time for her landlord who was an old man and very deaf, and not likely to get good by coming here. She had lent him the sermons and he had often read them with great attention. And it pleased God, suddenly, to give him his hearing so that he came here and heard one sermon and found the Savior and went home to his bed and died. One sermon saved his soul so that he could rejoice in Christ! Don't give up hearing, I pray you.

I would sooner you came here and went to sleep than that you should not come at all, for perhaps when you woke up a saving word might get in somehow or other—God might put it in and it might be blessed to your soul. No, don't say, "There is no hope," for, possibly—and this would be almost as bad—if you say, "There is no hope," you will keep on coming out of custom, but you won't listen with any attention because you will feel, "It is no good." I have heard of a boy who was noticed to lean forward to catch every word of the preacher, and his mother said to him, "William, what makes you so very attentive?" "Because," said the boy, "our minister said that if there was a sentence in the sermon that was likely to do us good Satan would try so that we should not hear it, and therefore I need to hear all that is said in the hope that God may bless me."

I do believe, if you were to hear like *that* you would get good one of these days! At any rate, if God does not mean me to speak to you, I should be very glad if He would do it by somebody else so that you may get a blessing. But really you must not, you must *never* give way to that feeling that there is no hope. And I shall tell you why. First, it is quite contrary to Scripture. Do you find the passage there that says there is no hope for you? You say you think God has determined to cast you away. Where did you find that? Did you read it anywhere within the pages of this Book? I know you never have read the secret decrees of God. No one has—not even Gabriel can pry between the folded leaves. Do not oppose Scripture!

Don't go in the teeth of it, for the Scripture says, "Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

Why do *you* say He will cast you out? "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." Why do you say He cannot save *you*? He says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do you not labor? Are you not a laboring man? Are you never heavy laden? Have you no trouble, nothing that depresses you? Well then, if the description suits you, He bids you come to Him, and He says, "I will give you rest." Do you not believe Him? Do you think the Scriptures must all be untrue and your despairing notion must be the only fact? No, dear Friend, you need not tantalize yourself with any such idea because it is opposed to all fact!

There are many here present who were sinners and seekers like you now are and they have found peace. Now if they have been delivered out of all their distresses, why should not you? You say, "But I have sinned too much." I could find somebody that has sinned more, I daresay. And if I could not, even then you might venture on the promise, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Do not despair, I pray you, for that is to insult the great Father who always receives the prodigals that come back to Him. You say that He cannot save *you*? Why you deny His Omnipotence! You say that He will not save *you*? Why you distrust His mercy! Nothing makes Him happier than to forgive sinners! It is a great part of the joy of God in that portion of His Nature which He reveals to us, to display His Grace towards the undeserving sons of men.

Moreover, you grieve Jesus Christ when you say there is no hope that you shall be saved. Do you think His blood cannot cleanse you? What? Is there some new sin come up that Jesus did not know of? Is there some fresh transgression which at last has overcome the precious blood? You know this morning we talked about the battle between sin and love, [**IN-GRATITUDE OF MAN, #1055**] and we showed you how they wrestled together and how Sin seemed to be all but omnipotent, but Love kept on and won the day and gave Sin a deadly fall and set its foot upon it. Never suppose that Christ's love is going to be conquered by your sin! I will say one thing to you—if you will go to Christ and He rejects you, I have done with preaching—it is in vain. If you go to Christ and He rejects you, I will mention it tomorrow—I will promulgate it next Sunday—that I have been mistaken about Christ and that He does reject sinners.

I beseech you, put it to the test! Some of us have tried it. I went to Him with a rope about my neck—I mean I went conscious that I deserved to be lost. And I thought when brightest hopes elated me that perhaps He might, after a long while, receive me and I might get a little hope and perhaps slink into Heaven through some hole or corner. But oh, when I came

to Him, He received me in such a bounteous manner that the like of it was never known except by those that have tried Him, too! He forgave my sins without a rebuke! He received me as it were into His heart and gave me to rejoice in His finished salvation! He is a good Savior, a precious Savior! Oh, that the Spirit of God would lead sinners here to go and try Him!

Once again let me admonish you. Don't despair, dear Heart, don't despair, for you do injury to the Holy Spirit—you dishonor Him if you do—for there is nothing which the blessed Spirit cannot move out of your way which is now an impediment. If your heart is like the nether millstone, He can turn it into wax. If you cannot feel your sin, He can make you feel. What if you cannot believe? He can give you faith! What if you are dead? He can give you life! The Holy Spirit is God Himself—and is anything too hard for the Lord? No, no! You must not go away and say, "All hope that I shall be saved is taken away from me." Have you fallen, Sister, for by that name I will call you? Have you forfeited your good name? Yet all hope that you shall be saved is not taken away! Jesus Christ receives such as you are and forgives them and cleanses them and puts them into the family.

Young Man, have you done wrong? Are you afraid of being found out? Confess the wrong that you have done and make restitution and come to God, for there is hope for you yet. Backslider, have you come here tonight? Have you dared to show your face here again? We are glad to see you, for all hope that you should be saved is not taken away from us though it may seem to be so to your stricken conscience. Come back, come back, come and welcome to the Savior's feet and you shall find mercy! Is there one that has said, "Well, I can believe all this for others, but not for myself. I am the one out of the catalog. I am the odd man. There is nothing that can ever deal with me"?

You are the very man I am seeking after! Your hope of being saved has been wrecked but there is a better hope than the one you have lost! There is life in a *look* at the crucified Savior! If you will but come and throw yourself at the foot of His Cross and let His drops of blood fall on your soul, you shall be cleansed, yes, you shall be saved tonight! The Lord God, the Father of mercies, grant to despairing souls to find peace and life just now.

**III.** I pass on to the last phase of this cry. At times I have heard the exclamation, "All hope that we should be saved is taken away," when I have SYMPATHIZED IN IT—sympathized with those who uttered it because not once nor twice, but many a time have *I* felt the same. Children of God do not always find it smooth sailing to Heaven. Even in the good boat of Christ-Crucified there are storms. Christ may be in the vessel but He may be asleep and the ship may be tossed with the tempest.

I shall describe with great brevity what I believe to be with some Christians a frequent experience. The light of God's Countenance is taken away from us. We were sitting yesterday at the banquet of wine with Christ, with His banner of love waving over us and now, today, we cry, "He has brought me into darkness, not into light! He has turned against me in His fierce anger! Oh, that I knew where I might find Him that I might come even to His feet, for, truly, He is turned against me and He smites me with a heavy hand!"

At such seasons it will happen that our graces will refuse to act. Like some flowers that shut up their cups when the sun is gone, so will our love and our faith shut themselves up. They are reflectors—when there is no light outside they cannot reflect any within. I have known what it is to search my heart through and through without being able to discover any spark of love to Jesus Christ in it, yes, and to bring my soul to the closest investigation, with diligent enquiry asking, "Is this faith, or is it presumption? Is it really trusting in Christ, or is it all a fond persuasion of my own, an unwarranted confidence, a false security?"

At such times you may rest assured that the devil will cast in suggestions to torment us. He is an old coward—he always strikes the saints when they are down. I only wish he would meet me on some sunny day when my faith is strong and Christ is with me—I would give him a wound or two for himself! But, alas, he comes on us in the dark, when we have been slipping and tumbling down about in that Valley of Humiliation where we are afraid of the Valley of the Shadow of Death! And there he stands right in the way and swears that he will spill our soul's blood and farther on the road to Heaven we shall never go! And then, if Satan comes and his tyrannical voice is heard, the dogs that did lay quiet within our soul begin to howl and the corruptions that we almost thought dead and buried suddenly lift their hydra heads!

It seems, then, as though the fountains of the great deep were broken up and a very Noah's flood, a mighty deluge, breaks forth to inundate even the mountains of our last hope till we seem to have no chance of escape and the soul is ready to die. Perhaps at this moment we turn to the Word of God and it seems all a blank. The very promises that used to cheer us refuse to speak to us! We go where the saints of God go to hear the Gospel but we find no comfort there. The Word appears to condemn rather than console us. Perhaps at that very minute we are assailed with some temporal trouble and when spiritual trouble and temporal trouble come together and two seas meet—ah, it is hard for the poor boat to keep above the water at all!

Yet have we known it so. There has been a perplexity about money, or an anxiety about a sick child, or sore disquietude concerning a dear sick

wife or a dire apprehension that the health of our body, or the stability of our circumstances is menaced. A strange fever, a wild deliriousness has seized us. At the same time there has been this horrible thought, "After all may I not have been deluded?" and Satan howls out, "Why, of course you were! *You* are no child of God!" and the flesh prevails awhile over the spirit and conscience itself becomes a tormentor and upbraids and accuses us! Then alas for our poor vessel—it seems as if all hope that we should be saved were utterly taken away.

Well, but cannot we turn to prayer at such times as that? Yes Brothers and Sisters, and that is the *only* thing we can do. And perhaps the only prayer we can get at then is a groan or a sigh and it is a thousand mercies that if we cannot pray we can groan, or, if we cannot get to a groan, we can breathe and our very breath of desire is accepted of God. When we are so down in the dust, so crushed and broken and bruised that we could not put half-a-dozen sentences together—and would not dare to utter even one as children of God—we may *still* come as sinners and say, "Lord receive a poor worm of the dust and if I never was Your child, make me one now. Take me just as I am! I come to You just as I thought I did before, and sink or swim, I rest my guilty soul on Christ."

Now why I have introduced this at all is just this. There are many young Believers who get into such a squall and do not know what to make of it. They say, "Why, had I been a child of God I could not have drifted into this frightful tempest." Why do you say so? Did not David go through it? He said, "All Your waves and Your billows have gone over me." You must be very little acquainted with the history of the people of God if you think that they are strangers to these conflicts. There are some old mariners here that I could call up into the pulpit, if it were needed, to tell you that they have done business on great waters many years and they have encountered many storms. You cannot expect to be upon these seas and not be tossed to and fro sometimes.

The strongest faith that ever was in this world has sometimes faltered. Even Abraham had times when his faith was exceedingly weak, though, indeed, at other times it staggered not at the promise through unbelief. David was a great man in battle but he waxed faint and almost slain. So you will find the bravest of God's servants have their times when it is hard to hold their own—when they would be glad to creep into a mouse-hole if they could there find themselves a shelter. But this is the point, dear Brothers and Sisters—no soul that rests in Jesus will ever be wrecked! You may have the storms and be tossed about, but you will come to land—be assured of that. The old story tells us of Caesar in the storm, when he said to the trembling captain, "Fear not! You carry Caesar and all his fortunes!"

Now Christ is in the same boat with all His people. If one of His members can perish, He must perish, too. “Strong language!” you say. Well, it is all in that verse—“Because I live you shall live also.” You know, if you have got a man and you put him in the water, as long as his head is above the water you cannot drown him. There are his feet down in the mud—they will not drown, and he cannot drown. There are his hands in the cold stream—the hands are not drowned, cannot be—because his head is all safe.

Now look at our glorious Head! See where He is exalted in the highest heavens, at the right hand of the Father! The devil cannot drown me and cannot drown you if you are a member of Christ’s body, because your Head is safe! Your Head is safe and you are safe, too! Rest in this, that your faith may be *shaken* but it cannot be destroyed if you are resting upon Christ! Your little temporary foundations that may have overlain Christ may move, but the rock of Christ Jesus never can! You remember Mr. James Smith telling a story of a good woman whom he visited upon her dying bed? He said to her, “Well, my Sister, how are you? Are your spirits good?” “Yes,” she said—

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

“But,” said the minister, “don’t you feel yourself sinking?” “Sir,” she said with surprise, “What do you mean?” He repeated his question, “Don’t you feel yourself in these times weak and sinking?” She said to him, “Minister, I would not have believed that *you* would have put such a question, but as you have I must answer it. What do you say? Sinking? Sinking? Did you ever hear of anyone sinking through a rock? If I stood upon the sand I might sink, but standing upon the Rock, how can I sink?” Glory be to God in Christ, we are on that Rock and there is no sinking for us! God bring you all there and to Him shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

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# THE CHURCH—THE WORLD'S HOPE

## NO. 2952

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1905.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
IN THE YEAR 1863.

*“Lo, God has given you all them that sail with you.”*  
*Acts 27:24.*

THE Apostle Paul had given some very good advice to the mariners of this ship. They had thought fit to reject it. What then? Now some of us are of such short temper that if our advice should be rejected, we would be in a huff and never offer any more—and we should feel some sort of pleasure in seeing those persons get into mischief who were so foolish as not to take our sage counsel! Not so the Apostle Paul. After he had prudently abstained for some time from saying anything—for there is a time to be silent—he at length gave proof of his unabated affection in them by the good advice which he offered. Let us take a lesson from him and let us forgive our brethren even to 70 times seven and, if, after having done our very best, we still find our advice rejected, let us persevere in our work of love.

One other remark. Note the comfort that was given to the Apostle. He had been long out at sea and, with the rest, had suffered much. The comfort given him was, “Fear not, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar.” No very great comfort, you will say. It seems no more comfort than if the angel had said, “You can’t be drowned, for you are to be devoured by a lion.” Some such comfort Bishop Ridley took to himself when, being rowed up the river to the burning, a little storm coming on and the watermen being much afraid, he said, “Fear not, boatmen, the bishop that is doomed to be burned cannot be drowned.” Yet there was real comfort in the words of the angel, for it was the Apostle’s intense desire to preach Christ before Nero. He wished to proclaim the Gospel at Rome—he had had great trouble of heart for those who had not seen his face in the flesh and, therefore, whether Nero was a lion or not, he was but too glad to face him for Christ’s sake!

And when a man has no self remaining, but has given himself up as a living sacrifice for Christ, that which would be a terror to another man becomes a comfort to him. “I am now ready to be offered,” said the Apostle. And it was given to him even as a comfort that he must be offered up by some cruel death and not escape by the milder method of a passage to Heaven by sea—and he found comfort in the fact that those with him would be preserved. It had been the subject of his prayer, so

that he was cheered not only with the prospect of himself prophesying at Rome, but with the hope of seeing all his comrades safe on shore.

I have two or three things to talk of, so let me proceed with them at once.

**I.** The first practical observation founded upon my text is this—A GODLY MAN MAY OFTEN BE THROWN INTO AN ILL POSITION FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS.

Paul was put into a ship—into a ship among thieves and other criminals. He was put into a ship among sailors and soldiers, who were none of the best in those days, but he was put there *for their good*. This, then, I would lay down as a general theory—there are multitudes of Christians who are in places very uncomfortable and, perhaps, very unsuitable for them, but who are put there for the good of others.

*If they were not so placed, they would not be like their Lord.* Why was Christ on earth at all but for the good of sinners? Why does He sit there at a publican's table? Why eats He bread with a harlot? Why does He permit an unclean woman to come and wash His feet? As for Himself, 'tis pain to Him, pain to His holy Nature to come into contact with evil. But our Lord was the Great Physician and where should a physician be but among the sick? Now, as you and I are to be made like our Lord, we must not marvel if sometimes we are thrown, as He was, into company which we would not choose for its own sake, but into which Providence puts us that we may do good.

Moreover, *is not this the reason why the saints of God are on earth at all?* Why does He not send an express chariot to take them at once to Heaven? There is no necessity for saints being on earth that I know of, except for the good of their fellow men. Sanctification might be completed in a moment. As for all the rest, it is already done. God "has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Why do we stay here, then, at all, but that we may be salt in the midst of putrefaction—light in the midst of darkness—life in the midst of death? The Church is the world's hope! As Christ is the hope of the Church, so the Church is the hope of the world! The saints become, under Christ, the world's saviors. Then we must not marvel, being here for this very purpose, if Christ does throw us like a handful of salt, just where the putrefaction is the worst! Or if He should cast us, as He has often done with His saints before, where our influence is most needed.

And remember, dear Friends, that *there have been special cases in Scripture where the putting of a person into an unpleasant condition has been a great gift to his fellow men.* There is Joseph in the dungeon. Why is he there? Why, with his haggard look and shaggy beard, is he sitting down in the round dungeon tower of the chief of the jailers? He is put there that he may relieve his fellow prisoners in their distress. And yet, more fully, that he may provide food for his ungrateful brothers who had sold him for a slave! The salvation of Israel's offspring depended upon Joseph being put into prison. Look at a more majestic case. There, upon the ruins of a once glorious temple, sits a grand old man, weeping as

though he had been a masculine Niobe. Tears flow down both his cheeks, and these are the words he utters, "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" It is old Jeremy. Why is he there? Why is he not in Babylon? Why is he not in some place where he could be comfortably cared for? Because Israel needs him. The women that flock around him like stricken deer need his comfort. And the sinners in Zion that hide their faces from his weeping eyes need him to pour out those burning syllables which make their consciences start, seared though they are!

If you should say that these are two instances which are above your head, let me ask you why was that little maid taken prisoner by the Syrians and carried away from her own country? It was not a pleasant thing for a child to be torn away from her family and become a slave, even in the house of the kind Naaman. Why was she there? Naaman the leper must be healed—the Syrian king must know that the Lord of Israel can work wonders—and, therefore, that little maid must be carried away and she must be where otherwise she would not wish to be placed!

I need not give any more proofs that such has been often the case. Instead of that, let me give instances. There is a young man here—he is hardly a man yet—whose father, in binding him an apprentice, made a mistake. Parents should be very careful whom they choose to be instructors of their sons. They should not wantonly put a youth who has been trained under pious influences, under subjection to an ungodly man, however business-like he may be. Well, evidently your parents made a mistake and now you are in a family where religion is lightly spoken of. You get out on the Sabbath. You don't get out at other times, but if you mention religion, you are either met with a sneer or, perhaps, with something worse! Well, young Believer, this is a hard trial for you. We do not generally send our lads to battle, but our Master knows how to sometimes do the greatest feats by the feeblest instrumentality! What if God should intend to bless your master's family through you? What if He has ordained to send you to that house that in the garb of an apprentice, you may be a missionary of the Cross? It may be so. Opportunities will occur to you—there will be fitting occasions for the use of them—and you will see God's wisdom even in your father's mistake!

Another of you happens to be one of a family, not by mistake, but in the common course of Providence. Electing love has fixed on you and left an ungodly parent behind—and brothers and sisters run the downward road. Do not be too sad over this. I do not know whether this may not be a cause for joy to you. God has this day lighted a lamp in your father's house which will never go out! Inasmuch as you are converted, salvation has come to your house. Oh, watch for your brother's soul! Pray for your sister's conversion! Take your parents in the arms of faith before God and who can tell but that it shall prove to be the best thing in your life, that you were thus placed in a family where Christ was not feared? Or you are a workman—I know a great many such instances—and you have

come up from the country for the sake of better work. It may be that in the country you worked in some little shop where there was a godly man with you and now you have come into one of our large shops in London and got work. There is a deal of swearing on both sides of you and if you are known to go to a House of Prayer, the other men mark you out and call you some odd name or other. I know you say, "I wish I could get into another place. I will quit this work and go somewhere else." Don't do it! It is very likely that God has sent you there just as He sent Paul into that ship! Instead of leaving, gird up your loins like a man and cry to God to give you all them that sail with you, that they may yet be saved! Your advent into that workshop may be as if an angel had come straight from Heaven and gone down to the vilest place to make it ring with the songs of joy!

