

# FOR HIS GLORY

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If I cannot defend the book of Genesis against the arithmetic of a prelate. If I cannot defend certain dogmas against the sneers of a clever unbeliever, I yet believe that I could do so if I were better taught. But if the doubters will come to battle with me about my blessed Lord and Master and the power of His blood and the secret of the Lord that is with them that fear Him, I will cut them in pieces as Samuel hewed Agag before the Lord—for my own experience makes me strong! Oh, it is sweet contending here, for reason is laughed to scorn! You might as well reason me out of a toothache, or convince me that I do not exist, as reason me out of my consciousness that I love Christ and that I am saved in Him!—  
CHS



## PLEAD YOUR SIN!

By Charles H. Spurgeon

The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force. There is none so violent as the man who is in desperate need! There is a person who has been without bread many hours and he asks you for charity in the street. You would pass him by, but he is famished, and he says, “Oh give me bread or I die!” He compels you to it.

And such is the prayer that prevails with God—when the soul cannot wait! When it *dares* not wait—when it fears lest it should shut its eyes and open them in Hell! Oh, God will not keep such a soul waiting long! I am always glad when I hear of convicted souls saying, “I went up into my chamber with the resolution that I would never come down again till I had found the Savior.” I always delight to hear of men and women who say, “I went upon my knees and cried to Him, saying, I will not let You go except You bless me.”

He *will* bless you! But if you will let Him go, He will go. And if you will not let Him go, you shall have your request of Him. “But who am I,” says one, “that I should plead thus? I have no right to hold Him thus.” ‘Tis true, but when a man is hungry—when a man is dying—he does not think of *rights*. He holds onto you, right or wrong. His *need* is his right.

Poor Soul, go and plead your need before God! Plead your sin! Tell Him you are wretched and undone without His Sovereign Grace. Use the strange argument which David used, the strangest in all the world—“For Your name’s sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great!”

Plead the very greatness of your sin as a reason for mercy! Plead the damnable character of your sin! Plead the certainty that you will soon be cast into Hell! Plead the fact that He might justly drive you from His Presence forever! Plead all that before Him and say, “Lord, if ever the heights and depths of Your Grace might be seen in saving an undeserving soul, I am just that one! If Your mercy wants to honor itself by saving the most undeserving, ill deserving, Hell-deserving sinner that ever lived, Lord, I am the man!

“If You want a platform on which to erect a monument of infinite Grace that men shall stand and wonder, and angels shall gaze on with  
(See **PLEAD!** on page 2)

## PRACTICAL GODLINESS

By A. W. Pink

“But be you doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”  
James 1:22.

It is much, very much to be thankful for, when the Holy Spirit has illumined a man’s understanding, dispersed the mists of error, and established him in the Truth. Yet *that* is only the beginning. The Holy Scriptures are “profitable” not only for “doctrine,” but also “for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16).

Observe well the order there: before we are ready to be instructed “in righteousness” (right doing), there is much in our lives that God “reproves,” and which *we* must “correct.” Necessarily so, for before conversion *everything* in our lives was *wrong!* All we did was for the gratifying of self, with no thought or concern for God’s honor and glory.

Therefore, the first great need, and the primary duty of every young convert is *not* to study the Old Testament types, or puzzle his brains over prophecy, but to diligently search the Scriptures in order to find out what is pleasing and displeasing to God—what He forbids and what He commands.

If you have been genuinely converted, then your first concern must

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## PLEAD!

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astonishment—Lord, here I am! If You want emptiness, here is one who is all emptiness! If You, as the Good Physician want a bad case, a glaring case, a desperate case to operate on, You will never have a worse case than mine! O God, turn aside and have pity upon me and show Your mighty power.”

This is the way to plead. Not your *merits*—they will never get a hearing—but your *misery*, your *sin*, your *guiltiness* before God—these are the arguments! And then if faith can come in and plead the blood, and say, “Did You not send Your Son to save sinners? Has He not said He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance? Is it not written that the Son of Man is come to seek and to save not the good, but that which was lost?”

Oh, if you can plead the blood in that fashion, you will not fail! His name is the Savior—He came to save His people from their sins! He died for the ungodly! He justifies the ungodly—the unrighteous He makes righteous through His own merits! If you can plead this, oh, then, you shall not wait long, for though God does not deliver till we cry, yet He does deliver when we cry. “He will deliver the needy when he cries; the poor also, and him that has no helper.”

Oh, what a mercy it is when the tide is ebbd right out and there is nothing left! It will turn now! It will turn now! The streams of Grace will turn now! When you are empty. When you are overwhelmed. When you are like a dish wiped out and there is not anything good left in you—*now* God will come to you! The darkest part of the night is that which precedes the dawn of the day. When God has killed you, He will make you live! When He has wounded you through and through, He will come to your healing—

**“‘Tis perfect poverty alone,**

**That sets the soul at large.**

**While we can call one mite our own,**

**We get no full discharge.**

**But let our debts be what they may,**

**However great or small.**

**As soon as we have nothing to pay,**

**Our God forgives us all.”**

May it be so now, for His name’s sake. Amen.

[Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307—Sermon #1037, Vol. 18—THE POOR MAN’S FRIEND—Read/download free, the entire sermon at [www.spurgeongems.org](http://www.spurgeongems.org).]

**PRAY THAT GOD WOULD BRING  
CONFUSION AND TRIBULATION  
TO INTERNET PORNOGRAPHERS!**

## PRACTICAL GODLINESS

(Continued from page 1)

be to form all the details of your life—in the home, in the church, in the world—*so as to please God*. And in the actual bringing of this to pass, the order will be “cease to do evil; learn to do well” (Isa 1:16, 17); “Depart from evil, and do good” (Psa 34:14 and cf. 37:27). There has to be a breaking down before there can be a building up (Eccl 3:3). There has to be an emptying of self before there is the filling of the Spirit. There has to be an unlearning before there is a true learning. And there has to be an hating of the “evil” before there is loving of the “good” (Amos 5:15 and cf. Rom 12:9).

Now the extent the young Christian *does* use the Holy Scriptures in a practical way, regulating his thoughts, desires and actions by their warnings and encouragements, their prohibitions and precepts, will very largely determine the measure in which he will enjoy God’s *blessing* on his life. As the moral Governor of this world, God takes note of our conduct and, sooner or later manifests His displeasure against our sins and His approval of a righteous walk by granting that measure of prosperity which is most for our good and His glory. In the keeping of His commandments “there is great reward” (Psa 19:11), in *this* life (1 Tim 4:8). O how much spiritual and temporal blessing most Christians miss through careless and disobedient conduct—see Isaiah 48:18!

The tragic thing is that instead of the average young Christian diligently studying God’s Word so as to discover all the details of the Divine will for him, he does almost anything and everything else. Many a one engages in “personal work” or some form of Christian “service,” while *his own* life remains full of things *displeasing to God!* The presence of those displeasing things in his life hinders God’s blessing upon his soul, body and temporal affairs—and to him it has to be said, “your sins have withheld good things from you” (Jer 5:25). God’s Word to His people is, “work out *your own* salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). But O how little of this “fear and trembling” is to be found anywhere today! Instead, there is self-esteem, self-confidence, boasting and carnal security.