Possibly, dear Friends, to multiply instances, some of you may happen to live in a very low locality. In such a crowded place as London and especially now that the railways make the houses of artisans so scarce, you may have to live where you do not like to live. On both sides of you, you know, the houses are not what you would wish them to be. And down in the court on Sunday what a scene there is! You went home this morning and you saw people in their shirt-sleeves lolling about and waiting at the corner till the bars opened that they might go in and drink. And you will go home tonight and see what you do not like to see. Now, I do not know that you should be in a hurry to get out of that place. It is just possible that you are put there for some end or design! Who can tell the benefit your good example may be? And if you are bold enough to speak a word for Christ, there may be a neighbor in that court, or in that alley who, though he never did go up to the House of God before, will go with you. It may have been written in the book of God's Predestination that you must pass through that Samaria, so that you might find that fallen woman and that she might be brought to Christ—who knows?

And there are some of you going to emigrate. Some dear friends who have been among us for years find it best to cross the seas. I would not weep, my Brothers and Sisters—I would not sorrow at your departure, for who knows, unpleasant though it is to tear oneself from one's connections and to leave one's native land, you may go forth to carry Seed that shall be wafted over a continent and bring forth fruit in years to come! Let a Christian be where he may, however unpleasant to himself, he cannot be out of place if Providence puts him there. Yes, and if what some of you dread so much should come to pass—if, in your old age, the workhouse should be the only place that is to receive you—ah, it is not pleasant to look forward to that! But I can conceive of a Christian pauper doing more good for God in the house of poverty than many a peer has been able to do in Parliament! I can imagine you shedding a light and luster along the walls which shall rebuke the harshness of those that are masters, and kindle light, and love, and hope in some bosoms that had grown strangers to all those Heavenly things! Good Master, if You shall cast us into a ship, we will ask You to give us all that

sail with us! And if you put us anywhere, by Your Grace we will look about us to see what we can do there to honor You!

I must not leave this point, even though time flies, until I have made one or two more remarks rapidly.

*Do not get into these places of your own choice.* “Put your finger in the fire,” said one to a martyr, “and see whether you can burn.” “No,” he said, “I don’t see the use of that. If I put my own finger into the fire, I have no promise from God about it. But if He calls me to burn for His sake, I have no doubt He will give me strength to do it.” You have no business to pick bad places to live in—you have no right to expose yourself to danger. That is a foolish thing. *But if God shall do it—take this for my next remark—do not be in a hurry to undo it.* You may leap out of the frying pan into the fire. You may go from bad to worse. It is just possible that if the present place has one set of temptations, the next may have another set. For my part, I do not like changing temptations. I know my old temptations—not as well as I would like to know them, but still, if the devil could change the whole set of my temptations, I do not know what would become of me! I think it is better keep the old ones. You have been tried in one point—you have got used to it and are growing stronger in that point.

You have no need to run after a fresh ordeal, but if God has placed you there, be like Paul—*be very prudent.* Do not talk very much. There is wisdom in holding your tongue. Paul gave his advice, but he abstained a long time before he gave it again. He timed himself and there is nothing like watching opportunities. You young persons, especially, if you live in families and want to do them good, take care that you are willing to do good in temporal things. Lend a hand when they need your help. Paul and Luke helped to throw the tackling into the sea—so the chapter tells us—yes, and the sailors liked them all the better for it. They said, “There is Luke, a passenger, and here is Paul, a prisoner—they are, neither of them, bound to work, but they have buckled to and helped us! We will listen to them, for they are very handy fellows.” Young man, try and make the best use of yourself. If you are placed in a family that is irreligious, make them value you—show them that you will do anything you can to serve them. They will not believe in the reality of your spiritual affection unless you show a temporal affection, too. And when the time comes, do not hesitate to speak, but let your speaking be mainly by your actions!

The best sermon Paul preached was when he took bread and gave thanks. He did not do that for show. It was just in the daily course of his habitual godliness that the man of God came forth boldly before their eyes. Do not conceal your godliness from those around you! Though at first they may laugh at you and despise you, who can tell but that, like Paul, you may gain influence till they will do anything you tell them? And like Paul, by means of that influence, you may save all that are in the house and so the text may come true of you, “God has given you all them that sail with you.”

**II.** A second lesson suggested to us is this. WHEREVER WE ARE CAST, WE SHOULD ANXIOUSLY ASK OF GOD ALL THE SOULS THAT SAIL WITH US.

God says He gave to Paul all that sailed with him and, therefore, I conclude that Paul had asked Him to do so. How many were they? Some 270 and yet He gave them all to Paul! Father, some seven or eight make up your family, or, if it is of larger dimensions, at least you have not, in all your kinsfolk, I should think, so many as the two hundred and seventy! Do not, in your prayers, therefore, leave out one child, or one connection, or one friend. Pray to God for them all!

They will be of all sorts. Let me describe those that sailed with Paul. There was one good one—that was Luke. Well, Luke was saved. You have one pious son, or one converted daughter. Continue in your prayer till you see that child safely landed with you in Heaven. Perhaps you have one courteous passenger with you in the ship, like Julius, the centurion, of whom we read in the third verse of the chapter, that he courteously entreated Paul. Be very earnest in prayer for those who are willing to hear the Word! O how good it is if we have in our families brothers and sisters, or servants, or masters, who treat the Word of God with deference and respect! Let not these be omitted from your supplications—anxiously pray for them.

Perhaps you have among your connections some knowing ones. Paul had. There was the master of the ship—he knew better than Paul, or, at least, he preferred his own conceit to Paul's counsel. Do not give up the self-conceited, the suspicious, the quibbling, the skeptical—pray for them till you have all in the ship! Possibly, no, *certainly*, you have some worldly friends. You have a son, perhaps, who is exceedingly careful about this world, but careless about the next—do not give him up. There was the owner of the ship on board. All he cared about was getting his corn to Rome in time to catch the next market. He did not care what became of the sailors, or what became of Paul. So, pray for your worldly relatives—do not leave any of them out.

And then it may be that you have on board, or in connection with you, some who are very careless and some who even add to this carelessness, cruelty and a lack of gratitude—such were the soldiers. They counseled to kill the prisoners, including Paul—Paul who had preserved them, but, nevertheless, Paul prayed for the soldiers. Do not, I pray you, leave out the most unkind, the most flinty-hearted of your friends and neighbors! Or it may be that you have a cunning and selfish friend. Do not forget him. Such were the sailors. Under pretense of casting anchors out of the ship, they were attempting to get into a boat and escape—and leave the ship and its hundreds of passengers to perish in the storm! Paul prayed for the sailors. Do the same. There were many on board who could not swim, but he prayed that those who could not swim might be saved. And there were some who could swim, and he prayed for them quite as much as for those who could not. So you have some that are converted and

some that are not—you have some that are moral and some that are not—yet plead with the Lord for all them that sail with you!

I want you to notice, especially you who are parents—something that the Apostle did *not* pray for. I do not read that he ever prayed, “Lord, save the ship.” Now, the ship is like your family name, like your family dignity. Do not pray about that, but cry, “Lord, give me my children’s souls and let my name be blotted out, if You will, as long as their souls are saved.” And I do not find that the Apostle ever prayed about the cargo. He let them fling the wheat out and never troubled about that. So, you need not pray about your wealth. Put that into God’s hands and say, “Lord, do as You will with my sons and daughters, only save their souls. I don’t ask fortunes for them, I ask Grace. I would, if it were Your will, that they might always have food and never need bread, but still, Lord, I would rather see their souls saved and see them in poverty than see them rich and their souls lost.”

Moreover, I do not find that Paul made any conditions in his prayer. He did not tell the Lord *when* he wanted these people saved. And so you are not to expect that God will save your children just when you please. You may never live to see it—it may be when you are dead and gone—but still plead earnestly that God will give you all of them. And Paul did not make a stipulation as to *how* it should be done. I remember my mother saying to me, “I prayed that you might be a Christian, but I never prayed that you might be a Baptist.” But, nevertheless, I became a Baptist, for, as I reminded her, the Lord was able to do for her exceedingly above what she asked or thought—and He did it! She expected, of course, that I should be an Independent. Well, as long as your children are saved, you need not put any conditions as to the mode. Sooner see your son and daughter go to the Established Church, saved, than see them go to your own place of worship and be lost. We like to see them go with us to our place of worship. I think it is right that they should. And it is a great joy to a Christian’s heart to see all his children walking with him to the same sanctuary. But that is a mere trifle compared with the solemn matter of seeing them saved!

And, once more, though Paul did get them all saved, yet he did not ask God to save them without means. Nor did it please God to do so, either, for though the means were contemptible, yet, they were means—“Some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass that they all escaped safely to land.” We must try to put the “boards and broken pieces of the ship” in the way of those we wish to see saved. We must try to give them a plank to float on to share on in our earnest instructions and our indefatigable exertions to bring them to know the Lord.

Now, dear Friends, having pointed the arrow, I will try to shoot it. Surely you who love the Lord will take up this matter from this time forth and ask the Lord to give you all them that sail with you!

**III.** As we should ask for all, so WE SHOULD LABOR FOR THE CONVERSION OF ALL THAT SAIL WITH US.

There were two Athenians who were to be employed by the republic in some great work. The first one had great gifts of speech. He stood up before the Athenian populace and addressed them, describing the style in which the work should be done and depicting his own qualifications and the congratulations with which they would receive him when they saw how beautifully he had finished all their designs. The next workman had no power of speech, so, standing up before the Athenian assembly, he said, "I cannot speak, but all that So-and-So has said, I will do." They chose him—wisely chose him—believing he would be a man of deeds, while the other would probably be a man of words. Now, if you are men of deeds, you will be the best men! He that only prays for a thing, but does not work for it, is like the workman that could talk well. He that works as well as prays is the best workman to be employed in the Master's service!

It may be that you will say, "But what am I to do? How can I be the means of saving all them that sail with me?" Well, the first thing you can do is to *begin early with good advice*. Paul gave his advice before the storm came. As soon as ever your children can understand anything, let them know about Christ! Begin early. A certain minister called, some time ago, to see a mother, having heard that a child about 12 years old was dead. The mother was in very deep distress and the pastor was not at all surprised at that. He talked to her about the Lord's giving and the Lord's taking away, when she suddenly stopped him and said, "Yes, Sir, I know the consolations which may be offered to a mother who has lost her child, and I appreciate them all. But I have a sting in my conscience that you cannot remove. There is a venom in my grief that you cannot cure." He asked her what that was, and she said, "I have had it on my conscience to speak to my boy solemnly and privately about his soul for this last year past, but my deceitful heart has always said, 'Do it tomorrow.' And I thought"—(here she burst into tears and the pastor had to wait awhile till she could resume her story), "I thought that as his mind was opening and he was 12 years of age, I would now do it. Yesterday morning I meant to do it—the very morning he took ill I thought I would do it! And when I heard him say that he had a headache, I was glad of it, thinking that while I was soothing him, he would be more ready to hear a mother's words. But, oh, Sir, before I had an opportunity of speaking to him, he was much worse and I had to take him to bed. And when he was in bed, he fell asleep. I sent for the physician, but my child had soon fallen into unconsciousness and he was shortly after removed from me—he has gone before God and I never solemnly and privately talked to him about his soul. That is a grief you cannot remove." O mothers and fathers, never have that sting! Your children may die—begin with them now—that they may not die before you have had an opportunity of telling them the way of salvation!

But after having given this early advice, *you must not think the work is done*. Your boy may forget it. He may turn out a wild youth and run away from you, but continue in prayer. And let me say to you, continue in

*family prayer.* I think if we were to look into those cases where the sons and daughters of Christian people turn out badly, it would be found to be usually the parents own fault. I think you would find that they neglected to pray with their children. O dear Friends, there can be no ordinance more likely to be blest than that Heavenly institution of family prayer, when you can go there together and, in the presence of the child, pray for his soul and mother and father can unite their hearts in the desire that their offspring may live before God! Paul continued to pray. Follow Paul's example and you may hope to see God give you all them that sail with you.

And then remember, dear Friends, *if you would have your children saved, there is something you must not do.* If Paul had prayed for these people and then had gone down below into the hold with an auger and had begun boring holes in the ship, you would have said, "Oh, it is no use that scoundrel praying, for look, he is scuttling the ship! He is praying to God to save them and then going straight down and doing the mischief." You parents who are inconsistent—you mothers who do not keep your promises—you fathers who talk as you ought not to talk—you careless, prayerless parents, I do not ask you to pray for your children! Pray for yourselves, first. It would be an awful mockery for you to talk about wishing your children to go to Heaven. You are dragging them to Hell! You may think that your son will not swear. Why should he not swear if his father does? Do you think the young cubs will not roar if the old lion sets the example? Of course they will! You will see your children multiplied images of your own iniquity! Let our conduct be consistent. Let our everyday life be pure and holy and so shall we hope to see our children and our connections saved.

And I do think, dear Friends, as the Apostle Paul was very anxious to point out to them the way in which they might be saved, telling them that the sailors must stay in the ship and they must do this and that, so *we should be very careful to explain to our children, neighbors and connections, the way of salvation.* And I think we ought to do this, as much as possible, in private ways. I will tell you an anecdote—A good bishop of the Methodist Church, Bishop Arsbury, in travelling on horseback through South Carolina about a 100 years ago, saw a Negro sitting quite close to the edge of a forest, fishing with a line. This Negro was an old man called, Punch, well known for his dissolute conduct and filthy speech. The bishop, as soon as he saw him, proceeded deliberately to dismount, tied his horse to a tree and went and sat down by the bank, letting his feet hang over the edge, like Punch's. Finding that the Negro was willing to talk, and pleased with his affability, he began to talk to him about his soul's concern. He told him about the ruin of the Fall, about the result of sin, about the Redeemer, about faith and about the sweet invitations of Christ to the sinner to come to him and live.

Punch had never heard anything like it. And when the bishop had done, he said, "Now I will sing you a song." Punch was mighty fond of songs and the bishop sang to him that hymn beginning—

***“Plunged in a gulf of dark despair,  
We wretched sinners lay,  
Without one cheerful beam of hope,  
Or spark of glimmering day.  
With pitying eyes, the Prince of Grace  
Beheld our helpless grief,  
He saw—and, oh, amazing love!—  
He ran to our relief.  
Down from the shining seats above,  
With joyful haste He fled,  
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,  
And dwelt among the dead.  
He spoiled the powers of darkness thus,  
And broke our iron chains—  
Jesus has freed our captive souls  
From everlasting pains.”***

When he had sung through the hymn, he mounted his horse and resumed his journey as a bishop should do when he has done his work. The Negro went home and masticated and digested what he had heard—and if you had been on the plantation, some months later, you would have seen the old hut where the Negro lived crowded with the poor neglected sons of Africa—and who was preaching? Why, the Negro who was fishing by the rivers' bank had now become a fisher of souls! Months went on—the holy flame had begun to spread, the overseer was alarmed and went down to Punch's cabin to put a stop to it. Punch was preaching. He stopped outside to listen to what was said—conviction pierced his heart. He went in, fell on his knees and joined in prayer—and throughout that province the Gospel mightily spread and prevailed!

Oh, what you might do, dear Friends, if you would talk like this! You men and women do not need to be preachers in order to do good! I don't know—but I can guess why the devil ever invented pulpit gowns and bibs and all that sort of distinction between clergymen and laymen. I am no clergyman—there is no such distinction in the New Testament. We are all Christians if we are converted—and there is no other distinction. We are either Brothers and Sisters in Christ, or else, “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.” It is sometimes asked, “Ought laymen to preach?” “Nonsense! Any man may preach if he has the ability. I do not believe, in my soul, that there is authority for saying, “*These men are to preach and these people are to talk of Christ—and all the rest of you are to hold your tongues and listen.*” No, no, no! Let every man of you preach! Let every woman among you, in her own sphere, talk and tell of what the Lord has done for her soul. I do believe it is the invention of Satan to lift up some few men above the rest and say, “Only some of you are to fight the Lord's battles.” “Up guards and at them!”—not your colonels only, but every man in the ranks—not here and there, a lieutenant, but EVERY man! “England expects every man”—not merely the captains, but every man—“to do his duty.” And Christ expects every man—not here and there one that is paid for doing it—the minister—but

every man to tell what God has done for his soul. Do this and who can tell what good may come of it?

Still—and here I shall conclude—*never be satisfied without clinching the whole work with prayer*. Paul, You see, did not get those that were in the ship by his works—God gave them to Him. Everything is of Grace. Paul may pray and Paul may preach, but Paul does not purchase! That is Christ's work. God gives—gives freely—and if you see friends and connections saved, it must be the gift of God's Grace to you. Just as much as your own salvation was God's gift to you, so the salvation of friends and dependents must be a gift from God to you. What then? Be much in prayer for them! I wish some of you mothers would meet together, sometimes, and pray for your children. I think it would be a noble thing for a dozen of you, perhaps, to come together only for prayer if any of you have unconverted children. And you fathers, sometimes, when you meet, if you have children who have not yielded to Divine Grace, could not you say, "Come, friend So-and-So, you and I have the same burden, let us bear it together at the Throne of Grace"? Just at the back of that hoarding there, while this place was being built, there was a prayer breathed one night by two souls, that God would bless this place. There were only two and nobody knew that that supplication went up to Heaven and I, for one, have felt strengthened by their prayer ever since. It was but a "chance" meeting, as we say. It was night and they both looked in at the same time and met each other. "Ah, friend So-and-So," said one, "let us go up yonder, in a quiet nook, and pray, 'God bless the Tabernacle.'" And God has blessed it and will bless it still! Now, you may all of you do something like that.

I was walking down the Old Kent Road one day and I was met by an excellent clergyman, not now in this neighborhood. He said to me, "Our places are close to one another, but we do not often meet. Come in and pray." We entered his house, walked across the hall into the library and there the two ministers knelt down. One prayed and then the other prayed. We then rose, shook hands and parted. It took us but ten minutes, but it was worth I know not how much to us both! We went to our work refreshed, for we had been with God! When we meet for this purpose, God will be with us, and He will give us all that are in the ship if we will but ask Him—for it is by prayer, prayer, prayer that we shall prevail! Let us wrestle and agonize until He gives us our desire.

There may be some of you who are praying for yourselves, but have not got the answer yet. There was a mother who went to hear George Whitefield preach—that mighty man of God. After the sermon was over, the mother was convicted of sin. In deep anguish of spirit, she went home. Her husband was dead and she had only a little girl and, having no one else to talk to, she told the child about her convictions. The little girl—you will think it strange, perhaps—under the recital was made to feel the same. Mother and child wept together under the same sense of sin. Upstairs they went and prayed. They neither of them found peace for some months, but, it pleased God, at last, to give mother and child, who

had prayed together, peace at the same time. While the mother was rejoicing, the child, just like a babe in Grace, said, "Mother, oh, what a joyful thing it is to be pardoned! What a blessed thing it is to be saved! I would like to run and tell our neighbors." "No," said the mother, "that would not be wise, child, they don't care about these things. They would not understand—they would laugh at you—and we must not cast pearls before swine. We will do it by-and-by." "But, Mother," said the child, "I can't leave it. I do feel so happy, Mother, I must tell somebody, so I will just run across the street to the shoemaker and tell him." The shoemaker was at work with his lap stone and the little one began by saying, "Do you know that you are a sinner? I am a sinner, but I am a pardoned sinner. I have been seeking Christ and I have found Him." She then set forth the tale, with tears in her eyes, till the shoemaker laid down his hammer to listen and stopped his work awhile. He became converted and the story was told abroad—and through the conversion of that man the work spread, a meeting was established and the means of Grace were soon set up—and there arose a flourishing church in that town, where not a believer in Christ had been known to live before!