There are others who give themselves unto the diligent study of doctrine, but, generally, they fail to realize that the doctrine of Scripture is not a series of intellectual propositions, but is “the doctrine which is *according to godliness*” (1 Tim 6:3). The “doctrine” or “teaching” of God’s holy Word is given not for the instruction of our brains, but for the regulation of all the details of our daily lives—and this in order that we “may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things” (Titus 2:10). But *that* can only be realized by a constant reading of the Word with one dominant purpose—to discover *what* God forbids and *what* He commands by our meditating frequently on what we have read—and by fervent prayer for supernatural Grace to enable us to obey.

If the young convert does not early form the habit of treading the path of practical obedience to God, then he will not have His ear when he prays! 1 John 3:22 states plainly one of the main conditions which we must constantly seek Grace to heed, if our petitions are to meet with acceptance—“And whatever we ask, we receive of Him because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” But if instead of submitting unto God’s holy requirements we follow our own inclinations, then it will be said, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear” (Isa 59:2). This is unspeakably solemn. O what a difference it makes whether or not we have experimental access to God!

Not only does the young Christian, by following a course of self-pleasing, reduce

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## CALVINISM: ITS EVANGELISM

By DANIEL E. PARKS, PASTOR

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*The evangelism of Calvinists expresses the sincere desire of God for sinners to turn to Him for salvation.* God declares in Ezekiel 18:23, 32, “Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?...And not that he should turn from his ways and live?...For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies...Therefore turn and live!” The Incarnate Son of God expresses the same desire in Matthew 23:37, saying, “How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.”

Calvinists express the same desire. We are not hesitant to say regarding our countrymen as Paul the Apostle said of his own in Romans 10:1: “My heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.” And we are not hesitant to share the profound sentiment he expressed in Romans 9:2f, “that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.” And with him we share the same desire for all humanity, saying with him in 1 Corinthians 9:22, “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

*The evangelism of Calvinists is directed to everyone.* We stress this fact because Arminians often misrepresent Calvinists as being concerned for preaching to only God’s elect. They therefore declare that we go about looking for the elect in order that we may preach the Gospel to them, thereby ignoring the non-elect.

This accusation is ludicrous! Calvinists have no means of knowing who the unregenerate elect are. God did not put some special physical identifying mark on the elect, such as a tulip tattooed on their foreheads, so that Calvinists could preach only to them and thereby not waste their time on the rest!

Rather, we Calvinists are diligent to obey the command of Jesus Christ in Mark 16:15 to, “Go into *all* the world and preach the Gospel to *every* creature.” And we Calvinists are diligent to obey the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19 to, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of *all* the nations.” And we Calvinists are diligent to fulfill the promise of Jesus Christ in Acts 1:8 to be “witnesses to Me...to the *end* of the earth.” And we Calvinists are diligent to overlook no man in our evangelism, declaring to all men everywhere the command of God in Isaiah 45:22—“Look to Me, and be saved, *all you ends of the earth.*”

*The evangelism of Calvinists fulfills accountability to God.* Applying to ourselves the admonition expressed by God in Ezekiel 3:17-19, we consider ourselves as watchmen on the walls of humanity to warn of the wrath to come. If we faithfully perform our duty we are absolved of all guilt if they disregard the warning. But if we do not, the blood of those who perish because of our silence is on our own hands. We therefore desire to be able to declare with Paul the Apostle in Acts 20:26f: “Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.”

*The evangelism of Calvinists views God’s calls to salvation not as invitations only, but also as His commands.* Scriptures throughout contain many invitations from God to sinners for them to come to Jesus Christ for salvation (e.g. Isa 45:22; Mat 11:28; Rev 22:17).

But these are not mere *invitations* only. Rather, “God...*commands* all men everywhere to repent,” (Acts 17:30), and to come to Christ. We Calvinists, therefore, emphasize the command expressed in Psalm 2:11f: “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.”

*The evangelism of Calvinists emphasizes the ministry of preaching the Word of God for the salvation of sinners.* We Calvinists do not hesitate to declare the Truth of God expressed by Paul the Apostle in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, that God sovereignly and graciously chose a people to salvation in Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world, and that the Holy Spirit will apply that salvation through the preaching of the Gospel.

This is in sharp contrast to the evangelistic appeal of Arminian evangelists. To them, preaching the Gospel is not enough! Rather, preaching is but a prelude to a ceremony of human invention never found in Holy Scriptures—an “invitation,” or “altar call.” Arminian preachers here invite sinners to be saved by “coming to the altar,” and saying, “yes,” to certain questions, and/or repeating after the preacher the so-called “sinners’ prayer.”

No preacher in Scriptures ever employed such a measure! Calvinists, therefore, condemn such ungodly devices and esteem in their place the preaching of the Gospel. We realize that those who disagree with us consider it foolish to rely only upon the preaching of the Gospel to the neglect of an “altar call.” But we also confess with Paul the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 1:18, 21—“the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God...it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”

*The evangelism of Calvinists does not deny the Sovereignty of God in salvation.* This is in sharp contrast to Arminian evangelists. They plead with their hearers, “God wants so very much to save you, but He is incapable of doing so unless *you* let Him. God the Father has chosen you to salvation, but the devil has chosen you for damnation and *you* must cast the deciding vote. Jesus Christ died for your sins, but His atoning work is worthless and all in vain unless *you* believe in Him. The Holy Spirit pleads with you to let Him cause you to be born-again, but He cannot do so unless you first believe in Christ. Please let God save you!”

One such Arminian preacher was so bold as to say, “Hell is a ghastly monument to the failure of the Triune God to save the multitudes who are there. I say it reverently, I say it with every nerve in my body tense—sinners go to Hell because God Almighty Himself cannot save them! He did all He could. He failed.” (Noel Smith, past president of the Bible Baptist Fellowship).

Calvinists do not commit this grievous error because we acknowledge the Sovereignty and Omnipotence of God. We declare in the words of Psalm 115:3, “But our God is in Heaven; He does whatever He pleases.” And we acknowledge what is taught in verses 4-8 of the same Psalm—that helpless gods are “idols,” and “the work of men’s hands” and that, “Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them.”

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# CALVINISM

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*The evangelism of Calvinists requires both repentance and faith from sinners.* Our Example *par excellence* in this regard is Jesus Christ. According to Mark 1:15f, He began His ministry by, “preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel.’” We, therefore, follow also the example of Paul the Apostle, who declared in Acts 20:20f, “I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also [Gentiles], *repentance* toward God and *faith* toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” So important are these two elements that we read in Hebrews 6:1 that, “the *elementary* principles of Christ” are established upon “the foundation of *repentance* from dead works and of *faith* toward God.”

This emphasis by Calvinists upon the necessity of both repentance and faith is in sharp contrast to Arminian evangelists: 1. Arminians misrepresent the Biblical command to “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved” (Acts 16:31). They equate with it an expression of human invention no Biblical preacher ever uttered—“Accept Jesus as your personal Savior.” 2. Arminians are woefully lacking in requiring repentance in their hearers, even though, “God...commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

The preaching of Biblical preachers resulted in their hearers experiencing “godly sorrow [which] produces repentance to salvation” (2 Cor 7:9f), and causing them to cry out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved” (Acts 16:30). The preaching of Arminian preachers results in their hearers often responding to “altar calls” nonchalantly, and in making a “decision for Christ” (another human invention never found in Scriptures) without ever living as a disciple of Christ.

Arminians call such persons “carnal Christians.” God declares otherwise, saying expressly that “to be carnally minded is death...Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, nor indeed can be.”

*The evangelism of Calvinists is Scriptural evangelism.* We exhort all mankind everywhere to “Repent and believe in the Gospel.” Have you obeyed?

## PRACTICAL GODLINESS

(Continued from page 2)

his prayers to empty words, but he brings down upon himself the rod of God and everything goes wrong in his life. That is one reason why, in these hard times, many Christians are suffering just as sorely as the poor worldlings are—*God is displeased with their ways* and does not show Himself strong on their behalf (2 Chron 16:9). The remedy calls for *real* heart-humbling before the Lord, godly sorrow, true repentance, unsparing confession, the firm determination to reform our ways—and *then* (and not before)—faith’s counting on God’s mercy and a patient expectation that He will work wonders for us if we now tread the path of full submission to Him.—Gleaned from Brother Pink’s *Studies in the Scriptures*, November, 1933.

## THINK ABOUT IT!

“Brothers and Sisters, we need not suppose that the sacramental host of God’s elect has come to the end of persecution! We may have done so in this country. I cannot tell. This I know, I would not aid in maintaining an unjust law to escape from persecution. I would not deny to the Roman Catholic his natural rights though I thought he would burn me and my fellow Believers as soon as he had the power! I would do him no wrong under the pretext of preventing him from doing a wrong to me. God forbid that we should do evil that good may come!

“True Protestantism does not live upon political favoritism or national supremacy. Truth can afford to let justice be done, for she knows that the right can never hurt her. We who worship Jesus in spirit can afford to do what is right and let consequences take care of themselves.

My Brothers and Sisters, let the worst come—let violence again assail us—we have overcome in days gone by, and can overcome again! Weak and feeble as we are today, when filled by the Holy Spirit we shall be strong and shall form a fresh band of martyrs to illustrate the faithfulness of God again! But we cannot, we *cannot* do violence to our consciences and the rights of other men even though it is to save our lives and preserve our liberties.”—

CHS

## ABOUT PREDESTINATION AND FREE WILL

I believe in predestination, yes, even in its very jots and tittles. I believe that the path of a single grain of dust in the March wind is ordained and settled by a decree which cannot be violated. I believe that every word and thought of man, every fluttering of a sparrow’s wing, every flight of a fly, the crawling of a beetle, the gliding of a fish in the depth of the sea—that everything, in fact—is foreknown and foreordained. But I do *equally* believe in the free agency of man, that man acts as he wills, especially in *moral* operations—choosing the evil with a will that is unbiased by anything that comes from God—biased only by his own depravity of heart and the perverseness of his habits.

I believe in man’s free agency in choosing the right, too, with perfect freedom—though sacredly guided and led by the Holy Spirit—but in such a way that his disposition is trained to choose and prefer the right and the true, not violently driven in the teeth of his own reluctance. He is free in his agency, for the Son of God has made him free. I believe that man is as free as if everything were left to chance and that he is as accountable as if there were no destiny whatever. Where the two Truths of God meet I do not know, nor do I *want* to know. They do not puzzle me, since I have given up my mind to believing them both.

They are thought by some to be antagonistic, the one contrary to the other. I believe them to be two parallel lines. They run side by side and perhaps even in eternity there is no point of contact between these two grand Truths of God.—CHS—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307—Sermon #886, Vol. 15—*A SAFE PROSPECTIVE*—Read/download entire sermon on [www.spurgeongems.org](http://www.spurgeongems.org).

# WHAT IS “GRACE”?

By Rev. Thomas Spurgeon, London, England  
[Son of Charles H. Spurgeon]

Once upon a time, I met, on board an Australian liner, an aged man of genial temperament, and of sound and extensive learning. He managed to dwell in well-nigh perpetual sunshine, for he followed the sun round the globe year after year, and he was himself so sunny that the passengers made friends with him, and sought information from him. It fell out that a discussion having arisen as to what “Grace” was, someone said, “Let us ask ‘The Walking Encyclopedia’—he will be sure to know.” So to him they went with their inquiry as to the meaning of the theological term, “Grace.”

They returned woefully disappointed, for all he could say was, “I confess that I don’t understand it.” At the same time he volunteered the following extraordinary statement—“I don’t think that they understand it either who so often speak of it.” Like the medical man of whom the Rev. T. Phillips told in his Baptist World Congress sermon who said of Grace, “It is utterly meaningless to me,” this well-read traveler comprehended it not. Some among us were hardly astonished at this, but it did occur to us that he might have allowed that it was just possible that on this particular theme, at all events, some less learned folk might be more enlightened than himself.

Now, it chanced that on that same vessel there was a Christian seaman, who, if he could not have given a concise and adequate definition of “Grace,” nevertheless knew perfectly well its significance, and would have said, “Ay, ay, Sir; that’s it,” with bounding heart and beaming face, if one had suggested that “Grace is God’s free, unmerited favor, graciously bestowed upon the unworthy and sinful.” And if Mr. Phillips himself had been on board, and had preached his Congress sermon there, and had declared that “Grace is something in God which is at the heart of all His redeeming activities, the downward stoop and reach of God, God bending from the heights of His majesty, to touch and grasp our insignificance and poverty,” the weather-beaten face would have beamed again, and the converted sailor-man would have said within himself, “Oh, to Grace how great a debtor, daily I’m constrained to be.”

Verily, the world through its wisdom knows not God. The true meaning of “Grace” is hidden from the wise and prudent, and is revealed to babes. “Cottage dames” are often wiser as to the deep things of God than savants and scientists. Our learned traveler dwelt in perpetual sunshine, but he was not able from experience to say, “God hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Dr. Dale, long years ago, lamented that the word, “Grace,” was becoming disused. It has, alas, been used a great deal less since then. His own definition of “Grace” is worth remembering—“Grace is love which passes beyond all claims to love. It is love which after fulfilling the obligations imposed by law, has an unexhausted wealth of kindness.” And here is Dr. Maclaren’s—“Grace—what is that? The word means, first, love in exercise to those who are below the lover, or who deserve something else; stooping love that condescends, and patient love that forgives. Then it means the gifts which

such love bestows; and then it means the effect of these gifts in the beauties of character and conduct developed in the receivers.”