Ah, you young converts, you may tell the tale! And even you who are under conviction of sin may tell it to your children. Do not hesitate to let the Light of God shine! I pray you—any of you, but I do bid you, by the blood and by the wounds of Him who was crucified for our sins—by Him that lived and cried for us, never cease praying till God gives you all them that sail with you! O my dear Friends, pray for the congregations that come to the Tabernacle! Make this to be the burden of your never-ceasing cry, "Give us all them that sail with us!" The Lord hear our prayers and add His blessing on our labors, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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

# A CHEERY WORD IN TROUBLOUS TIMES

## NO. 1335

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

***“Therefore, Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God,  
that it shall be even as it was told me.”  
Acts 27:25.***

THE presence of a brave man in the hour of danger is a very great comfort to his companions. It is a grand thing to observe Paul so bold, so calm in the midst of all the hurly-burly of the storm. He was talking so cheerfully and so encouragingly to the crew and to the soldiers and to the prisoners. You must have seen, in many events in history, that it is the one man, after all, that wins the battle. All the rest play their parts well when the one heroic spirit lifts the standard. Every now and then we hear some simpleton or other talking against a “one-man ministry,” when it has been a one-man ministry from the commencement of the world to the present day! And whenever you try to have any other form of ministry, except that of each individual saint discharging his own ministry, and doing it thoroughly and heartily and independently and bravely in the sight of God, you very soon run upon quicksand.

Remember, Christian man, that wherever you are placed, you are to be the one man. You are to have courage and independence of spirit and strength of mind received from God, that with it you may comfort those around you who are of the weaker sort. So act that your confidence in God shall strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees—and, by God’s Grace, your calm, quiet look shall say to them that are of a faint heart, “Be strong! Fear not.” If you are to do this, and I trust you will do it, in the sick chamber, in the midst of the troubles of life, in the Church and everywhere else, you must be strong!

Take it as a good rule that nothing can come *out* of you that is not *in* you. You cannot render real encouragement to others unless you have courage within yourself. Now, the reason why Paul was able to embolden his companions was that he had encouraged himself in his God. He was calm, or else he could not have calmed those around him. Imagine him excited and all in a tremble, and yet saying, “Sirs, be of good cheer.” Why they would have thought that he mocked them and they would have replied, “Be of good cheer yourself, Sir, before you encourage us.” So my dear Brothers and Sisters, you must trust God and be calm and strong, or else you will not be of much service in the world and in the Church as you ought to be. Get full, and then you will run over, but you can never fill others till you become full yourselves.

Be yourselves, “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might,” and then you will be, as a standard, lifted up to which the timid will rally. At this time we are going to speak very little about Paul, but a great deal to ourselves. May God speak to us! May the Holy Spirit cheer our hearts and

lead us into the way of peace and power! If Paul was strong it was because he believed God! Let us speak about that faith. Paul, being strong, spoke words of good cheer to others. Let us, in the second place, see whether we cannot speak words of encouragement to our comrades in distress. We will finish up with such words as God may give us.

**I.** First, then, PAUL WAS STRONG BECAUSE HE BELIEVED. Faith makes men strong—not in the head, but in the heart. Doubting people are generally headstrong—the Thomas sort of people who obstinately declare that they will not believe unless they can have proofs of their own choosing. If you read certain newspapers, journals, quarterly reviews and so on, you will see that the doubting people who are always extolling skepticism and making out that there is more faith in their doubt than in half the creeds, and so on, are particularly strong in the upper region, namely, in the head—only it is that sort of head-strength which implies real weakness, for obstinacy seldom goes with wisdom!

They are always sneering at Believers as a feeble folk, which is a clear sign that they are not very strong, themselves. This has been a rule without exception forever, that when a man despises his opponent, he is, himself, the party who ought to be despised. When certain writers rave about “evangelical platitudes,” as they commonly do, they only see in others a fault with which they are largely chargeable themselves. Anybody who glances at the skeptical literature of the present day will bear me out that the platitudes have gone over to the doubting side of the house. No people can write such fluent nonsense and talk such absurdity as the school of modern doubt and “culture!”

They think themselves the wisest of the wise, but, professing to be wise, they have become fools! And I know what I say. It is true that the evangelical party has become flat and stale, but the other party has beaten us at that. They are more dull, more stale and more unprofitable by far! When a man leaves faith, he leaves strength. When he takes up with “liberal” views in religion and does not believe anything in particular, he has lost the bone and sinew of his soul. It is true all round, in all things, that he who firmly believes has an element of power which the doubter knows nothing of. Even if a man is somewhat mistaken in what he believes, there is a power in his faith, though it may be, in part, power for mischief.

There is, however, in a Believer, a world of power for good if the right thing is believed. Paul was a believer in God, and so became strong in heart. He was, on board the foundering vessel, the center of hope, the mainstay of courage. But notice that Paul’s faith was faith in God. “I believe God,” he said. Nobody else in the ship could see any hope in God. With the exception of one or two like-minded with Paul, they thought that God had *forsaken* them, if, indeed, they thought of God at all! But there had, that night, stood by Paul’s side, an angel fresh from Heaven, bright with the Divine Presence and, strengthened by his message, Paul said, “I believe God.”

That was something more than saying, “I believe *in* God.” This many do and derive but slender comfort from the belief. But, “I believe God, believe Him, believe His truthfulness, believe the Word that He has spoken, be-

lieve His mercy and His power. I believe God.” This made Paul calm, peaceful, strong! Would to God that all professing Christians did really believe God! Believing God, he believed the message that God had sent him! He drank in every word and was revived by it. God had said, “Fear not Paul, I have given you all them that sail with you.” He believed it! He felt certain that God, having promised it, was able to perform it, and amidst the howling of the winds Paul clung to that promise!

He was sure that no hair of any man’s head would be harmed. The Lord had said the preserving Word and it was enough for His servant! Has He said it and shall He not do it? Has He spoken it and shall it not come to pass? He believed God that it should be even as it was told him. And he did that—mark, dear Friends—when there was nothing else to believe in. “I believe God,” he said. He might have said to the centurion, if he had pleased, “I do not believe in the sailors. They are evidently nonplussed and do not know what to do. We are driven before the wind and their sails and tackle are useless. I do not believe in the men, themselves, for they are plotting to get into the boat and leave the ship and all in it to go to the bottom. We must have them on board, but still, I have no trust in them, their help is of small account compared with the Divine aid.”

He did not say “I believe in you, the centurion, that you can maintain military discipline and so we shall have a better opportunity of escaping.” No, the ship was breaking up! They had put ropes all round her, undergirding her, but he could clearly perceive that all this would not matter. The fierce hurricane was sweeping the vessel here and there, and driving her towards the shore. But Paul calmly said, “I believe God.” Ah, that is a *grand* thing—to believe God when the winds are out—to believe God when the waves howl like so many wild beasts, and follow, one upon another like a pack of wolves all seeking to devour you. “I believe God.” This is the genuine breed of faith—this which can brave a tempest!

The common run of men’s faith is fair-weather faith—faith which loves to see its beautiful image mirrored in the glassy waves—but is far away when the storm clouds are marshalling the battle! The faith of God’s elect is the faith that can see in the dark! The faith that is calm in the tumult! The faith that can sing in the midst of sorrow! The faith that is brightest when everything around her is black as midnight. “I believe God,” Paul said, when he had nothing else to believe in. “My Soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” Say, O my Soul, “Though the earth is removed, and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea, will we not fear, for God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”—

***“God lives still! Trust, my Soul, and fear no ill!  
Heaven’s huge vault may cleave asunder,  
Earth’s round globe in ruins burst.  
Devil’s fullest rage may thunder,  
Death and Hell may spend their worst.  
Then will God keep safe and surely  
Those who trust in Him securely!  
Therefore then, my Soul, despair?  
Mid the shipwreck, God is there.”***

Since the Apostle Paul believed God thus truly and really, he was not ashamed to say so. He said openly to all those around him, "There shall not a hair of your heads perish, for I believe God." Now, it is not so easy to thrust out your faith and expose it to rough weathers and to the hearing of rough men! Many a man has believed the promise but has not quite liked to *say* so, for there has been the whisper in his soul, "Suppose it should not come true, then how the enemy will rejoice! How those that listened to me will be saddened when they find that I was mistaken." Thus does the devil cause faith to be dumb and God is robbed of His honor.

Under the name of prudence there lurks an unbelieving selfishness. Brothers and Sisters, lend me your ears that I may whisper in them—"You do not believe at all." That is not the legitimate sort of believing! Genuine faith in God speaks out and says, "God is true and I will stake everything on His Word." It does not swallow its own words and keep its thoughts to itself. But when the time comes and others are in difficulty and doubt, it cheers them by crying out, "I believe God." It is not ashamed to say, "The Lord Jesus, whose I am and whom I serve, stood by me this night and spoke with me, and I swear it."

I would to God all Christians were prepared to throw down the gauntlet and to come out straight! For if God is not true, let us not pretend to trust Him! And if the Gospel is a lie, let us be honest enough to confess it! But if it is true, why should we doubt it and speak with bated breath? If God's promise is true, why should we distrust it? What excuse is there for this hesitancy? "Oh," says one, "but that might be running great risks." Risks with God, Sir? Risks about God's keeping His Word? It cannot be! "Let God be true and every man a liar." Let Heaven and earth return to chaos and old night, but the Most High cannot break His Word or run back from His promise! Therefore, O you Pauls, if you receive a message from the Most High, publish it abroad and let your faith be known!

I should like that little word to drop into the ears of some of you who think you love Christ but have never told of your love—you that are hiding in the background. Come out and show yourselves! As for you who have long proclaimed your Savior, do it more and more and, "Speak His Word, though kings should hear, or yield to sinful shame."

**II.** Now, if we have any measure of the faith of Paul, let us try whether we CANNOT CHEER OTHERS AS PAUL DID. Let the language of the text be on our tongues, "Therefore, Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." First, you will meet with seeking souls. They have not found Christ, yet, but they are hungering and thirsting after Him. They are saying, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" You that believe God are bound to speak comfortably to them, and say, "Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

There is one that is sorrowing for sin. Go and tell him that sorrow for sin is sweet sorrow and that no man should ever regret that he mourns his faults, but should be glad that God has enabled him to feel a holy grief, a penitential pain. Gotthold tells us that he was called, one day, to see a man who, when he entered his chamber, burst into many tears. It

was a long time before the good Divine could discover what made him so unhappy. At last the man broke out, saying, "Oh, my sin, how I hate it! My sin, how I sorrow over it!" Whereupon Gotthold, who had been sad at the sight of his sadness, smiled and said, "Friend, your sadness is my gladness! I never behold a happier sight than when I see a man sorrowing for his sin!"

"Oh," said the other, "really?" "Yes, indeed," he said, "there are many mourners who mourn for others, but blessed are they that mourn for themselves! There are many who are sorry because they cannot have their own will, but," he said, "there are few enough that sorrow because they have had their own will and have disregarded the will of the Lord. I rejoice," he said, "for such as you are those for whom Jesus died! Come and trust Him, for when there is sorrow for sin there will soon be joy for pardon!" Now, whisper in the ears of those who are penitent. Tell the mourner that God has promised to turn his night into day and his sackcloth into beauty!

Perhaps you will meet with another whose condition is that he is pleading, daily, for mercy. "Oh," he says, "I have been praying and praying and praying! I cannot let a day pass without asking for forgiveness but somehow my prayers seem to come back to me. I get no favorable replies." Brother, to a man in this plight you should speak up and say, "Be of good cheer, Friend, for I believe God, that it shall be even as He told me, and He told me this—'Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened.'" Tell the praying soul that praying breath was never spent in vain and that, in due time, "He that asks, receives." To withhold your testimony will be cruelty to the seeking one and a robbery of God, to whose honor you are bound to speak!

Possibly you will meet with another who is saying, "I am beginning, now, to venture myself upon Christ. I am desiring to believe, but oh, mine is such a feeble confidence. I think I trust Him, but I am afraid I do not. I know there is no other Savior and I give myself to Him, but, still, I am jealous of my heart, lest mine is not true faith." Tell that soul that Jesus has plainly said, "Him that comes to Me I will in nowise cast out," and then say, "Be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as He has told me." Tell the trembling heart that Jesus never did yet reject one Believer, however trembling might be his trust! Whoever believes in Him is not condemned! Let the comfort you feel in coming to Christ, yourself, thus be handed on to other seekers, even as the disciples passed the loaves and fishes among the hungry multitudes.

Perhaps you will find one who says, "I desire the renewal of my nature. I am so sinful! I can believe in Christ for pardon, but my heart is terribly deceitful and I feel such strong passions and evil habits binding me that I am sorely afraid." Go and say to that soul, "His name is called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Tell that anxious one that the Lord can take away a heart of stone and give a heart of flesh. Say that Christ has come to bring liberty to the captives and to set men free from the bonds of sin! And tell them that you believe God, that it will be even as He has told you—and He has told you and you know it is true—that He

will purge you from sin and sanctify you wholly! Any soul and *every* soul that comes trustingly to Jesus and rests in Him shall find sanctification in Him so that sin shall be hated, avoided, and *conquered*!

I do not know how I shall manage it, but I wish that I could, in two or three words, say something that would make every Christian here look out after poor seeking souls with tenfold eagerness! I do not know what to say, except this. There is a Brother in this house tonight. There was one here two Sabbaths ago who never needed me to tell him to sympathize with anxious souls. He was always up here in the great congregation looking out, and then down in the Prayer Meeting below on the same errand. Many persons have been invited from this upper service to go down below and have there been spoken with by him concerning the Lord Jesus. It was our dear Brother, Verdon, who was a mighty soul-hunter before the Lord and he lived to seek after souls.

He is gone, and my heart mourns him. Alas, my Brother, when shall I ever, again, see such an one as you were? Now, I want each one of you to try to fill up his place. Keep your eyes on any who seem to feel the power of the Word, and then step up with an encouraging word, somewhat like that of the Apostle, "Sirs, I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." Now, there is another set of people who are saved, but they are Little-Faiths, and I want you Strong-Faith people to encourage them by telling them that you believe God that it shall be even as it was told you. Some of these Little-Faiths are conscious of very great inward sin. They thought, when they believed in Christ, that they would never feel any more conflicts—their notion was that they should be saved from the *assaults* of sin the moment they were born unto God.

But now they discover that the old viper within is not dead! He has had a blow on the head, but he is not dead! They see lusts and corruptions moving within their hearts and they cannot understand it. Go and tell them that you feel the same, but that, thanks be to God, He gives you the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! The poor young soul that is just struggling out of darkness into light, and beginning to contend with inward corruption, will be greatly comforted if you thus state your experience and declare your faith in the ultimate issue. In the case of some others of these Feeble-Faiths, the trouble is that they are vexed with outward temptation.

Many a young man says, "It is hard to be a Christian where I work." Many a young woman has to say, "Father and Mother are against me." Others have to complain that all their associations in business tempt them to that which is evil and that they have few to help them. Go and tell them of the Lord All-Sufficient! Remind them, "He keeps the feet of His saints." Tell them to pray, day by day, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Tell them that there is strength enough in Christ to preserve His own. Bid them hide under the shadow of His wings! *You* have done so and found a happy shelter and, therefore, you may confidently say to them, "Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

You will find others whose lamentation is, "I am so weak! If I am a Christian, yet I am good for nothing! I have little liberty in prayer, or power to edify anybody. I think I am the most useless of all the family." Tell them, "He gives power to the weak and to him that has no strength He increases might." Tell them the Lord does not cast away the little ones, but He, "carries the lambs in His bosom and gently leads those that are with young." Tell them of the faithfulness and tenderness of the Good Shepherd and say, "Sirs, be of good cheer: weak as you are, the Lord's strength will sustain you! And as He has promised to preserve His own and has evermore preserved me, do not doubt, for it shall be to you even as the Lord has told me."

Perhaps they will say, "Ah, but I am beset by Satan! Blasphemous thoughts are injected into my soul! I am driven to my wits' end." Then tell them that the Lord enables His people to cry, "Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, for though I fall yet shall I rise again." Tell them that when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him! As they feel their danger, point them to their great Protector, the Lord Jesus, who has come to destroy the works of the devil! And say, "You will conquer him, you will conquer him yet. The Lord will bruise Satan under our feet shortly. Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as He has told me." There is much work for happy Christians among the Feeble-Minds, and the Miss Much-Afraids, and the Mr. Despondencies and the like. I earnestly hope that they will set about it.

Now, if you have performed these tasks, I commend to your attention a third class of persons, namely, those who are greatly tried. God has a very tried people abroad in the world. I learned a lesson the other day which, I think, I never can forget. I was asked, after preaching a sermon, to go and see a lady who suffered from rheumatism. Now, I know by bitter experience what rheumatism is. But when I saw one whose fingers and hands had all lost their form through pain, so that she was incapable of any motion beyond the mere lifting up of her hand and the letting it fall again—when I saw the pain marked on her countenance and knew that for 22 years she had suffered in agony, then I said, "You have preached me a sermon upon patience and I hope I shall profit by it. How dare I be impatient if you have to suffer so?"

Now, if you go and see sick folk—and I suppose you do, and if no sickness comes to your own house—say to them, "Sirs, be of good cheer, for it shall be even as God has told me." And what has He told you? Why, that He will support His people in the most severe afflictions. "In six troubles I will be with you, and in seven there shall no evil touch you!" Tell them that the Lord will bless His people's troubles, for, "all things work together for good to them that love God." Tell them that God will bring His people out of the trouble some way or other, for He has said, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all."

And if you will tell them these precious things, believing them yourself—for that is the main point—having experienced the truth of them, yourself, your testimony will comfort them. You will meet with some that have been bereaved, who have lost the light of their house and have seen

the desire of their eyes taken away with a stroke. Cheer them and tell them of the sweet things that God has said concerning the bereaved. He is “the Judge of the widow and the Father of the fatherless,” and make a point of declaring your belief that He is so. You will meet with godly folks who are under testing trials. Many young people have to go through severe tests.

I mean trials like this—“Will you take this employment, young man? The wages are sufficient, are they not?” “Yes, Sir, I should be well content. I do not think I shall get a better situation as far as money goes.” “You understand that you will not have the Sabbath to yourself and that we want no religion here. Now, young man, what do you say to that? Do not think twice about it, my Friend, but say, “No, ‘what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?’” Speak right straight out and do not be afraid to give up the tempting offer. Many Christians can tell you, “be of good cheer,” for if you do this, God will bless you. You shall have, even in this life, your recompense, as well as in the life to come if you can be decided and steadfast to stand for God and keep His way!

I could mention many Christians who would tell you that when they were tested the Lord helped them to stand fast and that they have to bless Him for it every day of their lives. Whereas certain others have temporized and given way a little—and they have got out of God’s ways and have had to run from pillar to post all their lives long—and though they are still Christians, yet they never enter into the joy of their Lord. O Sirs, be of good cheer when you have to suffer for Christ’s sake, for He is able to give you much more than you will ever lose by Him! And above all He will give you peace of conscience which is worth all the mines of California!

Should you come under persecution, any of you, I hope you will be met by your fellow Christians who will tell you not to be afraid, for the Lord can make you increasingly to rejoice the more you are despised and persecuted. Believe that and you shall find it true. And, O you tried people of God, you that have lost the light of His countenance—those of us who rejoice in God would come to you and bear witness that He has only forsaken you for a little while—He will return to you in the fullness of His mercy! We believe God that whether the season is dark or light, and whether the road is rough or smooth, His heart is still the same and He will not turn aside from the salvation of one of His chosen people! Thus, dear Friends, you have good scope for your faith to exercise itself in comforting others. Lay yourselves out in this delightful service!

I have yet another set of good folks to speak to. We have some Christian people about who tremble greatly for the ark of the Lord. I occasionally meet with good Brothers and Sisters, very good Brethren, who are tempted to commit the sin of Uzzah—to put forth their hand to steady the ark because the oxen shake it—as if God could not protect His own cause! Some say that the good men are all dying—I have even heard that they are all dead! But I am not quite sure of it. And they ask, as the fathers fall asleep and one after another of the pillars of the House of God are taken away, what will become of the Church? What will become of the Church?

“My Father! My Father! The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!” What will become of the truth, the cause, and the Church?

You know the good Methodist woman’s outcry at the funeral sermon when the minister said, “Now that this eminent servant of the Lord is departed, we know of no one to fill his place. The standard-bearers are removed and we have none left at all to be compared with them. It seems as if the glory were departing and the faithful failing from among men.” The worthy mother in Israel called out from the aisle. “Glory be to God, that’s a lie!” Well, I have often felt inclined to say the same when I have heard a wailing over the absence of good and great men—and melancholy prophecies of the awful times to come! “Glory be to God, He will never let His Church die out for lack of leaders! He has a grand reserve somewhere!”

If all the men who preach the Gospel, today, were struck down in the pulpit with apoplectic fits tomorrow, the Holy Spirit would still qualify men to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ! We are, none of us, necessary to Him, nor is *any* mere man necessary to God! Do not get into that state of mind which makes you attach undue value to men or means. The salvation of souls is *God’s* work—and if it is God’s work it will go on! Be quite sure of that. There is no fear of any work falling to the ground which has Jehovah for its Builder! In this Church of ours at the Tabernacle, we gradually lose our leaders and I have heard it said, and I must confess that I have almost thought, “If So-and-So were gone, nobody would ever fill her place or his place.”

Such earnest and holy individuals seem to be essential and we feel that their removal would be fatal. Yet it is not so, dear Friends! It is not so! Others arise and God’s work still goes on. Christians ought to be as confident as the heroic Spartans. The old men advanced in procession and they said, “We have been brave,” and they showed their scars. And then the strong men, in the prime of their days, followed and said, “We *are* brave,” and they bared their arms for war! Then if anyone wondered what would happen when the old men were gone and when the strong men were slain in battle, there came the boys and the striplings behind, and they said, “We *will be* brave, for we are Spartans!” I see my gray-headed Brothers and Sisters going off the stage and I bless God that, though *they* do not say it, I can say it of them—“They have been brave.”

Blessed be God, we have, also, a good staff of active workers of whom I may say, though they must not say it, “They *are* brave.” And yonder are the young soldiers coming on—the young men and the young women! I see in their very faces that they are smiling at the thought of being numbered with the hosts of Christ and I am persuaded they mean *to be* brave and to stand up for the good old cause—and for the blood-stained banner of Christ—even as their fathers have done! Instead of the fathers shall be the children—God make them far better soldiers than we have been! Brethren, do not let us be discouraged, for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me—“The Lord has been mindful of us, He will bless us.”

Many minds are in a state of great distress about the spread of error. I do not know what is going to happen to England according to the weeping

prophets. The signs of the times are very bad and the would-be prophets say that a dreadful storm is coming on. My barometer does not indicate anything of the kind! But theirs stand at, “much rain,” or “stormy.” Not long ago I walked with a very excellent man, whose name I will not mention because I think he must have been ill that morning. He told me that he believed that he should live to see the streets of London run with blood on account of the unbridled democracy, the atheism and the radicalism of the times. In fact, he thought that everything was out of joint, and we were going—I do not know where!

It is not long ago and I remember that I pulled him by the sleeve and said, “But, my dear Friend, God is not dead.” Now, that is my comfort! God is not dead and He will beat the devil, yet! As surely as Jesus Christ won the victory on the Cross, He will win the victory over the world’s sin! It is true it is a hard time for Christianity. Infidels are fighting us with new arguments—but when I think of them I feel inclined to say what the Duke of Wellington said at Waterloo to the generals—“Hard pounding, Gentlemen! Hard pounding! But we will see which will pound the longest.” And so we say—it may be “hard pounding” for the Christian Church, but we shall see who can pound the longest!

Up to now—these 1,800 hundred years or more—the Gospel gun has gone on pounding and has neither been spiked nor worn out! As for our opponents, they have changed their guns a good many times! Our Gospel cannon has blown their guns and gun carriages and gunners all to pieces—and they have had to set up new batteries every year or two. They change their modes, their arguments, their tactics—but we glory in the same Cross as Paul did, and preach the same Gospel as Augustine, and Calvin, and Whitefield and the like! All along, the testimony of Jesus Christ has still been the same! The precious blood has been exalted and men have been bid to believe in Jesus! Pound away, Gentlemen! We shall pound the longest and we shall win the day! If we believe God in that fashion, let us turn round to our discomfited Brethren and say to them, “Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.”

The last class that I shall notice will be our Brothers and Sisters who are laboring for Christ. Sometimes workers for the Lord get cast down. “I have taught a class for years,” says one, “and have seen no fruit.” “I have been preaching at the corner of the street for months but have never heard of a conversion,” says another. “I have been visiting the lodgings-houses, but I have never met with a convert.” Well, dear Brother, do you think that you have preached Jesus Christ and nothing has come of it? If you do, you must be a very unbelieving Brother! I do not believe it for a moment! I believe God, that it shall be even as He has told me, and He has said, “My Word shall not return unto Me void, but it shall prosper in the thing where I sent it.”

Perhaps you preach unbelievably. Now, an unbelieving word is not God’s Word! If you preach confidently and teach trustfully, believing in the power of the Spirit of God and so exhibiting Jesus Christ to your children and to your hearers, there are sure to be results. The raindrops return not

to Heaven and the snow flakes climb not back to the treasure house, but water the earth and make it bring forth and bud! And even so shall God's Word be. It must prosper in the thing where He has sent it! Beloved Brother, do not give up! Dear Sister, do not be discouraged! Go on! Go on! If you do not see results today, you must wait and work on, for the harvest will come. "He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Be not so cowardly as to say, "I will leave the work." You are not to win a battle in a moment, or reap a harvest as soon as you sow the seed! Keep on! "Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." We say this to you because we are confident, ourselves, and would have you confident also. Sirs, be of good cheer. God has been true to us and given us success. And we believe that it shall be to you even as He has told us.

**III.** Now, I have done the sermon, but I had intended, if time had held out, to give ONE OR TWO WORDS OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY TO THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD by declaring that the Lord has always acted to me as He has promised me. I will give one or two. When I was converted to God, as I read the Scriptures I found that Believers ought to be baptized. Now, nobody around me saw things in that light—but it did not matter to me what they thought, for I looked at it carefully for myself. Parents, friends—all differed—but Believers' Baptism, seemed to me, to be Scriptural, and, though I was a lad, God gave me Grace to be honest to my conscience and to follow the Lord in that respect as fully as I could.

Have I had any cause to regret it? It seemed, then, that I might soon have grave cause for doing so, but I have had none. It has, on the other hand, often been a great comfort to my soul to feel that I did not trifle with my convictions. And I should like to urge you, young people, whether on that matter or any other, if you have received light from God, never to trifle with it. Follow the Lord fully and I can say, as the result of actual experience, "Sirs, be of good cheer. No harm will come to you if you are faithful to God and to your consciences."

Again, when I came to London as a young minister, I knew very well that the doctrines which I preached were by no means popular, but I, for that very reason, brought them out with all the more emphasis. What a storm was raised! I was reading, the other day, a tirade of abuse which was poured upon me about 20 years ago. I must have been a horribly bad fellow, according to that description, but I was pleased to observe that it was not *I* that was bad! Now, 24 years or so later, what can I say of the results? Why, that no man loses anything by bringing the Truth of God right straight out! If he believes a doctrine, let him speak it boldly!

Mr. Slapdash, as Rowland Hill called the bold preacher, will, after all, succeed! Let no minister say, "That is too Calvinistic and Calvinism is at a discount. That is too nonconforming, and if you dare to speak against the Church of England somebody will be very vexed. Trim your sails! Preach smoothly! Whenever you have anything to say, polish it and put it in such a neat way that nobody can object. As the great goddess Diana, nowa-

days, is unsectarian, try and be unsectarian. And preach and teach all that is sweet and soothing and velvety and teachy—and you will succeed.”

Now, how has it turned out with me? I wish to bear this witness, not about myself, mark, but about the Truth of God which I have preached. Nothing has succeeded better than preaching out boldly what I have believed and standing to it in defiance of all opposition and never caring a snap of the fingers whether it offended or whether it pleased! Young man, if you are beginning life now, I charge you begin so that you can keep on, with a straightforward, honest reliance in God, for be sure of this—the Truth of God will reward those who love it—and all who lose for its sake are great gainers!

Be steadfast in following your convictions. I cannot help saying it, because some of you, perhaps, are beginning to temporize a little. I would say to you, “Stand up straight and proclaim the Truth of God and then be of good cheer, for I believe God, that it shall be even as He has told me!” May God grant that this little personal testimony may tend to put backbone into certain Christians, for we have a molluscos company of professors about who do not believe anything! They shape their creed according to the mind of the last person they meet!

Go, dear Brethren, and pray God to cleanse your hearts of that evil if you have ever indulged in it! Believe God! Take every letter of His Book and hang to it as for dear life! And in little, as well as in great things, keep to the statutes and precepts and ordinances and doctrines of the Lord as they are committed to you! As surely as you do this, the Lord of Hosts will bless you! First rest in Jesus by a simple faith in Him and then treasure up His every Word and keep His every command. So shall the blessing of God be with you from now on and forever. May His Holy Spirit work this in you! Amen.

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# LESSONS FROM THE MALTA FIRE

## NO. 3136

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 1909.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
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*“They kindled a fire, and received us, every one, because  
of the present rain, and because of the cold.”*  
*Acts 28:2.*

As much as lies in us, we should seek to do good unto all men, and we can never know to whom we may be rendering service. These people of Malta never dreamed that they were entertaining an Apostle and it never entered into their heads that their simple act of hospitality would be recorded in the Sacred Scriptures—and that millions of eyes would read of—and millions of minds would think upon this kind act of theirs on behalf of this shipwrecked company! They really entertained an angel unawares, and they had many blessings in consequence, for we find that Paul afterwards healed the father of the chief of the island and others of the inhabitants who were suffering from various diseases. We can never tell how God may make return to us for acts of kindness which we may do to others, but just as it is said that curses, like chickens, come home to roost, and that he who throws a stone into the air will find it fall on his own head, so do good actions—deeds of kindness and charity—come back to us in some shape or other, even as Christ said to His disciples, “Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” It is the best way to bless ourselves to be earnest in blessing others! These hospitable people were bringing down upon the island of Malta untold benedictions while they were, in their simple kindness, entertaining shipwrecked mariners! At this season of the year, in the midst of such a city as this, abounding as it does with the poor and needy, there are abundant opportunities of using “the mammon of unrighteousness” well by relieving their needs—and what you possess would be made all the sweeter to yourselves through your ministering to others in their necessities. I am not, however, going to speak upon that matter just now—I intend to use the text in this manner. First, I am afraid *we are very apt to grow spiritually cold* and, therefore, next, the text suggests that *we should be diligent in using means for getting spiritual warmth*. And thirdly, as there are a good many in this world who are cold, as Paul and his companions were when they came shivering from the deep, *it should be*

*our constant duty to seek to kindle a fire* and to receive them, every one, because of the cold.

**I.** First, then, I am afraid that WE OURSELVES ARE VERY APT TO BE COLD SPIRITUALLY.

First, because *we are ourselves cold subjects*—hot enough, perhaps, in temper, earnest enough in pursuit of business, fast enough where pleasure may draw us, but ah—how chilly, how wintry when we have to do with the things of God! I know that at one time we burned and flamed with sacred ardor, but we look back upon that period with the deepest regret that it should have gone by so long ago. Even now, when we are moved by an earnest discourse, or are gathered with faithful Brothers and Sisters, we begin to glow again, but how easy it is for us to get back to the icy state and to have our soul frozen so that it does not flow as freely as it should! Do you not find, Brothers and Sisters, that you never need make any effort to be dull in religious matters, but that the effort has to be made the other way—that you have to make an effort and need God’s Grace to give you strength to make it towards holiness, towards fervency, towards enthusiasm? By nature, we are as hard, cold and dead as stones—and seem as if we never could be warm! And we never are unless God turns the heart of stone into a heart of flesh. And even then it often seems to grow hard and chill again, so that we need fresh Grace to warm our heart and to keep it beating at anything like the pace of life. I know not how it may be with you, dear Friends. Perhaps you have been so lifted up by Divine Grace that you have never wearied in the heavenly race. If so, you are very happy and privileged individuals! But there are some of us who, although we have not been allowed to actually stand still, have found our onward progress to be a hard climb up the Hill Difficulty because we are so lumpish and heavy. Often have we had to cry with Dr. Watts—

***“Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,  
With all Your quickening powers,  
Kindle a flame of sacred love  
In these cold hearts of ours!  
Dear Lord! And shall we always be  
At this poor dying rate?  
Our love so faint, so cold to You,  
And Yours to us so great?”***

We are indeed cold subjects. Just compare your state of heart, for a while, with the ardor of Apostles, confessors and martyrs who lived and died for Jesus. Compare, or rather, contrast yourselves with some other children of God whom you have known, whose fervent prayers put you to shame and whose many acts of self-denial, and whose whole persevering service now rise before you to make you blush. Above all, contrast yourselves with your dear Lord and Savior. He was a veritable flame of fire, but what are you? Alas! Alas, what am I? Cold, cold, cold! Even His great love scarcely warms us to anything like true Christian affection! We can think of Hell with its unutterable horrors and yet be scarcely moved! We can think of Heaven with its indescribable glories and yet be scarcely af-

fectured. We can turn to You, O You blessed Christ of Calvary, and look upon Your ghastly wounds, yet is our soul scarcely made to melt! It is sad that it should be so, but mournfully true is it that we are cold by nature.

But then, besides that, *we live in a cold country*. Who that has to move about in this world does not know that this is true? Not only are we so chilly by nature that even when we live in the torrid zone of revival, we can scarcely keep ourselves warm, but, alas, we are often compelled to be where everything is like the Arctic regions! You who have to spend most of your time in business, do you meet with many in the market or on the Exchange who help you to make progress in the Divine life? You who have to go to work with other workmen, do you meet with many who toil for their bread who speak earnest words for Jesus? I ask you who live as servants in the house, or you whose occupation calls you abroad, do you meet with many who aid you spiritually? Have you found this world helps you join to God? In the olden time, it was a world lying in the Wicked One and God's people were strangers and foreigners here—and I fear it is still so. Our very employments, as they engross our attention, take our thoughts away from higher things and so tend to chill us. How often does it happen that the possession of riches brings coldness to the heart and, on the other hand, if we grow poor, chill penury represses the genial currents of the soul and prevents them from flowing freely, as they ought to do. There is scarcely any position in life that can be said to minister to growth in Grace. How few heads encircled by a crown have ever been dedicated to God and how seldom have the beggar's rags covered the body of a truly gracious man! Everywhere it is a cold world in which we live—and we are cold subjects in a cold world.

But then, besides that, *there are very cold seasons that come upon us*. There are times when everything seems chillier than usual. The Church at one time seems to be all in earnest—her Prayer Meetings are crowded and fervent, her ministry seems full of life, zeal and enthusiasm. The members seem to walk together in holy unity and love seeking what shall bring most glory to God. But the Church has her winters as well as her summers—after her revivals there will come years of dearth—seven years of famine after seven years of plenty! And the cankerworm will come and eat up the fruit of the land—and that by a long space together! When the Church as a whole is cold, it is not easy for us as individuals to be warm. I have often heard members of this Church say, when they have gone away to join other congregations, that they have felt as if they had suddenly dropped out of a conservatory into an ice-well. I can easily gauge the temperature of a congregation in any place where I go to preach. I can soon see that some are warm and hearty and ready to receive the Truth—while it is heavy work to preach to others because they evidently either do not understand or do not appreciate the Gospel—or if they do appreciate it, they have a peculiar way of preventing the preacher from seeing that they have any enjoyment of the Word of God that he has spoken. There are churches which always seem to be very cold and there are

other churches that once glowed with summer heat that have now come into their wintry season.

Let me add that there are not only these cold seasons in the Church as a whole, but *we ourselves have our cold seasons*. I suppose we are very much like one another, but sometimes, for some reason we scarcely know why, we are full of fervor and ardor. We are not only in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, but we are also in the Spirit all the days of the week! The candle of the Lord shines about our path. We walk in the light as God is in the light and we have fellowship with Him—and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. The Spirit of God is with us and the time of the singing of birds has come to us! At other times the desire to pray is within us, but we cannot pray. Gloomy doubts arise, or carking cares come crowding in upon us, or else a dreadful indifference which we cannot shake off steals over us like the sleepy fits which come on people when they need to be active, but their eyelids are so heavy that they cannot keep from sleep. This will happen again and again as we struggle against it and seek by any means and every means to keep ourselves spiritually warm. I suppose the experience of most of God's people will verify this.

Thus I have tried to show you that we are cold by nature, we live in a cold country and there are cold seasons with us all.

And then I may add that *there are some persons who live in very cold corners*. There are some who not only live in a country that is cold, but they are in the coldest part of that country. There may be a cold room that is more chilly than any other in the house and some of my friends seem to have lived in that particularly cold room. Good people as they are, if they speak to you, it is very frosty talk. They never greet you with that genial smile that is born of sunshine. They seem almost to prefer to have the temperature of winter in their souls. It is constitutional with them and they communicate that cold to those with whom they come in contact. I always like a room which has a sunny aspect, but I know some people who prefer a room that is darkened by a high brick wall. If they could have a room near the Old Bailey, with a clear view of the gallows, that is the kind of prospect that would please them! They like to think of the corruptions of their own heart and of the depravity that rages within—and no preaching will suit them unless it makes them thoroughly melancholy—and if it makes them unutterably wretched, they consider that the preacher is a deeply experienced man of God sent to instruct them! I shall not quarrel with these Brothers and Sisters—and if they prefer the room with the dark or wintry aspect, they may have it, as far as I am concerned. I shall be quite content to take the room with the sunnier aspect and to look out on green fields, waving trees, shining water—and to see the goodness, loving kindness and tenderness of the Almighty both in Nature and Grace.