Dr. Jowett puts the matter strikingly—“Grace is energy. Grace is love-energy. Grace is a redeeming love-energy ministering to the unlovely, and endowing the unlovely with its own loveliness.” Shall we hear Dr. Alexander Whyte hereupon? “Grace means favor, mercy, pardon. Grace and love are essentially the same, only Grace is love manifesting itself and operating under certain conditions, and adapting itself to certain circumstances. As, for instance, love has no limit or law such as Grace has. Love may exist between equals, or it may rise to those above us, or flow down to those in any way beneath us. But Grace, from its nature, has only one direction it can take. GRACE ALWAYS FLOWS DOWN. Grace is love indeed, but it is love to creatures humbling itself. A king’s love to his equals, or to his own royal house, is love; but his love to his subjects is called grace. And thus it is that God’s love to sinners is always called GRACE in the Scriptures. It is love indeed, but it is love to creatures, and to creatures who do not deserve His love. And therefore all He does for us in Christ, and all that is disclosed to us of His goodwill in the Gospel, is called Grace.”

Delightful as these definitions are, we are conscious that the half has not been told. O the exceeding riches of His Grace. Whereunto shall we liken the mercy of God, or with what comparison shall we compare it? It defies definition, and beggars description. This is hardly to be wondered at, for it is so Divine. There are some things of earth to which no human pen or brush has done justice—storms, rainbows, cataracts, sunsets, icebergs, snowflakes, dewdrops, the wings that wanton among summer flowers. Because God made them, man fails to describe them. Who, then, shall tell forth fully that which God has and is?

The definition we have quoted from Dr. Jowett is worthy of his great reputation, yet he himself confesses that “Grace” is indefinable. Thus choicely he puts it—“Some minister of the Cross, toiling in great loneliness, among a scattered and primitive people, and on the very fringe of dark primeval forests, sent me a little sample of his vast and wealthy environment. It was a bright and gaily colored wing of a native bird. The color and life of trackless leagues sampled within the confines of an envelope! And when we have made a compact little phrase to enshrine the secret of Grace, I feel that however fair and radiant it may be, we have only got a wing of a native bird, and bewildering stretches of wealth are untouched and unrevealed. No, we cannot define it.”

PRAY GOD WILL BE MERCIFUL AND RAISE UP  
MANY “SAULS OF TARSUS” AMONG  
THE PERSECUTORS OF HIS ELECT  
IN CHINA AND INDONESIA.

**PRAY FOR GRACE  
TO BE HOLY!**

## HERE I STAND!

By Donald S. Fortner, Pastor

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I believe and preach the Gospel of God's free and Sovereign Grace as it is plainly revealed in the Word of God. We place no confidence in the flesh. We believe, trust and worship God in the glory of His Sovereign Majesty. We rest our souls upon the merits of Christ's righteousness and shed blood, trusting Him alone as our all-sufficient Savior. I preach to men an effectual, accomplished redemption.

Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and Perseverance of the Saints are household words in this house of worship, and they shall be so long as I am pastor here. We will not compromise the Gospel!

I refuse to recognize any man as a Gospel preacher who, for whatever reason, refuses to publicly proclaim these basic Truths of the Gospel. They are vital! The more men oppose these blessed Truths, the more they are enraged by them, the more forcefully I intend to preach them. I know no Gospel but the Gospel of pure, free, sovereign, effectual Grace. Here I stand! I cannot do otherwise. The glory of God, the Gospel of Christ, and the souls of eternity-bound men and women compel me to tell the truth.

## REFLECTIONS

Gems gleaned by Jim Robinette

<http://www.actionuganda.net/>

Reflections is a Christian meditation sent by ACTION Uganda Ministries and is meant to encourage and edify.

### LEARN FROM THE EAGLE!

A looking at Christ will tend greatly to the weakening and unfruitfulness of faith. It is said that the eagle's eyes become strong through the early discipline of the parent—placed in such a position when young, as to fix the gaze intently upon the sun—the power of vision gradually becomes so great as to enable it, in time, to look at its meridian splendor without uneasiness and to descry the remotest object without difficulty.

The same spiritual discipline strengthens the eyes of faith. The eyes grow vigorous by looking much at the Sun of Righteousness! The more constantly they gaze upon Jesus, the stronger they grow, the more Glory they discover in Him, the more beauty in His Person, and perfection in His work. Thus strengthened, they can see things that are afar off—the promises of a Covenant-keeping God, the hope of eternal life, the crown of Glory—these they can look upon and almost touch!

“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” And of the Old Testament worthies it is recorded by the same Spirit—“These all died in faith, not having received the promises but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

O precious, costly Divine Grace of the Eternal Spirit! Who would not possess You? Who would not mortify everything that would wound, enfeeble and cause You to decay in the soul?—Octavius Winslow from *Personal Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul*. Published by The Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle, PA, 2000

## WHAT DID YOU COME TO HEAR?

By Charles H. Spurgeon

Many persons, in hearing a sermon, are like children looking at a cornfield—it is full of yellow garlic, or perhaps of scarlet poppies, and they cry, “What a lovely field!” But the farmer doesn't think so—he is looking for the corn. Many a hearer watches for pretty speeches and flowery metaphors, and cries, “How well he puts it! What a well-turned sentence! How sweetly he quotes poetry!” and so on. Bah! Is that what you come to God's House for? O Fools, and slow of heart! Is this your end in hearing the life-giving Gospel of the bleeding Lamb? I assure you it is not this that we are aiming at in preaching to you! If you came to look after the good corn, you would care little for the gaudy poppies of a flaunting eloquence so much regarded by the men of these days.

Come with the intent to find faith in Jesus! Cry to God to make His Word effectual to your salvation, and then hearing will be quite another business with you! Alas, I fear you will perish, let us preach as we may, while we are regarded by you as mere orators to be criticized and not as a witnesses whose testimony is to be weighed.

Some do not hear aright for need of attention. Sleepy hearers are not likely to be led to faith. Eutychus may fall from the third loft and be taken up for dead, but he is not likely to become a Believer by sleeping, even though Paul should be the preacher. We need attention in order to hear the real reception of the Word of God. Oh how pleasant it is to preach to earnest hearers who lean forward to catch every syllable, anxious to know how they can be saved! Wandering hearts lose the benefit of the Truth of God and vain minds trifle away the privilege of a Gospel ministry. Take heed how you hear, otherwise you may remain hearers only, and so perish in unbelief!—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.—Sermon #1031, Vol. 18—HOW CAN I OBTAIN FAITH?—Read/download the entire sermon free of charge at [www.spurgeongems.org](http://www.spurgeongems.org).

**STUDY OF EPHESIANS****CHRIST THE MIGHTY VICTOR—PART 5**

We recently looked at the statement in Ephesians 4:7 where the Apostle tells us that the fact that the church is one and that the Holy Spirit has given to the church a deep unity, does not mean that there is no diversity in the church. In fact, he tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ has given spiritual gifts to each one in the church. And because of this, as each Believer uses the spiritual gift Christ has given him for the good of the church, he is helping the whole church.