But, besides the fact that some people are in these cold corners constitutionally, others seem to have found their way there in the order of God's Providence. A wife who has become converted has a husband who

has no desire towards the things of God and, therefore, opposes and vexes her continually. A Christian is living with another Christian of totally opposite views and Doctrines—they ought to have fellowship with one another, but they do not—and differences constantly come up. Then there is a Christian whose unhappy lot it is to live with persons who have no sympathy whatever with true religion. Another Christian man is thrown, not by his own choice, but unavoidably amongst those who continually ridicule him, or he is compelled to dwell with fellow Christians who are all of the cold school and who freeze him. Or what is perhaps quite as bad, a Christian is compelled to live where he has no one to assist him with a word of sympathy, none with whom he can take sweet counsel and walk to the House of God in company. These are some of those who live in a specially cold corner. And if you are among them, I would say to you that if you cannot get out of that cold corner, you must, above all others, kindle a fire because of the present cold! Above all others you must give good heed to what I shall have to say to you directly about maintaining the warmth of the heart. As you have the severer trial, you must be the more earnest in overcoming it!

**II.** I will say no more about the cold lest you begin to shiver while I am speaking of it, but we will now come to THE KINDLING OF THE FIRE. Thank God He does not leave us without some means of becoming spiritually warmer! There is an abundance of fuel to overcome the cold. The Christian being subject to coldness of heart, God has provided him with the means of kindling a spiritual fire that may make him warm and keep him warm.

The first great fire is *the Word of God*. “Is not My Word like a fire, says the Lord?” It is so in many ways, but especially because it has such a warming influence. When we are spiritually cold and we go to hear the Word preached, how it warms our hearts! Brothers and Sisters, have you not often proved it to be so? You have been trembling, downcast and almost distracted—and you have said, “I will go and enquire at the hand of the Lord,” and God has given you a message that has so changed your feelings that you have gone out with unspeakable joy, blessing God that your feet have trodden that floor which has become sacred to you through the visitation of God’s Spirit! It is not often that I can hear a sermon, but when I do, I have sometimes had seasons of very gracious refreshing to my soul. I remember one Sabbath morning listening to a man who was by no means literate. And as I listened, I felt the tears streaming down my cheeks as I realized afresh how precious Christ was to me! And I envied the good people who could hear the Gospel preached Sabbath by Sabbath and who had not to stand up and deliver it to others—and go without spiritual food themselves. I am sure you who love the Lord will bear witness that when Christ is preached, your heart is always warmed. The preacher may have spoken very simply and not have tried to display any of the graces of oratory, yet the sermon satisfied your soul because Christ was in it! But if there is no Christ in it, you go down the aisles saying, like Mary Magdalene, “They have taken away my Lord.”

It is Jesus Christ that you need and when you get the Truth about Him, and about the Father, and about the Spirit—when you get the Doctrine of electing love, of God’s faithfulness, of God’s Sovereignty, of God’s Immutability and all those precious things of the Covenant of Grace, you feel somewhat as the two disciples did when, on the way to Emmaus, Jesus Himself talked with them and their hearts burned within them!

Is it not very much the same also in reading the Word of God? I can speak more experimentally upon this than upon hearing the Word preached. Oh, to get one verse or perhaps only a few words in it—into your mouth and keep it there and roll it under your tongue as a sweet morsel! At first it tastes like wafers made with honey, and as you press it between the lips of meditation, and turn it over and over on the palate of mental discernment, at last you say, “How sweet are Your Words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” So the Word of God begins to warm your heart. You asked if there was any love there, and now it begins to flame out towards God! You thought the Spirit of adoption was gone from you, but now you say, “Abba, Father,” with no faltering tongue! Your faith, which seemed to be in a swoon, suddenly revives and gains new vigor. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, read the Scriptures diligently when you are passing through these cold seasons! Keep close to the fire of the precious promises and the other Divine messages and you will not be frost-bitten. That is one fire.

There is another fire which is equally efficacious. If you would be warmed when your soul is cold, *take yourself to prayer*. Pray! Pray! Pray! Some have said that it is good only to pray when you feel moved to pray, but I would rather say that you should pray *to feel moved to pray*. When you feel that you cannot pray is the very time when you should pray, for when you *can* pray there may be less need for prayer than when you feel that you cannot pray! Instead of its being wisdom to forsake the Mercy Seat, because you feel dead and cold, it is the most flagrant folly! A man might say to me, “If I put my hand near the fire when it is very cold, it pains my hand.” No doubt it does, because the cold is in it! But you need to bear that pain in order to get the cold out. So, when we try to pray when we feel dead and cold, the very trying to pray makes us feel an inward pain—but we must try—and keep on trying. Prayer is our very life and is essential to our health and our growth. As Montgomery’s well-known hymn reminds us, it is the Christian’s—

**“Watchword at the gates of death—  
He enters Heaven with prayer.”**

If your heart is cold, multiply your seasons for prayer! Try praying with somebody else. Ask some Christian Brother to come to your room and pray with you. And you, my dear Sister, call in some Christian woman whom you know, and say to her, “Come, dear Sister, and let us pray together.” Much blessing often comes through two or more Christians joining their supplications in private. But if that does not help you, I would urge you to get to the meeting where many gather together to pray. If you can do so, come to the Prayer Meeting and see if your heart does not

burn within you there. I cannot promise that it will certainly be so, for some of our Brethren's prayers are not always fervent, but when the meeting is as it should be, we help one another to get warm and to stay warm! I cannot tell you how much I owe to the Monday evening Prayer Meetings and the other Prayer Meetings that are held so frequently in connection with our work here. I do hope that we shall never have them less frequently, for those Prayer Meetings have been the strength of this pulpit. The pillars on which our ministry rests are, under God, the prayers of our people! If you want to be warm spiritually, you must keep up the spirit of prayer!

Next, I would say that in addition to hearing and reading the Word, and praying fervently, *it will often tend to warm us to be much in meditation*. Having read the Scriptures, keep them in memory. Turn them over and over in your minds and let your meditation grow beyond meditation into fellowship and communion with Christ. Sit down and think of Him and of His great love to you. Try to picture to yourself Gethsemane and Golgotha. Turn over in your mind the all-important Doctrine of the Atonement, and meditate upon its wonderful efficacy. Think of Christ's prevailing intercession for His people. Think of His Second Advent. If nothing else will warm a man's heart, surely the love of Christ will do it. There is such a warmth of love in the heart of Christ that it makes even the dead to live! Meditate perpetually upon Him and you shall not long have to complain that you are spiritually cold!

I would also strongly recommend anyone who feels a chill in his heart to *seek much fellowship with his fellow Christians*. I believe, under God, there is scarcely any greater blessing to a Christian than to have those to speak with who can help him by telling him their experience. If two friends are walking together and one of them stumbles, the other can help to hold him up. I recommend you young Christians, especially, to seek suitable godly companions. We are companionable by nature and we are too apt to get the wrong kind of associates. But if we have Christian companions, true helpers in the Lord, we shall find the way to Heaven much smoother! Be as much as you can with the saints of God. I have sometimes spent an hour with a congenial spirit, a man whose heart has been warm with love to his Master, and when he has gone I have felt that I could bless God for having had the privilege of talking with him, yet that very man has said that he thanked God for that hour because of the good he had got from me—while it seemed to me as if I had got all the good and had given nothing in return.

If all this should not sufficiently warm you, I would strongly recommend one fire which, under the blessing of God's Spirit, is sure to warm a Christian. And that is, *kindle the flame of earnest service for God and your fellow creatures*. You may rest assured that the best way of getting good is by doing good. I mean, of course, for the man who is saved, because he is a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Job's captivity was turned when he prayed for his friends, but not till then. Christ's disciples had all their baskets empty, but there was a boy in the crowd who had a

few loaves and fishes. I have no doubt that the disciples, as well as the people were hungry, but they had nothing to eat except through feeding the multitude with the loaves and fishes that their Master had blessed. When the people were fed, the disciples also were fed—and when you are awake to the necessities of others and begin to help them, you will find God blessing you. I believe that many professing Christians are cold and uncomfortable because they are doing nothing for their Lord. But if they actively served Him, their blood would begin to circulate spiritually and it would be well with them. You know what the farmer in the country says to his boys, “You say that you can’t warm yourselves by the fire? Well, then, just go out into the barn and do something that needs to be done, or go and attend to the horses in the stable.” And very soon the boys feel a good deal warmer and it is only because they have had something to do! And Christian people who want the minister to preach to them this Doctrine and the other, if they had something to do for Christ, would be all the better for it. Let the preacher take care to keep up a good fire and put on plenty of the coals of sound Doctrine—but that alone will not warm the people! But the moment they begin to seek to do good to others, they will have kindled a fire which will warm themselves as well as others!

**III.** Our third point is to be that like these barbarous people, we should not simply think of ourselves in the cold, but **SEEK TO KINDLE A FIRE FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS**, because of the present cold.

It is a very cold period, spiritually, just now. The professing Church seems to be frozen so hard that those fine skaters of modern growth have a fine sheet of ice on which to perform their wonderful evolutions. If God would send us a gracious thaw, they would soon disappear! When the Church is filled with the Spirit, her members do not find any room for these modern foolish notions about high culture which usually spring from ignorance of that which is really worth knowing. If God will give us back a really living Church, we shall soon find that these evils have vanished. Just as the iron gets bright when it gets hot, so let the Church of Christ get red-hot and it will soon throw off all this rubbish!

What is the first thing towards warming people at the fire? The first thing is that *we must get a flame*. And though the Indians are said to make a flame by rubbing two pieces of wood together, I do not think that you and I will ever get it in that way. There is no way for us to get a revival-fire but from God, Himself. If anybody can “get up a revival,” as it has been said that they do, in any other way, it is not worth having! The only kind of revival that is worth having is that which has come down from God, not that which has been got up by men. The fire which fell upon Elijah’s sacrifice on Carmel was the fire of the Lord which fell from Heaven and which “consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.” We need that kind of fire—and if we have only two or three praying people who feel that they would die of a broken heart if the Church of Christ should continue in the condition in which she now is, we shall soon see a

different state of things! The heart of God is still moved by the prayers of His people! His hand is still stretched out in blessing in answer to the cries of His children! The kindling of the fire of revival must be from a live coal from off the heavenly altar!

After you get a flame, you must remember that *all fires begin with lites*. At first you have only a little spark feebly glowing and you might put that spark out if you tried to make it into a big fire all at once. You must let it burn a little among the shavings and chips and wood—and then drop your coal on deftly, cunningly, tenderly—as if you loved the little fire too much to risk putting it out by putting on too much fuel at once. We must not despise the day of small things! We must give ourselves up to the full belief that God means us to do great things by doing them a little at a time. It is because we despise little things that we do not prosper as we might. You may have heard the story of a little child who was seen outside a door one day. A man had shot down a whole load of coals and she was with a little fire-pan taking some of them into the house. Someone said to the child, “Do you expect to get in all that load of coal?” “Yes,” replied she, “if I keep on long enough.” And there are many other great tasks that can be accomplished little by little. If we are prayerfully dependent upon God, great things can be done by any one of us! But let no one say, “I am going to do great things. I mean to have a glorious revival. There will be a great stir.” I do not think there will be anything of the sort if it depends upon what *you* are going to do! I have more faith in good men speaking to their children about their souls and in godly women praying for their little ones—and in Sunday school teachers praying and laboring for the conversion of their scholars and in humble, consecrated men talking about Christ to scores, or hundreds, or thousands of people! That is how God usually sends revivals of religion—and the fire will soon spread when it begins to burn in that fashion! And then there is one thing that should always be done. Have you never seen your servants—or you, good housewives, have you never done it yourselves—have you never knelt down in front of the fire when it has been nearly out, and gently blown upon it? That is a fine way of getting a spark to grow into a fire. And in a Christian Church, those who often go down on their knees in prayer will soon blow the spark into living flame! Just what Mary does with the kitchen or parlor fire is what you must do in order to get the spiritual fire needed because of the present cold. On your knees you must fan it with your very life’s breath—and then it will burn!

But when it does burn, *there must be fresh fuel for it*. Paul knew this and, therefore, he set to work picking up sticks. When we once get God’s revival fire to warm this cold world, the Church must find suitable fuel to feed it. We must get some from this Brother and some from another Brother, and from our good Sisters, too, and we ourselves must be the glowing coals. And if we can be kept close together and be fanned by the spirit of unity and by the breath of the Holy Spirit, there will soon be a blessed furnace heat that shall warm this cold earth—

**“Spirit Divine, attend our prayers,**

***Make a lost world Your home.  
Descend with all Your gracious powers  
Oh come, Great Spirit, come!  
Come as the fire and purge our hearts  
Like sacrificial flame—  
Let our whole soul an offering be  
To our Redeemer's name."***

And perhaps while we are trying to gather all the fuel that we can, *we may pick up a viper in the process*. It was so in Paul's case and I should not wonder if it is so in ours. I have heard this fault found with revivals, that certain persons had been added to the Church who never ought to have been admitted. Very likely some people found fault with that Malta fire when, in the process of picking up sticks to feed it, a viper fastened on Paul's hand. I have noticed that whenever there is a revival in the Church, there is almost certain to be a hypocrite hidden away among the converts. If you have a garden, you must have noticed that the snails come out after rain—and after a revival, slimy hypocrites are pretty sure to appear—but what if they do? The Lord Jesus Christ did not leave off preaching because He knew that there was a Judas among His Apostles! And if we should have a Judas in our ranks, should that make us give up our work for Christ? No! But if there are in our midst some people who are good for nothing, let us try all the more to find out those who will be good for something. And if, in the course of the Lord's work, there should be unworthy persons added to the Church, so much the greater should be our anxiety that worthy persons should be added, too, to counterbalance the mischief that the others may produce!

Oh, that we might have just now the gracious assurance sent from God that we are to have a still greater revival than any that we have ever yet experienced! As a Church we have lived in revivals for nearly 20 years—there has never been a time, that I can remember, when there have not been souls converted in our midst. I do not know that there has ever been a Sabbath without a conversion in this place. I do not think there has been a sermon without a conversion. We cannot speak positively about every one of them, but we can say to our certain knowledge of many of them—and we have every reason to believe that it was the same concerning all the rest—that the message has had upon it the blessing of God. To Him be praise and to Him let us cry that everywhere that great prayer may be answered, "Your Kingdom come. Your will be done in earth as it is in Heaven."

Thus have I used a very simple incident to set forth very important Truths of God. But, alas, there are some in this place to whom this subject may have seemed very uninteresting, for they are not themselves saved—they are not themselves converted. I would not have them go out of this building without reminding them that the Gospel is to be preached to every creature in all the world and, therefore, it is to be preached to them! And this is the Gospel—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." You will observe that I have not left out half of it. It is more than I dare to do to play with Christ's Gospel, or to clip one of its

wings. Christ's own words are, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." To believe is simply to trust Christ. To be baptized is to be immersed in water upon profession of your faith in Jesus Christ. May God grant to all of you Grace, first to believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, and then to confess that faith in His own appointed way, by being baptized in His name, and to Him be all the glory forever and ever. Amen.

[Mr. Spurgeon's Exposition of Acts 28 was too long for insertion here. It must be used with a shorter sermon. The Exposition here given belongs to Sermon #3127, Volume 55—A PROMISE AND A PRECEDENT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 16:1-14.**

**Verses 1-3.** *These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yes, the time comes that whoever kills you will think that he does God service. And these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father, nor Me.* True followers of Christ must not reckon upon having the world's commendation. At first the Jews persecuted the Christians. Then the Romans took up the cruel work and others have continued it, in some form or other, even to this day, for the persecution of the saints has not yet ceased. There are many who still have hard times and have to endure trials of cruel mocking for Christ's sake. If you resolve to follow Christ, men will be sure to call you old-fashioned, ridiculous, Puritan and I know not what besides—yet what does it matter to you if they do? Your Master foretold that it would be so.

**4.** *But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning because I was with you.* Christ did not deceive His disciples concerning the treatment that would be meted out to them. He did not promise that the road to Heaven would be an easy path, or flatter His followers with the notion that the cross which they had to carry after Him, had no weight in it. "These things have I told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them."

**5, 6.** *But now I go My way to Him that sent Me, and none of you asks Me, Where are You going? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart.* They were thinking more of their loss by His going away from them than of His gain in going back to His Father. If they had thought of the Glory into which He was so soon to enter, they would have ceased to sorrow and would have rejoiced with exceeding joy—but they seem to have loved themselves more than they loved their Lord—therefore His absence, which ought to have given them many reasons for rejoicing, became to them a cause for grief.

**7.** *Nevertheless I tell you the Truth. It is expedient for you that I go away.* "It is not merely for My own Glory that I am going away, but My

absence from you will be better for you than My continued bodily presence with you could possibly be.”

**7.** *For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.* “And He will be of more service to you than I could be even if I were to remain with you.” The Presence of the Spirit of God in the Church is better for the present dispensation than even the bodily Presence of Christ would be!

**8-12.** *And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.* “You have not yet received the Spirit of God as you shall do after My departure—then your capacities shall be enlarged so that you shall be able to understand deep Truths of God which are altogether beyond your comprehension at present.”

**13.** *Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come.* [See Sermon #50, Volume 1—THE HOLY SPIRIT—THE GREAT TEACHER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Is not that wonderful? As Jesus Christ said that He did not bear witness to Himself, but spoke the words which His Father had given Him, so the Spirit of God does not speak of Himself, but He bears witness to the Truth which Christ has revealed, and also makes known “things to come.” But He will never reveal anything contrary to that which Christ has revealed in His Word. That which is to be revealed is that Truth which was from the beginning. As we are taught it by the Divine Spirit, it becomes fresh Truth to us, though it was always in Christ’s eternal mind.

**14.** *He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.* Oh, that this blessed Spirit may continually show the things of Christ to us!

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

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# LOVING PERSUASION

## NO. 1970

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 26, 1887,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Persuading them concerning Jesus.”  
Acts 28:23.***

WHEREVER Paul is, he has but one errand and whenever Paul preaches, he has but one subject. Once at Athens, when he addressed the Areopagus, he seemed to wander a little from his main point and no special good followed, but this experience bound him all the faster to the Cross, for he afterwards said to the Corinthians, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” The Cross of Christ was his one theme. He henceforth hammered on the head of this one nail. Whatever faculty, ability and power he had, he turned its whole current into this one channel and cried, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.” Brethren, we have not strength enough for a dozen things. We have not even strength enough for two. What little vigor we have, let us use it all in one direction—let us say, “For me to live is Christ.” You could not have dropped into Paul’s lodging at any time during the two years that he was at Rome before the emperor liberated him, without hearing him preach of the “things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ. Every arrow in his quiver was aimed at the one target and he knew how to hit the white of it each time. “This one thing I do,” he said. His motto was—All for Jesus, and for Jesus only.

This one topic the Apostle brought forward in different ways. When addressing the chief men of the Jews in Rome, observe that he expounded, testified and persuaded. These three methods were necessary among the people of those days and they are the wisest that can be adopted to bring men to Christ even now. We must *expound*, set forth, explain, make clear the Gospel. We must tell men what the Word of God means in the plainest possible language, for they need to know what it is that the Revelation from Heaven has really declared. The more of true exposition the better! We must also *testify*. We must bear witness to the effect which the Gospel has had upon our heart and life. The telling out of our personal experience is a means of Grace to our hearers. Paul was known to describe his own conversion. He told the story of how the Lord appeared unto him on the way to Damascus and he did this so often that Luke and others, who were his companions, must have heard it several times. Indeed, it was a tale so worth the telling that none could weary of hearing it!

Paul knew that personal witness-bearing has a great weight upon the minds of men and, therefore, he was not afraid of being accused of egotism, for he knew that he did not preach himself, but *Christ Jesus the Lord*—and the narrative of his conversion was not intended to honor himself at all, but to glorify that blessed Christ who out of Heaven had spoken to him and called him to be a chosen vessel to bear His Word to the Gentiles. There is much force in such a personal testimony. Oh, that you and I, after having explained the Gospel, may always be able to tell out something from our own experience which will prove it! Men love, when they hear of a medicine, to meet with a case of care and, in the same way, when they hear of religion, they desire to hear from persons like themselves what that religion has done for them. Brethren, we should speak of Jesus in a happy, grateful, earnest manner and commend him as a Savior to our fellow sinners. Yet this was not all, our Apostle was not satisfied simply to expound and testify—his heart was full of love to his countrymen and, therefore, he *persuaded* them. He entreated, he besought, he implored his hearers to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ!

As Paul was speaking to Jews, he fetched the arguments of his persuasion from their own Holy Books. I have no doubt that he had spread out on the table before him the Books of Moses and the various rolls of the Prophets. To these he continually referred his Jewish friends. We cannot, this morning, go into that argument, neither is there need, for you are not Israelites and you are already well acquainted with that mode of argument. Paul must have been a master in that line of things. I think I hear him now explaining to them concerning Jesus as He appeared in Melchisedec—that was a wide subject! Hear him open up to them the justification of Abraham by faith and then the allegory of Sarah and Hagar and the two Covenants. I should have liked to have heard him speak of Isaac and Ishmael, and of Jacob and Esau and the electing love of God as seen in those memorable instances!

With what rapture would Paul speak of the sacrifices, reminding them that, “without shedding of blood there is no remission,” and pointing them to the blood of sprinkling which speaks better things than that of Abel! How he would then open up to them the meaning of the daily offerings, the mystery of the Day of Atonement, the sacred teaching of the entering in of the High Priest within the veil! How earnestly would he remind his brethren that the continual repetition of the sacrifices was a sure evidence that they had not made the consciences of the offerers clean from a sense of sin, or they would have ceased to be offered! How heartily would he direct their minds to that one Sacrifice which Jesus presented once and for all when He bowed His head in death! I think I can hear him turning to that memorable passage in Isaiah which so much engaged the attention of the Ethiopian eunuch and, opening up to his audience the Person and suffering of the Lord Jesus who was led as a lamb to the slaughter for our sakes—and for us was stricken, smitten and afflicted.

With such arguments, men who believed those Books to be Inspired ought to have been convinced! It is clear that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament. Had not their hearts been so

gross, their eyes so blind and their ears so dull, they would have believed in Jesus! But as it was, many of the Jewish leaders went away in a pet, quarrelling with those who believed and angry with Paul. None are such bitter enemies of the Cross as those who, by a firm resolve, determine to be blind to its Glory and dead to its power.

Thus Paul, you see, in his pleading, adapted himself to his audience. He had acquired the knack of being all things to all men that he might save some. In pleading with Israel, for whose salvation his heart's desire and prayer always rose to Heaven, he followed the wisest and most hopeful course. He argued from what they believed—he urged the Truths of God they already knew as a reason why they should admit another Truth or, rather, let me say he showed them that the Gospel of Jesus was involved and contained within those Truths of God which were assuredly accepted among them! He spent the whole day at this, but at this time I shall not pursue his line of reasoning because it is not needed among you—you have need of persuasion of another sort.

It would ill become me to beat the air, or exhibit before you a mimic combat with an absent adversary. No, my Friends, I have before me another sort of people whose condition needs another treatment. I long for your immediate conversion! With earnest prayer I have come here, seeking with tears and entreaties, to win men from destruction! Others have joined me in supplication and, therefore, I look to the Holy Spirit for His gracious work, that my hearers may be convicted of sin and led to Jesus!

**I. LET ME FIRST DESCRIBE THOSE WHO WE WOULD PERSUADE.** I will so picture you that some of you will see yourselves as in a mirror. I shall not talk to a people far away, but to you who sit before me this day.

*I would persuade those persons who believe the Truth, notionally, and yet do not receive it in their hearts.* It seems a strange thing that men should believe and yet not believe! This peculiar form of unbelief is current among us at this day. It is strange that men believe the Bible and even profess to believe it *all*—and yet they act as if it were all a dream! If we preach the Deity of Christ, it is an easy task, for they never thought of questioning it. If we proclaim the need of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, they are agreed, for they never doubted it. Whatever doctrine it is that we can prove by the Word of God, they bow before it! They are not guilty of skepticism. Alas, they hardly give the matter thought enough to observe any difficulties! Avoiding the whirlpool of questioning, they run upon the rock of *indifference*. Their belief holds the Truth as spices and linen preserve a mummy. The Gospel is to them a dead monarch, honorably interred in the sarcophagus of their reverence. It has no more power over them than if they disbelieved it! As a medicine retained upon the druggist's shelf has no effect upon the body, so is the Gospel stowed away in the minds of many so as to have no result in their lives!

This is a sad misuse of Divine Revelation. It cannot have been sent to us to be without effect. O my Hearers, if you believe that Jesus is the Savior, why is He not *your* Savior? If you believe that repentance and faith bring salvation, why have *you* not repented and believed? If you believe that there is a God that hears prayer, why do you not pray? If you know

that you must be born again, how is it you are content without the new birth? How is it that with regard to the hearing of the Word of God you come and you go, not once nor twice, but *year after year* and yet you are unmoved and unchanged? Age steals over some of you and finds you not an inch in advance of what you were in your youth! If you did not believe the Word of God, I could understand your conduct—but if you *do* believe it, why do you not receive it practically into your hearts?

If you were awakened by a cry of fire! and you were sure that your own house was burning, I should expect to see you hurrying from the flame. I could understand you keeping to your bed if you were persuaded that the cry was the mere idle noise of boys in the street, but if you believed it to be a real alarm, I should be perplexed if I saw you seeking a little more sleep! If you were told that you had a disease which would soon bring you to your grave and that a certain physician could work a speedy cure—if you did not believe the report, I would expect that you would suffer in the patience of despair. But if you did believe in the reputation of the physician and in the cures which he had worked, I would not be able to understand you if you did not go to him and seek relief! O Sirs, how is it that you are willing to continue in sin when Jesus is able to save unto the uttermost? How strangely you act! Alas, human nature has become monstrous! It is false to its own instinct of self-preservation and acts in a suicidal manner! Oh that you were wise! If Jesus tells you the Truth of God, why do you not believe Him? If Jesus is *Himself* the Truth of God, why do you not *receive* Him? Why do you need persuading to a course so proper, so reasonable?

*Many need persuading who intend, soon, to practice what they have believed, but the time has not fully come.* You have a resolve in your heart that before long you will turn to Christ, but the unhappy thing is that you have for many a day retained this resolve and it has grown moldy within your bosoms! When we met you as a child, you meant to love the Lord. When we conversed with you as young men and women you were very hopeful and your parents felt that their prayers would soon be heard. You seemed so thoughtful and impressible—and you had such good intentions—that we all reckoned upon your speedily being decided. You are much older, now, but you are not more advanced— it is still, with you, all intentions and intentions! I wish there could be a time fixed in your mind when it should be either, “yes,” or, “no.” “How long halt you between two opinions?” How long shall Jesus be put off and the world be served?

Some of you are not a whit more hopeful than you were 20 years ago. Let me recall the expression—you are a deal more hopeless, for you are becoming Gospel-hardened! Appeals which once pierced your hearts do not even wound you anymore. As water rolls down a marble slab and leaves nothing behind, so is it now with what you hear. The sword of the Spirit is as sharp as ever, but your heart has hardened like steel in the annealing. Oh, you that are forever resolving and resolving and yet abide where you are—you are the people whom at this time I would persuade to decision!

Some have gone even further, for they are *earnestly seeking salvation but they have chosen a wrong method of search which can only end in disappointment*. I would gladly persuade them to leave off seeking the living among the dead! Salvation is by immediate *trust in Jesus*, but you need to feel up to a certain degree of anguish, or you need to change yourselves up to a certain point of excellence! In a word, you want to *save yourselves, first, and then* come to Jesus! You are trying to make the lantern shine before a candle is put in it. You want to renew your own nature and *then* come to Christ for a new heart—you are not content to come to Jesus as *sinner*s! All will be done for you if you will but put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, but this you fail to do.

If I knew how to put the Gospel more plainly than I do, God knows I would not be slack to do so, but yet, with all the plainness of our preaching, our hearers still persist in going about after this and that hope of their own instead of at once accepting salvation by Jesus Christ. Oh, that you were so persuaded of the things concerning Jesus as to lay hold of them at once! You need to be led to see that salvation is all *finished* and that you have but to take it as a free gift! “Christ has died,” and in that expression lies your life! Believing in Jesus, you have eternal life the moment you believe! You need to be persuaded to accept this as the present Truth of God—the most precious Truth of God you can ever hear! If you will receive it, happy will it be with you. But if you continue running here and there after salvation and neglecting the Lord Jesus, you shall perish in your sins! Why will you pursue the will-o'-the-wisp and shut your eyes to the Daystar? Why will you follow the mirage and leave the lone well in the desert whose sweet waters will forever remove your thirst? Oh, that you were rightly persuaded at this very moment!

One other class I should like to deal with this morning—I would gladly persuade *those who have tried a long time to do their best and, having never succeeded, are falling into a state of despair*. Theirs is not a *painful* despair—I wish it were, but, alas, they have fallen into a lethargy, a paralysis of the mind with regard to heavenly things! “It is no good,” they say, “I cannot get peace, I shall never find pardon. A child of God I cannot hope to be! I might as well expect to be a peer of the realm!” Therefore they sit down in sullen hopelessness. They mutter that if it is to be, it will be, and it is of no use caring. They are rendered insensible by the frostbite of their horrible idea of fate. Oh, that they had been warmed by the sunlight of belief in a gracious predestination! Men die by insensibility as surely as by passion. I fear that some of you will never awake until in *Hell* you lift up your eyes! I have had you laid on my heart and the thought of your danger presses me down into the cast at this time. I feel but little joy, even in these jubilee times, when I think about those of you who are so near to the Kingdom of God and yet are aliens from it!

I must persuade you with all my heart to come to Jesus, for if you perish in the light, you will perish with a vengeance! If you go down to destruction from the borders of salvation, it will be sevenfold destruction! If you die with Jesus weeping over you, as He did over Jerusalem, you will die horribly! If you sink down to Hell with that Word of God in your ears,

“How often would I have gathered you, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!” your sinking will be like that of a millstone in the sea! If you perish under a Gospel ministry, it were better for you that you had never been born!

These are the people I long to persuade. O Divine Spirit, work through me at this time and let the eternal purposes of love be fulfilled! O my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I entreat you, by the love of Jesus, strive together with me in your prayers for this blessing!

**II.** Our second point shall be—LET US PERSUADE THEM. But are we right trying to persuade men? Are not human hearts too hard to be broken by so feeble a hammer as our persuasion? Yes, I most solemnly believe they are, but that is not the question. “What is the use of persuading them if you know that they will not be won by your persuasion in and of itself?” Well, Brethren, I feel safe in doing what Paul did. I will not stop to solve difficulties, but merely say, Paul persuaded and so will I. “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” “Oh,” says one, “we may persuade awakened sinners, but not *dead* sinners!” But I reply that Paul persuaded these chief men of the Jews, some of whom never believed in Jesus, for their hearts were gross and their eyes were blinded. Paul persuaded them, though they were judicially blind! He knew that they were living men and that they were possessed of reason, even though they had no Grace—and so he appealed to what remained in them—and he persuaded them.

Again I say, I will do what Paul did. But I know, as Paul also knew, that all the human persuasion in the world will fall short of the mark without Divine Power! I never dreamed that my persuasion was of the slightest avail without the Holy Spirit! If the Holy Spirit will cause the persuasion to reach the inward ear, then it will prevail, but no way else. If He will drive home the persuasion so that it touches the heart which is encased in the fat of worldly pleasure, indifference, prejudice and pride, then men will yield and men will be persuaded, indeed! And the Holy Spirit will do this! He *has* done it! He *is* doing it! He *will* do it and, therefore, we persuade! Brothers, why should we not expect the Holy Spirit to display His power? We have sought it with fervent prayer. The preacher comes on this platform neither without his own prayers, nor without your prayers and so we are persuaded that we shall have Divine help! Therefore, O Sinners, “as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead, be you reconciled to God”!

Once more, in the name of God, I return to the work to which God has ordained me. I would persuade you concerning Jesus. *To what shall I persuade you?* My dear Hearers, I would persuade some of you *to think of Christ*, the Lord’s Anointed—to think of Jesus, the Savior! I would have you read about Him and study His Person, work and Character. Turn to the four Evangelists and see what He was and what He did. Read carefully and reverently of the Inspired life of Jesus. Faith often comes to men when they are thinking about Christ. The Cross not only claims faith, but creates it! To sit and see the Son of God die on the Cross is the way to get faith. Some of you, perhaps, have been sitting still and trying to believe.

That is a very absurd thing to do, for faith is not a first effort of the mind, but it *follows* upon other states. Know what is to *be believed* and *why* you are to believe it! Know who He is in whom you are to put your trust and why He deserves to be trusted! Shut yourselves up a bit—read the Bible carefully and then *meditate* and *meditate* and *meditate*! This is the way in which faith grows in the soul, even as plants spring from seed sown and watered. Faith comes by hearing or reading—the hearing or reading of the Word of God! “Incline your ears,” says the Lord God, “and come unto Me: hear and your soul shall live.” May I not persuade you to think seriously and often about the way of salvation by Jesus Christ?

The next thing I would persuade you to is to *trust in Him*. Trust is the essence of saving faith. Faith is not merely believing facts, but trusting to a person. God has set forth Christ to be a Propitiation for sin—He becomes to me my Propitiation when I trust Him. Can you not trust Jesus? Is He not worth trusting? Where else can you trust? The moment you trust in Him, you are saved! You know that—why not prove it true by personal faith? To trust is the meaning of that text, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” There is life in the glance of trust! You are living men when you look to Christ, or trust Him.

“But,” you say, “I do not *feel*.” Away with your “buts”! What have I said about your *feelings*? “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “He that believes on Him has everlasting life.” Salvation lies in the simple act of trusting in your Savior. Oh, that I could persuade you to trust! And when you have trusted Him, I need to persuade you concerning Jesus that you should *avow that trust*. The Lord puts it thus—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Be baptized, therefore, in obedience to His command! Come out boldly and say, “I am on the Lord’s side.” Do not attempt to go sneaking to Heaven along some back lane—come into the King’s Highway—take up your cross and follow Him. He that will not confess Him before men, Christ will not confess before His Father who is in Heaven! What is there to be ashamed of in Jesus? If Christ is your Savior, the very least thing you can do is to say, “I am His disciple,” and openly declare yourself on His side. He puts it so—“He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved.” I would persuade you to an open confession—may God the Holy Spirit lead you at once to the doing of it!

And if I were happy enough to persuade you so far, I would persuade you to *obey Christ throughout life*. “Whatever He says to you, do it.” Seek to lead a holy, harmless, blameless life. Endeavor to avoid all sin. Endeavor to copy the Son of God throughout your whole course, making Him your Model and your Master, your Leader and your Lord. Some of you who have openly confessed Him still need to be persuaded to a closer obedience. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” The way of complete obedience is the way of happiness—and many professors miss the joy of their Lord—I am half afraid they will miss His acceptance at the last because they are not careful to walk in His ways and to glorify His holy name by a holy life. I would persuade you, then, to *think* of Christ, to *trust* in Christ, to *confess* Christ and to *obey* Christ.

*What shall be my arguments?* I can summon battalions of them *from Jesus Himself*. He is the Son of God—therefore, trust Him. He loves with a supreme love—shall we not love Him who first loved us? He died! Oh, by His agony and bloody sweat, by His Cross and passion, I would persuade you to turn to Him! Every drop of blood of the great Substitute, every sigh and every cry of the Redeemer is an argument with men that they should not neglect His salvation, but should come and trust Him! He is risen and lives again—despise not the risen Savior—come and bow before Him who is proved to be the Son of God with power by His Resurrection from the dead! He has gone up into His Glory. He sits at the right hand of God—obey Him, then, for all power is given to Him in Heaven and in earth. He will shortly come and you and I (in how short a time!) will have to stand before His Judgment Seat. Believe not those who would bid you to trifle with a future state and think little of the judgment to come! O men and women, a short time will swallow us all up in the grave and we shall pass into another world—in little more than the twinkling of an eye we shall hear that last trumpet heralding the Judge! Then shall we hear the summons, “Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come away!” Then I shall have to give an account of this morning’s sermon. What a weight to have to preach to all of you and to have your blood laid at my door if I preach not faithfully to you! O God Most Merciful, grant to all of us that knowing Christ will come and come to *judgment*, we may lay this fact to heart and be persuaded to put our trust in Him who will otherwise pronounce upon us the sentence of eternal perdition!

I may summon another battalion of arguments *from your own state and need*. O Sirs, you that are unconverted are yet in your sins, encrusted with years of gathered foulness! Your sins hang about you now like the white scales of leprosy—they are on your brows and in your hearts. There is but One that can cleanse these defilements—it is Jesus! Why do you not fly to Him? Moreover, remember the sinfulness of your nature. You will go on to sin—your heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked! You will not cease from sinning. Jesus alone can give you a new heart and a right spirit. He is the one Physician able to cure your fatal disease. Will you not cry to Him, “Jesus, Emmanuel, heal me with a touch”? Will you refuse to be made whole? I pray you do not so!

Even now you are conscious of a wearisome restlessness. You are not happy. You have forebodings of an awful future. You know you are not at peace. From all the gay and gallant sights you have seen this week [Jubilee celebration of Queen Victoria] you have turned away sick at heart. You need something better and more substantial. Be assured there is no rest for you but in Christ! He says to you, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Turn not away from the one and only rest of your souls, but this day accept Him! Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him—and you shall find rest unto your souls. As you love your souls, as you desire happiness here—as you desire blessedness hereafter—I beseech you to lay hold on eternal life in Jesus!

If I needed more arguments, there are many quarters from which they would come at my bidding. I would try to find them *in your hopes and*

*fears*. I do not know to whom I may be speaking now, but, my Friend, there is a glorious future before you if Christ becomes yours. Burdened Sinner, there is a peace which passes all understanding if you will look to Jesus! O distracted, tempest-tossed Soul, there is a haven of rest for you if you steer to Christ! I would gladly persuade you, now, to come to Him whose gift is Heaven below and then, Heaven above! I myself have tried Him. Blessed was the day in which I fell into His arms! O happy hour in which I looked to Him and was lightened! Truly, my face is not ashamed, nor is my tongue ashamed of my Lord, nor is my understanding ashamed to believe His Gospel, though all men should cast doubt upon it. I have no other hope under Heaven, no other joy in Heaven but my Savior and His Infallible Word. If you knew the comfort which my soul finds in Jesus, you could not desire a better. O you young people, I would especially say to you—come early to Jesus, for they that seek Him early shall find Him with supreme delight! You will come to die soon—here is the antidote of death. The strongest and youngest will, one day, have to go upstairs and gather up his feet in the bed. Oh, what a comfort and joy it gives you in that hour to have the Presence of your Lord! After death comes the forever and ever. What bliss to be “forever with the Lord”! That endless fellowship with Jesus means an immeasurable weight of glory. Surely these arguments ought to prevail with you. They will, if your reason is made reasonable.