Having made the general statement, the Apostle apparently was compelled to elaborate and explain what he had just said. For the question that naturally arises is how Christ came to be the distributor of the gifts He has given to the church. Paul answers this question in verse 8. Here, he quotes from Psalm 68:18 and shows us that in fulfillment of this Scripture, Jesus, upon His ascension, was given the authority and rewards of His perfect work of redeeming His people. These rewards He in turn distributes to His people in the form of gifts.

Now, having given that explanation of how Jesus came to give gifts to each one in the church, Paul feels compelled to explain his explanation. For there is a further question which is raised by his referring to Jesus' ascension. Paul realizes that the one who reads what he has just quoted from Psalm 68 might be asking the question, "How can you speak about God ascending?" For remember, we looked together at the context of the statement which is quoted from Psalm 68 and saw that it is a reference to YAH, which is the Old Testament name for God. But, when did YAH, Almighty God, ever descend so that He could be spoken of as ascending up on high and leading captivity captive?

The Apostle wants us to see that there is really only one event in all of history that can make sense of his statement. The only way you can speak of God ascending is if He first descended. The only One in all of history who is YAH, the Almighty God, who has ever descended is the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is exactly what Paul is saying in Ephesians 4:9-10—"(Now this, 'He ascended'; what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)"

But, as simple and straightforward as that explanation is, these two verses have become very controversial in the church over the centuries. The controversy is over the differences of interpretation of the expression at the end of verse 9—"He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth." Therefore, what I would like for us to do in the first part of our consideration of this passage together is to consider what is the meaning of this expression. Then, we will go on to look at the statement dealing with the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ which follows in verse 10.

Let me begin our consideration of this statement at the end of verse 9 which says that Jesus also descended into the lower parts of the earth by asking you a question. Have you ever thought about what is meant by the statement in the Apostles' Creed which says that Jesus, after His death and burial, "descended into Hell"? There are thousands of people repeating that phrase every week who, perhaps, do not give it very much thought.

Part of the reason for that expression in the Apostles' Creed is based upon a popular interpretation of the very verse we are studying here in Ephesians 4:9. For it is believed, perhaps even by a majority of commentators, that the reference here to Jesus descending "into the lower parts of the earth" is teaching that Jesus, sometime after being placed in the tomb and yet prior to His Resurrection, actually went down to Hell. What do those

who take this view believe that Jesus did when He went to Hell? Here, they bring in 1 Peter 3:17-20—"For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine long-suffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water."

Now, what is believed by many to be the proper interpretation of verses 19 and 20 of this passage is that Jesus personally went to Hell during the time when His body was in the tomb and preached to those unbelievers who had died at the time of the flood in the days of Noah. And what was it that they believe He preached when He went to Hell? Some believe that Jesus was giving those who were impenitent in the days of the flood a second chance to repent and believe the Gospel. Others think that He simply announced to them His victory at the Cross. There are a few other interpretations which are offered to explain the passage we are looking at. But you will find that the vast majority believe something along the lines of the view just explained.

Now the great question is, "Is this in fact what Ephesians 4:9 is saying?" Did Jesus "descend into Hell" and preach? Let me take a few moments, Brothers and Sisters, to tell you why I believe that this is not the correct interpretation and why such an interpretation misses entirely the point that the Apostle is making.

In the first place, the Bible is very plain in its teaching that there are no second chances in regard to the opportunity to be saved. The Roman Catholic invention of "purgatory is nowhere to be found in the Bible. Neither can we find any support for the idea that Jesus would have given anyone a second chance to believe. Everywhere the Scriptures tell us that what one does with Jesus Christ IN THIS LIFE will determine where he spends eternity.

On one of his mission trips, Paul came to the city of Antioch and, as was his custom, he went first to the Jews to announce to them the way of salvation through Christ. When they rejected his message, we read in Acts 13:46, "Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, 'It was necessary that the Word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.'" The Jews' rejection of the Gospel meant inevitably, the Apostle told them, that they were "unworthy of everlasting life."

Paul pleaded urgently with the Corinthians to heed what he had preached to them. He wrote to them in 2 Corinthians 6:2, "For He says: 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." NOW is the day of salvation. If one goes to his death without believing God's message, he will never have another opportunity!

Furthermore, why should those who lived in Noah's day be made exceptions to this principle when they, of all people, had an unusually long opportunity to heed the message? Noah preached to

*(Continued on page 8)*

*(Continued from page 7)*

the people of his day, Scripture tells us, for 120 YEARS! If God gave them a second chance, what would He say to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, or anyone else, for that matter, as to why they didn't have a second chance?

Let me pause to say that I hope that none reading this is living with any type of false security that there will be "second chances" to be saved after death. In the parable Jesus told of the rich man and Lazarus, He conveyed something of how the rich man wished he had it to do over, but it was too late. Oh, be sure that you NOW belong to the Lord, and let us be bold to tell others of Him. John 3:36 says, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Furthermore, it is not difficult to determine what Peter means by his statement in 1 Peter 3 if we simply look at the context. In this Epistle, Peter is preparing his readers for judgment. He tells them in 1 Peter 4:17, "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the Gospel of God?" In chapter three Peter is comparing what will happen when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in Glory to what happened in the days of Noah. He is telling them that there is only one way to be ready for what is coming and that is to be in the Ark. Just as the only ones saved in Noah's day are those who got into the Ark, so the only ones who will be saved at the coming of Christ are those who are in the Ark of Jesus Christ.

Now, if you look again at verse 18 you see that Peter does not even say that Jesus Himself did the preaching which he speaks of in verses 19 and 20. He says "by the Spirit" Jesus preached to the disobedient in Noah's day. What does this mean? Peter is saying what the Bible everywhere teaches when it says that God is the one speaking through the preaching of the Word. In Noah's day, Noah, by the power of the Holy Spirit, preached to his generation. What Peter is saying to his readers is that there is a judgment coming even greater than the Flood. And unless one is set free from bondage to sin by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, he, too, will be condemned when Jesus returns. The "spirits in prison" then, refer to those who, like the people in Noah's day, refused to believe, reject Jesus Christ and are still in the bondage of sin.

This explanation of the passage is consistent with the rest of Scripture. Nowhere does the Bible speak of second chances for repentance or of Jesus Christ descending into Hell. This has simply been read into these passages, but it is not what the passages themselves say.

Now, let us come back to our passage in Ephesians 4:9-10 to see that what Paul is saying is really very simple and, at the same time, very profound and wonderful. When he says at the end of verse 9 that Jesus "also descended first into the lower parts of the earth," he is simply talking about the Incarnation. The expression "lower parts of the earth" is simply a picturesque way of speaking of Christ's coming to earth. But more than that, it is designed to convey the awesome humility of the Savior who left Glory in order to become the Savior of mankind.