*How ought I to plead with you* when I have told you these arguments? I ought to plead with you in a manner far superior to that which I have yet reached. Alas, I cannot persuade you as I would. I think the preacher should feel a burning desire for his hearers’ conversion and even an intense anguish of heart for the immediate salvation of those to whom he speaks. To this I have attained—I long for your salvation most vehemently. I would say anything and say it any way, if I could but win you to immediate faith in the Lord Jesus! The desire is so strong upon me that should I not succeed on this occasion, I will try again and if, unhappily, I should fail again, I will continue at the work as long as you live and I am able to reach you! O my Hearers, I cannot endure that you should die in your sins! I will go before God in secret and lay your case before Him and beg Him to interpose. We cannot let you be damned, my Hearers. It is too dreadful! We cannot stand by and see you lost! If you are so insane as to refuse the Savior, those who have sober judgments will still continue to pray for you and to weep in secret places because of your sins. If we cannot prevail with you for God, we will endeavor to prevail with God for you. I would have every person in this place act reasonably, righteously, truthfully, honestly to his own soul—and if he does, he will be persuaded *this day* to believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and cast himself at His pierced feet!

**III.** Now I have to speak a few words upon another subject, with the same objective. It is this—LET US LAMENT THE FACT THAT OUR PERSUASIONS FAIL IN CERTAIN CASES. Paul found it so and where this chief of Apostles was baffled, can I wonder if I fail? The sower went forth to sow. He was a model sower. The Master put him in His parable as a pattern—he could not have sown better seed, nor have sown it better—

and yet some of his seed fell on stony places, some fell by the wayside, and yet a third fell among thorns. Only one portion of what he sowed appears to have fallen upon good soil.

Let me speak to those of you who will, I fear, be our failures. I grieve to think there should be any such. It is a sad business, *in the present*, for a man to be living without Christ. We pity abject poverty, but this is *worse* than the worst poverty. We are sorry for the friendless, but none are so forlorn as those who have not Jesus for a Friend. No ignorance is so terrible as ignorance of the Savior; no blindness so deplorable as blindness towards the Lord Jesus. To live without Christ is not life, but a breathing death! You are in the heyday of your youth, perhaps, and think that you are enjoying pleasure, but, indeed, it is not worth the name! You are eating husks and missing the kernels. Your mirth is as the crackling of thorns under a pot—it flares and blazes up—but there is no heat in it! It dies down in a moment and leaves nothing but a few ashes. If I had to die like a dog I should still wish to live the life of a Christian! Faith is good for this life. There is more solid joy in five minutes' fellowship with Christ than in a thousand years of reveling in the palaces of kings. You are a loser in a thousand ways by remaining an hour without Christ! It is a wretched business to be God's enemy, to miss rest of heart and to be a stranger to the Holy Spirit.

It is a wretched business to be now neglecting the great salvation, but this is not all—your present hardness of heart reveals a good deal as to *your past life*. If you will not be persuaded of the things concerning Jesus, it shows that your heart and conscience have been injured by years of willful resistance to the power of the Truth of God. You have been stopping up your ears and that is why you are so deaf. You have been sealing up your eyes, or you would not be so utterly blind. You have been hardening your heart against gracious appeals, or else you would not now be made of such hardened steel. Remember those years of broken Sabbaths and see what they have done for you—they have blinded and hardened you. Remember the neglected House of God and see how callous you have now become. Think of the times in which you have heard the Gospel and refused its tender warnings, instructions and invitations—and see what has come of those refusals. You are now well-nigh insensible. Oh, that black, black past!

We are also fearful about you because your past and present foretell a *future* of continued and increasing blindness, deafness and insensibility. I fear for some of you that you have been judicially hardened by the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit and that you are also hardened by the terrible influence of Satan—and that you have also allowed the suicidal influence of self-will to sear your conscience as with a hot iron. You are such a trifler that it is hard to get a serious thought into your mind. You are so fickle that none of our hopes concerning you are ever realized. You are so superficial that it is difficult to make any deep impression upon you. You crush beneath your feet the eggs of better things—you stifle the good thoughts which sometimes are born within you. Holy teachings fall upon your mind as sparks which drop into a pool of water. You have almost come to a

condition of mind in which you are like a man covered with armor from which the sharpest arrows glance off. O God, let it not be quite so, we beseech You, with anyone here!

This is all the sadder because it suggests such tremendous sin and such overwhelming punishment. I cannot tell you what must be the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah, neither can you, yourselves, conceive its full horror. They gave themselves up unto unmentionable lusts until, at last, God was so provoked that He would bear it no longer and He resolved to destroy the filthy ones and the place which they had polluted. He pulled up the sluices of His wrath and cataracts of fire poured down from Heaven upon the unclean ones! Heaven sent down fire and brimstone instead of silver showers! Then were the sinners burned up all of a sudden and not a speck, either of the Sodomites or of their city, was left. This was an unparalleled instance of Divine Justice, for their sin had broken all bounds. What their doom will be in the Day of Judgement, I leave you to imagine—but remember these words and weigh them well—“*It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for you.*”

Dear boy that you were upon your mother’s knee. Fair girl that you were in the Sunday school class, speaking so hopefully in your younger days—you will have to give an account for the delays which are ruining you! Hearer as you were and as you are this morning, listening respectfully to God’s ambassador—if you refuse the monitions of Infinite Love, what will become of you? Those were not *my* lips, remember, which first spoke those dagger-like words—they fell from the lips of the Prince of Love who died for men! It is Christ, Himself, who said to those who heard His Word and saw His mighty works and yet refused to repent—“Woe unto you! It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you.”

Yes, I have endeavored to persuade you and if I must labor in vain, I shall turn away with great reluctance, mourning that I may not be allowed to be a blessing to you. I quit you with lingering footstep and bow regretfully before the Lord, crying, “Who has believed my report; and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” Why will you die? Why will you rush upon such a destruction? Oh, that you were wise!

**IV.** But now, to change my strain, that we may not finish upon so sad a note, LET ME PERSEVERE IN PERSUADING OTHERS. Notice that the Apostle was not hindered in his work by sorrowing over those who rejected his persuasion, but he turned to others of whom he had better hope. Having spoken a solemn parting word, he said, “Be it known, therefore, unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles and that they will hear it.” To these Gentiles, for two years, Paul continued “preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.” He kept to his work, but he changed his audience!

We, also, will preach the Gospel to those who have not enjoyed Christian privileges. We preach Jesus to you who were not born of godly parents, nor brought up under Christian care. We preach Free Grace and dying love to you who up to now have not attended the House of Prayer, nor cared to hear the Word of everlasting life. If the moral refuse mercy, we declare it to the immoral! The Jews had been religious in profession, but

as they refused Christ, our Apostle preached Him to the Gentile population in Rome, which in Paul's day was worse than London, if there can be worse! Rome was an infamous den of every villainy beneath the sky, but Paul, without hesitation, preached Christ to all the Romans that he could reach—to soldiers, to slaves, to Caesar's household and to runaways! He believed in the adaptation of the Gospel to the most degraded. With no weapon but the Cross, he attacked a city sunk in idolatry and vice! So we, also, when repulsed by you who think yourselves exceedingly respectable, turn with hope to those who have been drunks, swearers, thieves, harlots and the like! To the chief of sinners we present the great salvation! To you is the Word of this salvation sent. "Whoever will, let him take of the Water of Life freely." "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men."

You far-off ones, that dwell out of the reach of the common means of Grace—the arm of mercy is stretched out to you! You who are not a people shall be made a people and she that was not beloved shall be called the Beloved of the Lord! Paul said of the Gentiles, "They will hear it," and we have the same confidence concerning many great transgressors. I thank God that those who never heard the Gospel before have heard it in this great house and have so heard it that they have at once yielded to its demands and accepted its provisions! Many who have been without hope, without God and without fear of eternal things, have heard the doctrine of free, rich, Sovereign Mercy and have turned at once from their sins and laid hold upon the hope set before them!

Oh that more would come! They will come—"They will hear it." The Divine purpose is that the Lord will provoke the outwardly religious by saving those who make no pretense of godliness. Because you were invited to the feast and would not come, therefore the Master of the house, being angry, issues a wider invitation and gives the grand command, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and as many as you find *compel* them to come in." If *you* will not have salvation, others will! Christ shall not be disappointed! He shall not die in vain! His Spirit shall not strive without success! "A seed shall serve Him." Jesus shall have a people saved by His precious blood. I hope that many such are brought here this morning on purpose to be blessed. I hope they will leap forward to catch at the gracious message. Oh that some of them would cry out, "I believe, I trust, I rest in Jesus!"

If it is so, go your way, God has saved you. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God. You have been worldly, sinful, abundantly wicked, but, if you will have Christ, now, have Him and welcome! If you are now drawn towards Him, come at once and linger not! "For the Scripture says, Whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed." May His sweet love persuade you in the things concerning Jesus! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 28.  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—450, 433, 385.**

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# THE MINISTER'S STOCK-TAKING NO. 516

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

***“And some believed the things which were spoken and some believed not.”  
Acts 28:24.***

THIS is the only proper way to calculate the results of our ministry. We just want the account book ruled with two columns. On one side we must put down the long list of the some that believe not. And on the brighter side we may enter what is, too often, the far less number of the some that believe. This is the only true method, I repeat it, by which we can hold a stock-taking so as to ascertain the net profit of the preaching of the Gospel. We must not estimate the good that is done by the number of those who listen. It is a very pleasant thing to see the House of Prayer filled to overflowing.

It is intensely delightful to reflect that often on the Sunday evening in London the theatres are full, St. Paul's Cathedral is full, and multitudes of Churches and Chapels are crowded with willing listeners. Still, it is not all pleasure. Instead of its being of any advantage for the persons who have heard the Gospel but have not believed, it will rather increase their doom. If they have only heard, and the Truth of God has penetrated no deeper than the natural ear, then alas for the preachers who have spent their strength for nothing! And alas for the multitudes who, having ears, have heard as though they heard not!

Nor ought we to calculate the result of our work by the persons who have been pleased with our ministry. What man is not gratified when he hears that the people have been pleased with his preaching? It were not in flesh and blood for a man to be unpleased by applause. The love of praise is ingrained in human nature—

***“The proud to gain it toils on toils endure,  
The modest shun it but to make it sure.”***

But still, it were a miserable thing if all that a man accomplishes is just to win the ear and to strike the people with wonder at the amazing way in which he could utter forth the Words of Truth. Shall God's servants live upon the breath of men's nostrils? Can the approbation of the crowd be nutritious enough to constitute the solid food of a God-sent herald of the Cross?

Never! When a man has to die, this shall give him no comfort. To have preached faithfully, though some were angry, will always be consolatory. To have preached unfaithfully, or to have held back any part of the Truth of God, though he may have won universal acclaim, would be but a passport to perdition at the last. No, no, if our ministry has only pleased people it is good for nothing. A sermon often does a man most good when it makes him most angry. Those people who walk down the aisles and say, “I

will never listen to that man again," very often have an arrow rankling in their breast.

Smarting from a wound that never will be healed till God heals it—they will come again right enough. Others, alas, who are quite pleased and delighted, will come and go from the place of the holy, unimpressed and unimpressionable as slabs of marble—down which the oil runs without producing the slightest impression.

Nor even dare we hastily to calculate the effect of our ministry by the number of persons impressed with serious convictions. Of course, it is a hopeful sign to see the people weep under the Word, especially if it is the Gospel that moves them to weep and not the pathos of the preacher. I do not think it does anybody much good spiritually when tears are excited simply by the description of a funeral, or by being reminded of one's childhood, or of one's parents. Some preachers appeal much to the passions and think when the congregation are weeping, good is being done. I do not see the use of it at all.

When the preacher can make these natural emotions a platform upon which to stand and work upon the *conscience*, then it is well and good. But if he has only succeeded in drawing briny tears from mortal eyes, they may flow until the floor is watered with them without any salutary result. We must go deeper than the eyes. We want to make the *heart* weep. We want tears of *penitence for sin*, not tears of regret for departed husbands and wives. We want emotions which spring from a startled conscience—not those which come from a want of resignation to the Divine will. No, dear Friends, we have done nothing after we have preached a thousand times unless we can write down that some believe on the Lord Jesus.

**I.** Turning to our text a little more closely, let us remark, in the first place, that UNDER THE BEST MINISTRY IN THE WORLD THE RESULTS WILL BE DIVERSE, AND THAT YOU WANT TWO COLUMNS TO WRITE THE ACCOUNT IN.

There will always be the some that believe and the some that believe not. This is not altogether the minister's fault. It is the custom of the age to blame ministers very much, and I dare say we deserve it. But still the blame in this matter does not lay entirely with us, for even when Paul preached—a model preacher, he!—there were, "some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not." Did I say that Paul was a model preacher? Let me prove it. Was he not a model preacher as to *matter*?

There are some persons who greatly admire a doctrinal preacher. They like a man who will lay down the doctrines as a master-builder would put the stones—one here, another there—each one in its proper place. When they go up to the House of Prayer they say they want really to learn something, to get some thought, to get a deeper insight into some great Biblical Truth, and they are not satisfied unless their understandings are provided for. Mere appeals to the passions they do not care about. They want to have their minds enlightened.

Well, a doctrinal preacher is an exceedingly useful man, especially if he does not degenerate into endless controversy, preaching Christ of envy and strife. I have heard it said that while a course of some twelve lectures

by any ordinary lecturer on geology would give you a pretty clear idea of the science, you might sit and listen to twelve hundred sermons upon Christianity by some ministers and never get an idea of what are its fundamental doctrines. If it is so, it is a crying evil, and grievously will the Church have to answer for it in the ill that will come upon her. It may be so in some cases, but I am sure it was not so with the Apostle Paul.

Who could preach doctrine more clearly than he did? If you want the very highest doctrine, read the ninth chapter of Romans. If you would have a clear system of Truth, read the Epistle to the Ephesians. If a young man wants to get a body of Divinity in miniature, he has only to read that Epistle. The Apostle is full of the most weighty matter and the most important Truths. He keeps back nothing that is profitable for the people. He can say, "I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God." To him it never was a question as to which part of the Truth would best please the people. He gave them the *whole* of it in due season.

But yet even under the Apostle Paul there were some that believed not! And you, young Man, if you have been listening to the Gospel under any minister, if you have not been converted, neither would you have been if you had heard Paul. Having Moses and the Prophets with you at this day, if you do not believe them, neither would you be converted, though an Apostle should rise from the dead.

I think I hear one observe—"Well, I do not care for a doctrinal preacher myself. I like *an experimental preacher* best." Be it so, dear Friend, and I can fully approve your choice. I like an experimental preacher, because he can get inside a man's *heart* and see what is there. He knows just what I am and what I feel. If I am distressed, he has been distressed, too. And he can talk of my temptations and of my trials, because they have been his own. If I am full of comfort or full of joy he has been up on the mountain, too, and he tells me of my ecstasy and of my delights. If I find some knotty passage in my inner life, he can translate it for me, for he has been through it all himself.

Perhaps of the three orders of preachers—the doctrinal, the experimental, and the practical—the experimental preacher is the most useful. I think if one had to choose which should be his pastor, he should prefer such a man as this, for a ministry without any experience in it must be a very poor, miserable, savorless thing to the people of God. But do you not think that in this respect the Apostle Paul, himself, was a perfect model? Would you understand the conflicts of the human heart? Does not Paul paint them to life as he says—"When I would do good, evil is present with me. To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not"? And again, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Does he not just express the sighing and longing of all the children of God who have been vexed with contests within? On the other hand, if you have high and glorious frames, the Apostle can go with you, and beyond you, and tell you of times when he was caught up to the third heavens and heard things which it is not possible for a man to utter. Are you full of assurance and confidence? Then Paul preaches to you from this text—"I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities,

nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Are you full of apprehensions? Then he fears and trembles with you—“Lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” Paul had his doubts and fears and was afraid that he might perish, after all. Yet he had his high flights and glorious confidences and knew that the Believer in Christ could never be cast away. But mark you, if you have listened to the preaching of the Gospel and have remained an unbeliever under it, neither would you be converted though the Apostle Paul's deep experimental knowledge should be brought to bear upon your conscience. For even under him there were some that believed not—and so I suppose it would be even were he here now.

Then there is *the practical preacher* and some men greatly admire him. So do I if he does not become legal, and if he does not degenerate into a preacher of mere morality. If he shall urge holiness upon the people of God, from evangelical motives, he may be very useful. But if upon legal terms he strives to stir the people of God to good works, he will do more harm than good. Yes, the practical preacher is very useful. The man who tells me precisely what my duty is in my sphere of life. The preacher who talks to me as a husband, a master, a servant, or as a son—who when I come after the cares of the week and sit down in my pew—refreshes my memory about my week's faults, and tells me how to behave myself during the week that is to come—such a man is useful.

And who ever did this so well as the Apostle Paul? That same Epistle to the Ephesians, which is an epitome of doctrinal theology, also contains the practical precepts of the Gospel fully written out. Children, parents, fathers, husbands, wives, servants, masters—the Apostle has a word to everyone. He is pre-eminently practical, generally basing his appeals for righteous conduct upon some Divine motive. Yet, dear Friends, if you have not been converted, I have no reason to believe it is because your ministers fail on the practical points. For even had you heard the Apostle, who was a pattern in this respect, neither would you have been converted, for under him some believed not.

Now put the practical, the experimental, and the doctrinal together, and you get the model exhibited in the Apostle Paul. Would that we had such preachers in all pulpits, and such ministers to preside over all flocks. But even if such were given to us, there would still be some that believed not. “Yes, yes,” says one, “I do not doubt that the *matter* was right enough. But you know there is more required of a preacher than matter. It is *manner* we want.” Well now, I hold that the Apostle Paul was a model preacher as to manner, too. He was a *bold* preacher. He never feared the face of man, but preached just what the Lord told him, in the Lord's own words, whether men would hear or whether they would not.

He was an *eloquent* preacher. Barnabas was no mean speaker, but Paul was a better speaker than he was. For at Lystra they called Paul, “Mercury,” and Mercury was their god of eloquence. Perhaps the concluding part of the eighth chapter of Romans is the most remarkable piece of human language ever known. He who wrote it was a master, able to soar

with eagle wings to any height, yet willing for the most part to keep near the ground. "Not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but with simplicity and godly sincerity he ordered his speech." He was a profound thinker, capable of the deepest argument or the finest allegory, but withal an easy talker, who loved to tell of the Grace of God.

When occasion required, as an impassioned orator, his thunders could make Festus tremble. And his persuasive appeals could wring confessions from Agrippa. But as a teacher in the Church of God, he was proverbially plain spoken. He spoke like a child, and babes in Divine Grace were fed under his ministry as with pure milk. This is just the style we want. Not the simplicity of ignorance, but the dignified simplicity of the man who has really the highest intellect, if he cared to show it, but who rather chooses to instruct the poor and ignorant. Then the Apostle *was very affectionate* with his boldness and simplicity. He loved the souls of men. He felt sometimes such a passionate longing to save souls, that he was almost ready to lose his own soul, if he might but save others.