In other words, by this statement, Paul is simply saying what he says so powerfully and beautifully in the words of Philippians 2:5-11: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a Man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the Cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should

bow, of those in Heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

How do we know this is the correct interpretation? Well, it is confirmed by the Scriptures in many ways. For instance, Isaiah 44:23 says, "Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it! Shout, you lower parts of the earth. Break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, And glorified Himself in Israel." It is obvious that in this passage, the expression "lower parts of the earth" can only refer to the earth. For the Prophet Isaiah goes on to tell us what he means by telling the mountains and the forest to sing praise to God. Furthermore, if you look at Ephesians 4:10, you see that the "lower parts of the earth" in verse 9 are in contrast to His ascending "far above all heavens." Well, the Bible is plain that there is nothing above Heaven. The highest Heaven is the place of God's dwelling, and there is nothing above that. But again, this is Biblical language to tell us that Jesus descended to the greatest depths and then rose to the highest heights.

But most important, perhaps, are those statements which were made by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He said in John 3:13, "No one has ascended to Heaven but He who came down from Heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in Heaven." Here it is obvious that the ascending and descending spoken of refer to His coming down from heaven and His returning there. In like manner we read His words in John 6:38, "For I have come down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

Up to this point, we have been involved with a rather extensive bit of exposition and explanation. But I would dare say that if you are a Believer in Jesus Christ, you want to know these things. You want to understand what the Bible means so that you will know what it is teaching. And it is impossible for us to make a right application of the Bible until we are first clear about what it is teaching. So having taken up some of the technicalities and looked at some of the phrases in detail, we must now step back and see what a tremendous thing is being presented to us here in verses 8-10. For what we have here has been rightly described by another as nothing less than an overview of the great drama of salvation. In these three brief verses, the Apostle Paul is presenting to us a summary of how the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our salvation.

Look at the terms which the Apostle is using here, and it helps to bring out the bigger picture. He refers in his quotation from Psalm 68:18 in verse 8 to "leading captivity captive." Roman Catholicism teaches that this meant that Jesus rescued Old Testament Believers from a place where they were being held. But this is another fanciful view which entirely misses the Apostle's point. What is being referred to here is the great victory which Jesus Christ accomplished on the Cross. I remind you of the picture which the language Paul is using is designed to convey. He is referring to the ancient practice of victorious generals who return from war and distribute the spoils of their victory to their fellow countrymen. But they also make a display of those they have defeated by making them tag along at the end of the procession. Here, the Apostle is telling us that Jesus defeated our great enemies when He descended from Heaven in order that He might die the horrible death of the Cross.—PF

**WHAT THINK YOU OF CHRIST?**

## Letters to Mike Gendron of Proclaiming the Gospel:

ptg@pro-gospel.org  
www.pro-gospel.org

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**S. L., Woodbine, GA, writes**—Recently returned from my Philippine trip and wanted you to know your book, *Preparing Catholics for Eternity*, was very well received. All raved over the accuracy. I had the pleasure to meet and minister with a former Bishop who has renounced the Catholic church and is winning thousands to Christ! He went ape over the book. I was wondering if you could get it printed and distributed over there in the Philippines? There is such a need for this. The church I work with has a Bible School that trains pastors and ministers. They are using your book as a course this semester! So many after glancing at it, literally begged me to give them one! I taught over 1000 Church workers and pastors in conferences while there. Everyone wanted one! I hope you will consider it. There are over 65 million lost Catholics in the Philippines.

**Vincent, Internet, writes**—You have separated yourself from Christ. Since you were a Catholic, you're going to Hell if you do not return to the One True Fold. Praying for your return.

**Brother Mike responds**—I was separated from Christ for over 30 years as a Catholic. Once I was reconciled to God by Grace through faith in Jesus, I separated myself from the apostate church of Rome to worship God in Spirit and Truth (John 4:24). Why would any born-again Christian return to a church that is under God's condemnation? (Gal 1:6-9).

**N.C., Garland, TX, writes**—Mike, I feel that a mere thank you is so inadequate to express how I feel. However I hope you will accept my heartfelt thank you for baptizing me and for leading me to the Truth of God. I am grateful to have been invited to your Bible study and feel like so many things came together to inspire me on that first night. I feel like you opened my eyes and allowed me to see. I was so moved that you answered all my questions with Scripture. I learned what the Bible says as well as what it does not say. It seems oddly poignant to me that I didn't feel lost and yet now I feel like I have found the right path. Thank you for leading me to the beginning of my journey. I look forward to my studies with you and Jane and our group.

**Rev. C. G., Hartford, CT, writes**—Please read the enclosed book *Pillar of Fire, Pillar of Truth* by Catholic Answers. The essentials of belief are there. As long as I am faithful to my Faith and do my best to love God and continue in God's service as one of His priests, I know God will bless me with eternal life. Why you left the Catholic Church, I do not know, but I wish you would return to the church of your parents. (Editor's note: This is the gospel of the Roman Catholic Church as communicated by my uncle—a Catholic priest of 58 years).

**L. T., Watsonville, CA, writes**—I devour and relish each edition of your newsletter and thank you for your tenacious defense of the Gospel. What a gift from our Lord you have in defending the Truth of God against the misguided people who come against your work and efforts. You address people in love, and yet with sharp and brief comments that strike a swift blow to deception. We appreciate you, and thank our Lord Jesus Christ for your ministry. We pray for you daily. I have a precious Catholic Aunt whom I dearly love. She will be 90 this month. I have shared the Gospel with her over and over again through the years, seeking in every imaginable way to make it plain. I have even exposed her Catholic teaching with the Truth of God's Word in ways that should have highly offended her, in the hopes of bringing her to faith in Christ alone. She listens to me, but still holds to her church and it's teaching. I believe she is blind to the Truth of God. It is so foreign to her. I pray for her daily knowing that only God can illumine the heart and mind and save a lost soul. And there, but for the Grace of God, go I.

**R. K., Alexandria, VA, writes**—As I was witnessing at St. Anthony's Catholic Church today, an elderly lady tore up your *Eucharistic Adoration* newsletter that I gave her. I could tell her husband felt bad for me and embarrassed for her. It's sad that Catholics are held in bondage to this false Roman system. Catholics are dying daily, Hell is filling up quickly, and the world just keeps going on and on like it's no big deal.

**C. L., St. Petersburg, FL, writes**—Too exhausted to give detailed praise reports, but the resources I've gotten through you have been great tools here in producing fruit, winning souls.

**R. S., Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan, writes**—I am watching your *Death Of Discernment* DVD. So much is bottled up inside me as I hate to say too much! I shall learn more about your activities as I watch many more messages and hear the harvesting news and the encouragement and comfort to the wounded, perplexed, downcast saints scattered everywhere. I can't believe what I have witnessed in churches in Japan. They have members that include Moonies, Jehovah Witnesses and even "Soka-Gakkai," a dangerous radical group notorious for their public tortures. I have recovered from much of my distress as I grew more mature in the Lord. He provided me with many good teachings from distant ministries that fed and kept me close to Jesus. So I'm thankful for your ministry and teaching. I will remember you before the Throne of God in Jesus Christ and pray that your messages reach out to a greater breadth and to the end of the world. May God use you as His mouthpiece to deliver people from their deceptions.