"Oh," you say, "but that was an extravagant thing for him to say." Yes, love is often extravagant, and I will never believe that a man has any love at all if he speaks in a cold, calculating way. Love must sometimes speak in rapturous phrases, which in its cooler moments it would not endorse. When I hear the Apostle say, "I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my Brothers and Sisters according to the flesh," I understand what his love means. He feels as if his own personal interest in Jesus he would gladly give up, if he might but see his own kindred saved. It is in a spirit akin with that of Moses, when he said, "If not, blot my name out of the Book of Life."

Dear, dear! How critics and commentators have stumbled over these two passages! They cannot make it out. They cannot understand it. But I tell you, Paul meant exactly what he said. I have felt the same strong emotion boiling in my own soul when I have looked upon some immense congregation and my heart has yearned for their conversion. I have felt that if I could die as a substitute for them I would do it. Of course, in more sober moments, no man would ever barter his own soul's salvation on *any* account—nor is it possible that such a ransom could be accepted. Still, love makes one feel as if even that were less than the evil that threatens our people and we exclaim, with Esther, "How can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"

The Apostle, thus full of eloquence, of love, and of holy boldness, seeking after souls, pressing them home with blessed arguments, pleading with them night and day with many tears—was a faithful and a perfect minister—as nearly so as mortal can be. "Oh," says one, "I wish I sat under such a minister!" Yes, but are you converted to God? For if you are not, I am not sure that you would be saved if you had Paul, himself, for a pastor. If at your wish he could leave his grave, start up, unwrap his cerements and address you from this pulpit, I have no reason to believe that his voice would have any more power over you than another man's voice. Paul would plant in vain where others have not been successful. And if you have not believed on Jesus with this Book in your houses, with your Sabbaths repeated hundreds of times, with earnest, affectionate par-

ents, and with loving friends, neither would you be converted though Paul rose from the dead.

**II.** I now proceed to notice, in the second place, THE TWO SORTS OF PEOPLE, AND THE REASON WHY SOME BELIEVED, AND WHY SOME BELIEVED NOT.

*There were some that believed.* Shall I describe them? So far as one young man is concerned, I will just give a little sketch of his history and that sketch will suffice for all. He dropped in one Sunday morning to hear the preacher. He stood in the aisle, for he did not intend to stay the whole time. But the place was full and he could not get out. He listened. He thought it very commonplace. It did not attract his attention much. But all of a sudden—yes, it was so—the Truth of God dropped right into his heart. He listened with greater interest than he had done before. He gathered himself up. Another sentence came.

When he came in, he was like a man in armor. All the shots fell upon his armor and were repelled. But now something had got in between the joints. He listened again. The preacher went on to discourse of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, and the young man felt as if there was no one else in the place. The minister's eyes were on him. He began to tremble. "What must I do to be saved?" was the language that was in his heart, though he could not utter it with his lips. He walked out of that aisle a calm and quiet man. He went home. There was no talking on the way. He went into his chamber.

Well, I will not say he prayed the first time but it was something like it, for he breathed out words like these, "Oh, ah, would that!" He began to have living desires after the living God. In the evening he went to the House of God again. It seemed that night as if the preacher prepared a most terrible sermon on purpose for him. The whole sermon through, the great hammer of God seemed to be breaking his flinty heart smaller and smaller till there was not a single piece of it that was not ground to powder. He could not help feeling that there was no hope for him—that mercy would never reach his case. He had thought that morning that he was about as good as most people, and that if it did not fare well with him, it would fare ill with all the world. But now he felt himself to be the vilest of the vile. He could not understand it, nor could his friends, either.

They thought he had been taken with a fit of melancholy. They hoped it would wear off. But it did not wear off. He was very quiet that week. He could not go out with his friends to places of amusement as he had been accustomed to do. One of them did get him to one place, but he was so miserable that he came out when it was half over and said, "I have no taste for such things now. I cannot stay." Well, I do not know how long it was that this went on—in some cases it is only a few minutes, in others it is a long, long time. I knew one young man with whom it lasted for five years—and he stands here today to tell of that long period of affliction.

That young man went in a state of sadness and grief on account of sin, seeking rest and finding none, till one morning the preacher lifted up Christ upon the Cross and said—this is the import of the words he used—"You see the Hebrew Prophet raise the brazen serpent high upon the Cross. Look, look, you that are bitten with serpents! Turn here your

eyes—however swollen you are, do but look! There is life in a look at the brazen serpent for any of you, for all of you.” And then the preacher said, “See Jesus hanging there on His Cross? His wounds are streaming. His head is bowed down with grief. There is life in a look at the Crucified. Sinner, there is life this moment for you.”

He explained that to look was simply to trust Christ and to put one's confidence in the blood and merits of the Lord Jesus. Well, the young man had heard that a great many times, but he had never heard it with his *conscience* before. It had never sunk deep down into his heart. Now it came home to him. Standing there in the aisle just as he was, conscious of his guilt and ruin, he turned his eyes to Jesus. He looked. He lived. He went his way like a man who had received a new life. He was blessed, happy, joyful! A tremendous burden had rolled into the deep sepulcher. The chains had been snapped from his manacled wrists. He was free! And whereas he could not creep before, he now ran and danced for joy and gladness of heart!

That is how it all came about. The conversion was so worked by his simply hearing his ruin and learning the remedy. The young man waited awhile in prayer and silent meditation and matured the piety which God had given him. He then came forward and made a profession of his faith. It was a happy day when he saw the pastor and told his experience, when he was joined to the Church and separated from the world. From that day all that knew him could but marvel at the change.

And now comes the question, “*Why did some believe?*” Well, it was not any difference in the *preacher*, for the same preacher addressed both. It was not any difference in the sermon, for the same sermon was preached to all the people and yet some believed and some did not. It could not be the power of persuasion, for there were some that were persuaded and some that were not by the very same address. Nor can we attribute it to a difference of constitution, for that were to make salvation of *works*, and not of Divine Grace. Were we to bring up the old legal Covenant again, and thus preach another Gospel, then we should be accursed. I only know of one answer to this question, “*Why did some believe?*”

And the answer is this—*because God willed it*. “He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion.” “It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” If any man is saved, it is not because he willed to be saved. If any man is brought to Christ, it is not of any effort of his. The root, the cause, the motive of the salvation of any human being, and of all the chosen in Heaven is to be found in the predestinating purpose and sovereign distinguishing will of the Lord, our God. I know some Christians do not hold this as a doctrine, but I believe there is no Christian alive who does not believe it as a matter of experience.

I was once with a good Christian man who was a little blind in both eyes, and he laid down this theory—if God gave Grace to one, He was bound—just listen to this—He was bound to give it to all. God, he said, was no respecter of persons, which I interpret to mean that He did not owe anything to anybody, but did just as He liked with them. But he understood it to mean that God gave alike to all, and that if He gave any-

thing to one, He must give the same to another. You see, however, that if it is a matter of debt to anybody, then it is not a matter of Grace any longer. Well, after that, we had prayer, and my friend prayed for his own family and his unconverted relatives—yes, actually prayed to God to give *more Grace* to them that they might believe and be saved!

When he had done, I said, “Well now, that would have been a very proper prayer for me to offer, because I think it just for God to give more to one than He does to another. But it was a very improper prayer for you, and completely subversive of your own theory. In fact, you have no right to make a distinction, and to pray for your own child more than for anybody else’s child. According to your scheme you believe that God ought to serve all alike, whereas I believe that no man has any claim on God—that if He pleases to save anyone He has a right to do it—and that if men perish they perish because they deserve to perish. And I, therefore, can present special petitions to God for special persons.”

I remember hearing of a case where a very high Calvinistic Brother never would believe that a Wesleyan could have the Grace of God in him, so bigoted was he to his own views. One night there was a Prayer Meeting and the gas would not light. They could not get it to light, and at last it was proposed to hold the meeting in the dark. A Wesleyan prayed first. He was at the far end of the room and he prayed, oh, so sweetly! Our Calvinistic friend said—“What a delightful prayer! What a depth of doctrinal knowledge! What a blessed character that person must be!”

So he watched for him when he came out—he stood at the door to find him. And to his surprise discovered who had been offering the prayer that was so full of Divine Grace and the Truth of God. I believe that if once we came to real, experimental godliness, we should not find a child of God anywhere that would not in some form or other subscribe to the substance of what I have asserted—that it is *God* who quickens the souls of those who believe—and that if men are saved all the glory must be unto God from first to last. And not an atom nor a particle can be attributed to the goodness, or the power, or the will of the creature. This is a doctrine which some people have not learned very fully yet, but they will have to learn it if they are God’s people.

Jonah, you know, had never learned it from the schools, but when the Lord got him in the whale’s belly, at the bottom of the mountains, with the weeds wrapped about his head, then it was that he said, “Salvation is of the Lord.” And often some sore trials and terrible afflictions are necessary schoolmasters to teach us this lesson—that salvation is of the Lord, alone.

Now let me change the note and speak *a few words respecting the some that believe not*. They are of different characters. Some of you were brought up at a Sunday school. You have attended a place of worship nearly all your lives, and yet you have not believed in Christ. There are others who do not often go to the House of God—in fact they have got into the habit of spending their Sundays in dissipation or frivolity. These are among the some that believe not, and some of them try to quiet their conscience by pretending that they do not believe the Bible to be true.

They set up for Atheists, or Deists, or Freethinkers, and when they can get some fools to applaud them, they vent out their spleen against the

Saints, and their blasphemy against God—albeit they do not believe their own blasphemies. Their consciences are uneasy. Atheism affords no rest for the sole of man's foot. Let a man go to the utmost extent in abandoning moral restraints and disowning religious obligations, there is still an aching void within him which even Hell itself cannot fill. The man feels that he wants something, he knows not what, but it is the Cross of Christ and faith in a crucified Savior that alone can supply the cravings of man's inner nature.

Some of these people that believe not are very moral. There is that young lady yonder, amiable and admirable in her degree, but she does not believe, therefore the crudeness of her tastes, the want of harmony in the colors that vary her disposition. There is that young man over there who is full of commercial integrity, his employer would trust him with a bag of untold gold. But he is among the some that believe not. And with strange inconsistency he relies on one virtue which procures him respect among men, to cover a thousand vices which proclaim his alienation from God.

On the other hand, there are a great many of them who are debauched and who go very far astray. We must put you all down together. There are no third parties. You either believe or you do not. If you have believed in Jesus, bless and praise almighty God, but if you have not, listen a moment while I try to answer the question—*Why do you not believe?* There are some people who will be ready to say, "Just listen what contradictory doctrine is preached!" I cannot help it. The only reason why you do not believe in Christ is because you *will not*. The reason why you are an unbeliever at this hour is your own will, and nothing but your own will.

It is not that you have not heard the Gospel. You have heard it! It is not because it is unworthy of your credence. It is the most reliable intelligence in all the world. It is not because it does not deserve your faith. It claims and demands it. It is not because you have never been aroused. You have had impressions without number. You know when you had that fever. You know there was a something striving with you that would have brought you to the Cross, but you would not come. The reason why you have not come to Jesus is contained in Christ's own words—"You will not come unto Me that you might have life."

Give me not back an answer that would excuse yourself and charge God foolishly. It is not God's fault that you are not a Believer. It is your own fault and your own fault, alone. I know there are some very wicked persons, and some on the other hand, who claim to be very orthodox, who lay the damnation of men at God's door—but God forbid that your soul or mine should have any sympathy with such blasphemy as that! I will suppose a case. There is a woman who has stabbed her own child, reddened her hands with the blood of her own offspring. She is brought up to the court to be tried for murder, and she makes use of a singular defense.

Her counsel bids her be silent. But she will speak. She says, "My Lord and gentlemen of the jury, I am not guilty. I did stab my child it is true, but I did it as the agent of God. I was decreed to do it. I could not help it. I was predestinated to do it, and the fault, therefore, lies not with me, but with God." Now the impression made in the court would be this—that a person whose moral sense was so depraved would be quite capable of

murder or any other crime. A state of heart which would allow a person to give utterance to such a saying against God would allow murder to be thought of without any compunction whatever. I should not wonder at such a remark being made by the culprit.

But suppose the lawyer, himself, the woman's counsel, should get up and claim the attention of the judge and the jury, and should say, "Gentlemen, really, this woman is not guilty when you come to think of it, for it was foreordained from before the foundation of the world that she should do this. She was predestinated to it, and therefore, my Lord, moral culpability does not rest with her." Can you think what the judge would say—such a man as the late good Lord Chancellor Campbell? Why, I think I see him rise from his seat and exclaim, "Hold your tongue, Sir, or else change your line of argument! For as long as I am one of the judges of this realm I will never sit in this court to hear God openly and publicly blasphemed. If you do not change your line of argument the usher shall put you out."

And I am sure every Englishman in the court would applaud a judge for so saying. Verily you would hold your breath and feel your blood chilled in your veins at the very idea of murder being laid at the door of God. What then shall I say of those men, calling themselves ministers of Christ, but who become the devil's advocates, and preach that the ruin of men's souls is the result of Divine Sovereignty, that God's decree damns men, and not their own sins? O my Soul, come not into their secret—with their confederacy be not joined! This is sewing pillows to all armholes! This is, indeed, stuffing beds with down for sinners to sleep on, till at last they wake up in damnation!

Sinner, you know it is a lie. It is a gross lie to say that God is responsible for your damnation. If your soul shall perish, it shall perish as a suicide. For you will have ruined yourself. "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself." If the damned in Hell could be made to believe that they did not deserve to be there, why Hell would be no Hell to them. But this is the sting of perdition—"I deserve this!" You will see written in lines of fire—"You knew your duty, but you did it not!" And when you cry for mercy, this shall be God's answer—"I called and you refused. I stretched out My hand and no man regarded it. I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear comes."

Do I hear someone say, "Why, that is Arminianism!" Precisely so. But some people say the truth lies between Calvinism and Arminianism. It does not. There is nothing between them but a barren wilderness. If you are asked why a man is saved, the only Scriptural answer is—"Sovereign Grace." Grace—unmoved by anything in the creature, flowing spontaneously from the mighty depths of the Divine heart. But if you are asked why are men damned? Answer this—"It is their *own sin*. Their own wicked, carnal, sensual, devilish nature—that they even dare to trample on the blood of Christ, to despise Jesus and to turn aside from Him that speaks from Heaven."

Never be frightened because one man says it is too high, or because another says it is too low. Take the Truth of God as you find it. Take it as it is in the Bible. "Well but," I hear one say, "are the two things consistent? Can you reconcile them?" I do want to reconcile them. They never

fell out. They are good friends. They are both true, and truths never quarrel. "Well," says one, "but I cannot see that they are quite straight." Have you ever been rowing in a boat on the water and remarked that your oars look bent? Are they bent? No. If you had an oar that was bent, and put it in a certain position it would look straight. But if it were a straight oar that you put in, and now that it should look bent is a mere optical illusion.

Why is this? Well, we are told it is because the rays of light pass through two different mediums—through the air and through the waters. These mediums are of different density, and therefore the ray of light is refracted and the thing looks bent, though it really is not. Now part of the truth is Divine—that part which has to do with Divine Sovereignty. And part of the truth is human—that which has to do with human responsibility. A great truth in passing through two such different media must look bent, and if it did not look bent, it would be strange, indeed. You may look at two lines. They are almost parallel, but not quite, and they do not meet anywhere that you and I can see, but they do meet somewhere that God can see.

When we get to Heaven we shall see where these two lines meet and we shall find, perhaps, that where we thought they were the farthest apart, was just the place where they touched each other. Of this, however, I am absolutely sure, man's conscience bears witness—it is one of the instinctive apprehensions of every enlightened man's mind—that if he is saved, it is of God's mercy. And that if he is lost, it is his own fault. I only want the witness of your own conscience to this point. In vain you drug conscience with nauseous doctrines. You may go and listen to something that is not pure Gospel, but a spurious compound. You never can stifle the deep conviction, that if you rebel against God you perish as the result of your own act and deed. The worm that never dies would cease to gnaw at your vitals if you could lay your ruin at God's door. And the fire that never can be quenched would have no meet fuel in your body and soul, if your own sins were not the cause of your own destruction.

And what does all this lead to? Why, it comes to this, dear Friends, that I must close *by dividing this* house. Sometimes, in the House of Commons, you know, when a person has been speaking and has been very prosy, and another man gets up to speak whom they do not want to hear, they will cry out, "Divide, divide." Then the House divides and the "Ayes" go out on one side and the "nays" on another. Well—I have not a convenient place here for some of you to go on one side of the house and some another—I do not suppose we could carry it out. But suppose this aisle now to represent the great division, and that the some that believe had to stand on this side, and the some that do not believe on that side.

There would soon be a change of seats, I expect. But do you know, I am afraid there would be a great number of you that would say, "Well, I cannot go on this side. I dare not say I do believe in Christ. And yet I cannot go to the other side. I dare not go there, it is such an awful thing to go with those that do not believe. Let me stand here in the aisle." No, no. There are only two places—Heaven and Hell—and there are only two sorts of people, the righteous and the wicked. The priests of Christian idolatry

have been preaching about purgatory for hundreds of years, but we do not believe in that doctrine, except as a means of filling their coffers while they make merchandize of souls.

We know that all the people that have died have either gone to Hell because they did not believe, or have gone to Heaven because they did. And we know that there has never been a cross between a Believer and an unbeliever. A man must be either dead or alive. There is no neutral ground. You must either be on one side with those who are alive, or on the other side with those who are dead and need to be quickened. Think not to halt between two opinions. For the most part those who are said to be halting between two opinions are really of one opinion—they do not intend to serve the Lord. They say in their hearts, “Who is the Lord that I should serve Him?”

Now will you do me this favor? I asked it once and it was blessed to the conversion of several. Will you take a little time alone, perhaps this evening. Take a paper and pencil, and after you have honestly and fairly thought on your own state and weighed your own condition before the Lord, will you write down one of two words—if you feel that you are *not* a Believer write down this word—“*Condemned.*” But if you are a Believer in Jesus and put your trust in Him, alone, write down the word, “*Forgiven.*” Do it, even though you have to write down the word, “condemned.” We lately received into Church fellowship a young man, who said—“Sir, I wrote down the word, “condemned,” and I looked at it. There it was. I had written it myself—“*Condemned.*”

As he looked, the tears began to flow, and the heart began to break. And before long he fled to Christ, put the paper in the fire and wrote down, “Forgiven.” This young man was about the sixth who had been brought to the Lord in the same way. So I pray you try it, and God may bless it to you. Remember you are either one or the other—you are either condemned or forgiven. Do not stand between the two. Let it be decided, and remember, if you are condemned today, you are not yet in Hell. There is hope still! Blessed be God, still is Christ lifted up and whoever believes on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

The gate of Heaven is not closed. The proclamation of mercy is not hushed. The Spirit of God still goes forth to open blind eyes and to unstop deaf ears. It is still preached to you, to every creature under Heaven—“Whosoever believes on the Son of God has everlasting life. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that be believes not shall be damned.” Believe! God help you to believe. Trust Jesus! Trust Him now. And may the Lord grant that your name may be written among the some that believe, and not among the some that believe not.

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