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## IS THE WORD OF GOD SWEETER THAN HONEY TO YOUR TASTE?

By Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Notice, first, THE WORD APPRECIATED. This exclamation of David is a clear proof that he set the highest possible value upon the Word of God. The evidence is more valuable because the Scripture that David had was but a slender book compared with this volume which is now before us. I suppose he had little more than the five Books of Moses, and yet as he opened that Pentateuch, which was to him complete in itself, he said, “How sweet are Your Words to my taste!” If that first morsel so satisfied the Psalmist, surely this fuller and richer feast of heavenly dainties ought to be yet more gratifying to us! If, when God had but given him the first dish of the course, and that by no means the best, his soul was ravished with it, how should you and I rejoice with unspeakable joy, now that the King has brought on royal dainties and given us the Revelation of His dear Son! Think a minute. The Pentateuch is what we would call, nowadays, the historical part of Scripture—and haven’t you frequently heard persons say, “Oh, the sermon was historical, and the minister read a passage out of the historical parts of the Word?” I have, with great pain, heard persons speak in a very depreciating manner of the histories of Holy Writ. Now, understand this—the part of the Word which David loved so much *is* mainly historical—and if the mere history of the Word was so sweet, what ought those holy Evangels and sacred Epistles to be which declare the mystery of that narrative—which are the honey whereof the Old Testament is but the comb—which are the treasures of which the Old Testament is but the casket? Surely we are to be condemned, indeed, who do not prize the Word now that we have it all!

That Word of God which David so much prized was mainly typical, shadowy, symbolical. I do not know that he understand it all. I *do* know that he understood *some* of it, for some of his Psalms are so evangelical that he must have perceived the great Sacrifice of God foreshadowed in the sacrifices described in the books of Numbers and Leviticus, or it would not have been possible that he would, in so marvelous a style, express his faith in the great offering of our Lord Jesus! I put it to some professors here, do you often read the types at all? If, now, your Bible was so circumscribed that all was taken from you but the Pentateuch, would you be able, to say, “Your Word is sweet to my taste?” Are not many of us so little educated in God’s Word that if we were confined to the reading of that part of it, we would be obliged to confess it was unprofitable to us? We could not give a good answer to Philip’s question, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Oh, shame on us that with so many more Books, and with the Holy Spirit so plenteously given to guide us into all the Truth of God, we should seem to value at least half of the Word of God even less than David did!

A great portion of the Pentateuch is taken up with precepts and I may say of some of them that they are grievous. Those commandments which are binding upon us are not grievous. Some of the commands of Leviticus and Deuteronomy are so complex and so entrenched upon the whose domestic life of a man that they were a yoke of bondage, according to Peter, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. Yet, that wondrous 20<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Exodus with its Ten Commandments, and all the long list of the precepts of the Ceremonial Law which you may, perhaps, account wearisome to

read, David says were sweet to his taste, sweeter than honey to his mouth! What? Did he so love to hear His heavenly Father speak that it did not much matter to him what He said as long as He did but speak, for the music of His voice was gladdening in its every tone to him? Now that you and I know that all the bondage of the Ceremonial Law is gone, that nothing remains of it but blessing to our souls—and now that we are not under the Law, but under Grace—and have become inheritors of rich and precious and unspeakably great promises, how is it that we fall so far short and do not, I fear, love the Word of God to anything like the degree that David loved it?

David here speaks of all God’s Words, without making any distinction concerning some one of them. So long as it was God’s Word, it was sweet to him, whatever form it might take. Alas, this is not true of all professors. With an unwise partiality, they pronounce some of God’s Words very sweet, but other portions of God’s Truth are rather sour and unsavory to their palates. There are persons of a certain class who delight in the Doctrines of Grace. Therein they are to be commended, for which of us do not delight in them if we know our interest in them? The Covenant and the great Truths of God which grow out of the Covenant—these are unspeakably precious things and are rightly enough the subjects of joy to all Believers who understand them! Yet certain of these persons will be as angry as though you had touched them with a hot iron if you should bring a precept anywhere near them—and if you insist upon anything being the duty of a Believer, the very words seem to sting them like a whip—they cannot endure it! If you speak of the “holiness without which no man shall see the Lord,” and speak of it as a holiness which is worked in us by God the Holy Spirit and as a holiness of mind and thought and action—a personal holiness which is to be seen in the daily life—they are offended. They can say, “How sweet are Your doctrinal Words to my taste, but not Your precepts, Lord! Those I do not love. Those I call legal. If your servants minister them, I say they are generating bondage and I go away from them, and leave them as Arminians, or duty-faith men or something of that kind—for I love half Your Word and only half of it.” Alas, there are not a few of that class to be found here and there. And there are some who go on the other side! They love God’s Word in the precepts of it, or the promises, but not the Doctrines. If a Doctrine is preached, they say it is dangerous—too high—it will elevate some of God’s servants to presumption! It will tempt them to think lightly of moral distinctions! It will lead them to walk carelessly because they know they are safe in Christ! Thus they, too, only love one half of the Truth of God, and not the whole of it. But, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I hope you are of the same mind as David. If God shall give you a promise, you will taste it, like a wafer of honey, and feed on it. And if He shall give you a precept, you will not stop to look at it, and say, “Lord, I don’t like this as well as the promise,” but you will receive *that* and feed upon *that* also! And when the Lord shall be pleased afterwards to give you some revelation with regard to your inward experience, or to your fellowship with His dear Son, you welcome it with joy because you love any Truth and every Truth as long as you know it to be the Truth of God’s own Word!

It is a blessed sign of Grace in the heart when God’s Words are sweet to us as a whole—when we love the Truth of God, not cast into a

(See *SWEETER THAN HONEY* on page 11)

## SWEETER THAN HONEY

(Continued from page 10)

system or a shape, but as we find it in God's Word. I believe that no man who has yet lived has ever proposed a system of theology which comprises all the Truth of God's Word. If such a system had been possible, the discovery of it would have been made for us by God, Himself—certainly it would if it had been desirable and useful for our profit and holiness. But it has not pleased God to give us a body of divinity—let us receive it as He has given it, each Truth in its own proportion—each Doctrine in harmony with its fellow—each precept carefully carried out into practice and each promise to be believed and, by-and-by, received. Let the Truth of God, and the whole Truth of God, be sweet to our taste! "How sweet are *Your* words!" There seems to be an emphasis on the pronoun, "How sweet are *Your* words!" O my God, if the Words are Yours, they are sweet to me! Had they come to me from the Prophet and I had perceived them to be merely the words of man, I might then have estimated them at their own weight, without reference to their authority. But when my Father speaks—when the Spirit lives and breathes in the Truth to which I listen—when Jesus Christ, Himself, draws near to me in the preaching of the Gospel—then it is that the Word becomes sweet to my taste! Beloved, let us not be satisfied with the truth unless we can also feel it to be God's Truth! Let us ask the Lord to enable us, when we open this Book, to feel that we are not reading it as we read a common book—truths put there by some means, unimportant to us how—but let us recollect that we are reading the Truth of God put there by an Inspired pen! That we have there God's Truth such as He would have us receive—such as He thought it worth His while to write and to preserve to all ages for our instruction.

The Psalmist is not content to say, "God's Word is sweet, and sweeter than honey," but "How sweet are Your Words to *my* taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to *my* mouth!" After all, the blessedness of the Word is a matter to be ascertained by personal experience. Let others choose this philosophy and that form of thought. Let then gad abroad after the beauties of poetry, or dote upon the charms of oratory—my palate shall be satisfied with Your Word, O God, and my soul shall find an excess of sweetness in the things which come from Your mouth into my mouth!

The Word of God, then, while in itself certainly most sweet, and all the sweeter when we recognize it as coming from God, will only be sweet to us in proportion as we are able to receive it and to feed upon it. Every man must in this case feed for himself. There can be no proxy here. I wonder not at those who think lightly of God's Word, notwithstanding the rapturous admiration they have heard expressed by others, for unless they have tasted it, and felt and handled it, they still must be strangers to its unspeakable sweetness!—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307—Sermon #3197, Volume 56—THE SWEETNESS OF GOD'S WORD—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.

## An Angel's Sermon— "ARISE AND EAT"

By C. H. Spurgeon

Did you ever study the sermon that was once preached by an angel to a desponding Prophet? It consisted of only three words and he preached it twice. The Prophet was Elijah, who, after the wondrous victory and excitement on the top of Carmel, fainted in spirit and was afraid of Jezebel and said, "Let me die." And so he fled from the field of battle and longed to expire. In his weariness and sorrow, he fell asleep and an angel came and awoke him. And this was the sermon he preached to him, "Arise and eat." And when he opened his eyes, he saw that "there was a cake baking on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink and laid him down again." The very best thing he could do.

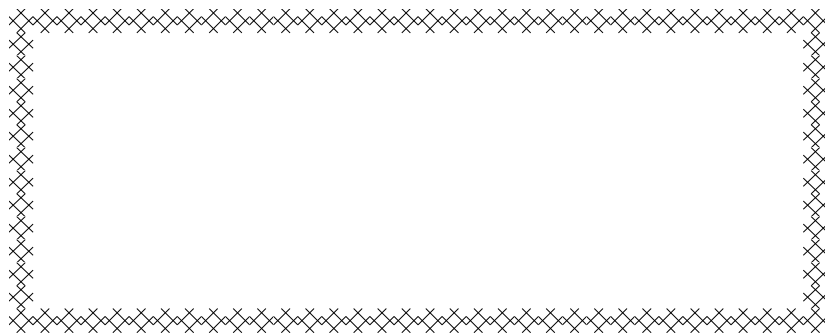
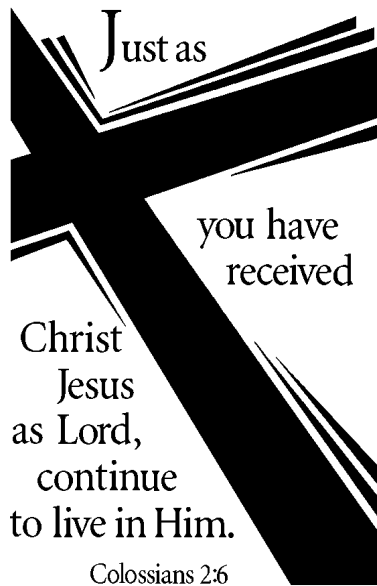
But the angel awoke him the second time and preached the same sermon to him, "Arise and eat." And I pass on that little sermon to some of you who feel faint in heart just now. You do not know how it is, but you are very low-spirited—here is a message for you—"Arise and eat." I will not prescribe you any medicine, but I say, "Arise and eat." Get to the Bible and study it—search out the promises and feed upon them. Get away to Christ and feed upon Him! "Arise and eat."

Often, the best possible cure for a poor, dispirited, fainting soul is a good meal of Gospel food! Your bright spirits will, in that way, come back to you. You will not be afraid of Jezebel and you will not say, "Let me die," but you will go, in the strength of that food, for many a day according to the will of God. So I give this as God's message to any discouraged, dispirited ones whom I may now be addressing, "Arise and eat."—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307—Sermon #2786, Volume 48—THE SOUL'S BEST FOOD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeons.org>

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Brothers and Sisters, as we believe Jesus to be the very center of the Christian religion, he who gets not to Christ gets not to true godliness at all! Some are quite satisfied if they get to the priest and obtain his absolution. They are fine if they get the "sacraments" and eat bread in the church—if they get to prayers and pass through a religious routine. But we know that all this is less than nothing and vanity unless the heart draws near to Jesus. Unless the soul accepts Jesus as God's appointed Sin-Offering and rests in Him *alone*, it walks in a vain show and disquiets itself in vain. Come then, Brethren, nerve yourselves to this point, that from this day forth let your one ambition be in dealing with your fellow men, to bring them to Jesus Christ Himself! Be it determined in your spirit that you will never cease to labor for them till you have reason to believe that they are trusting in Jesus, loving Jesus, serving Jesus and united to Jesus in the hope that they shall be conformed to the image of Jesus and dwell with Him, world without end.—CHS

For HIS Glory  
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Pray for the persecuted saints in China. And Indonesia.

In This Issue...

..and, Lord willing, *every* issue, our *only* purpose is to honor Jesus Christ.

# DO YOU PRAY?

Do you pray, Brothers and Sisters? I know you do. But do you really believe that God hears you? I cannot help thinking that a great mass of prayers are poured into a vacuum. I cannot shake off the thought that Brethren seem often to be praying into eternal emptiness, pleading with an infinite nothing. They say the proper words, but they mean little or nothing by them. Does God hear prayer? Do you answer, "Yes"? Then let us pray as if we truly believed that He did! When we have done praying, let us *expect* Him to answer us.

When we go into the bank with our checks, we hand them in, take up the money and are gone. Do we deal thus at the Bank of Faith? Do we plead the promise? If so, the Lord counts out the money. But do we take it up? I fear we leave it on the counter! The Lord might say, "Is that man gone? Gone without what he came for? He pleaded My promise and has he gone away content without My reply?"

Is it your habit to go to the Throne of Mercy and ask for the mere sake of asking? Do you grind at a mill for the mere pleasure of grinding? Surely he that asks, receives. And if he does not, he should enquire the reason why! A little time before prayer, to prepare the petition would much help towards reality in prayer. A little time *after* prayer, to consider when and how the blessing is to be used when the Lord sends it, would be a further aid to faith.

Sometimes the angels come to our mailboxes and cannot put in the answers because the boxes are fastened down by unbelief. We are not prepared to receive what God is prepared to give. Let us pray, believing that as surely as God has given us an ear, He has an ear, Himself, and will hear our pleadings. "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?"—CHS—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307—Sermon #2118, Vol. 35—*THE PLANTER OF THE EAR MUST HEAR*—read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>