

DRIVING THE VULTURES AWAY FROM THE SACRIFICE

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A SERMON
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“And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.”
Genesis 15:11.

ABRAHAM, when he was childless, received the amazing promise that his seed should be as the stars of heaven for number. This he believed, and his faith in Jehovah “was counted unto him for righteousness.” Surely there is more righteousness in trusting the Lord than in all the works of the flesh! Those who speak lightly of faith are of a different mind from the Lord, whose judgment is according to truth.

For the confirmation of the patriarch's faith the Lord resolved to give to His servant a gracious visitation which should be regarded as the solemn making of a covenant, and also as a prophecy of the future history of the promised seed. Abram was bidden to bring victims; a heifer, a she-goat, a ram, a turtle-dove, and a pigeon. The language is peculiar, “The Lord said unto him, Take *Me* an heifer of three years old,” and then in the next verse we read, “And he took unto *Him* all these.” Thus God and His servant each took part in the sacrifice, and so they set forth in symbol the communion which the Lord God has with His people in the covenant of grace, as they meet together in that one great Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, which is the soul and essence of all the outward offerings. It was an offering taken for God which the Lord accepted, but it was, also, an offering taken unto Himself by Abraham, who saw Christ's day—saw it, and was glad.

The man of God obeyed the command of God with great exactness and deliberation, laying the pieces of the sacrifice in due order, and then waiting upon God until He should be pleased to further reveal Himself. But what is this? The solemn service is disturbed by foul birds. The most intense devotion is liable to interruptions of the worst sort. In the East, if a camel falls dead in the desert, the air is almost immediately full of winged things. Vultures that had not been visible before, not so much as one of them, will suddenly appear, as if by magic, coming from every quarter and circling over the carcass. “Wheresoever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”

These and smaller carnivorous birds are the scavengers of warm countries, and do not long allow any flesh to remain uneaten. So, doubtless, when the victims presented by the patriarch Abram were laid upon the altar, they spied the bodies from afar, and hastened to the prey. It was nothing to the vultures whether they were victims slaughtered for God, or creatures that had fallen dead on the plain, for true to their instinct they discovered the carcasses and flew to them, even as Job said of the eagle, “Where the slain are, there is she.” Flights of buzzards, and kites, and carrion crows, began to make their appearance in the sky, and they would have swooped down upon the sacrifices and defiled them, or borne them away piece-meal, if the patriarch, who had presented the sacrifices, had not kept watch at the altar. This he did right earnestly and vigorously, so that we read in the text, “When the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.” When we meet with God, we must be serious and resolute in His worship, and if difficulties arise, we must encounter them with all our might, resolving that we will offer to God a sacrifice which shall not be torn in pieces by distracting influences.

Observe that Abram, when he had done as God had told him, and had brought the victims, and laid them in their places, did not go home in a hurry, and say, “It is near sundown, Sarah will expect me in the tent.” No, he remained by the sacrifice. He did not grudge the time, nor feel a sense of weariness, but he loved the worship of God, and therefore lingered at the altar till the sun was going down. Nothing is to be hurried in devotion; never is haste more out of place than in divine worship. The habit of quiet

waiting upon God, of never being in a hurry to be gone, the willingness to give time and thought to the service of God, is not as common as one could wish. But when a man is thoroughly devout, and God's Spirit has spoken with him, he is not satisfied to merely give the allotted time to divine service or to private devotion, he loathes to be gone. He would be the first in at the house of the Lord, and last out of it. He can wait the Lord's leisure and not grow impatient, even if, hour after hour, the converse is not closed. The longer the better when God is near us. And if the blessing seems far away, and it does not come all of a sudden, the gracious worshipper waits until it does come, for he would not go away without the benediction of the Lord.

When we are serving the Lord, our holy anxiety must not abate till we are fairly through with the service. Abram had laid the victims on the altar, but as yet no fire from heaven had consumed them, and so he remained on the spot to see that all was well to the end. The servant of the Lord does not quit his place till he has seen the matter through. For fear that all should yet be spoiled he sets himself to watch. When, therefore, the kites and carrion crows come down, the waiting patriarch is there to meet them. Had he gone away in haste to attend to his ordinary duties, the sacrifice had been stolen, or polluted. But he waits, and does well in waiting. My soul, wait only upon God, even as a maid waits on her mistress! Watch and pray, and watch still. "Blessed are all they that wait for Him." They that can be at leisure with God, who do not hurry over what they have to do, and who feel that their time is God's time, these are the true sons of Abraham. If any worldly business would hurry them away, they will not permit it; they give men the cold shoulder rather than rob their Lord, and rob themselves, by hasty worship. Till their appointment with God is over, they are at no man's call. They cannot break up their interview with God, but must tarry and wait His utmost time. Lest anything unforeseen should happen and spoil their service, they will wait till the sun goes down, and even when sleep overtakes them, they will be where the Lord will meet with them in the night-watches if He so shall favor them. It is wise to never leave our devotions till God Himself has pronounced the dismissal by a benediction, has given the blessing to the full, and so has bidden His servants go in peace.

I think that this staying of Abram to defend the sacrifice when the ravenous birds came down upon it may be used as a lesson to us in three respects. First, *let us zealously guard the great Sacrifice of Christ*. When the foul birds, which are so numerous, especially just now, come down upon the sacrifice, let us drive them away. Secondly, let us guard that minor sacrifice, *the grateful sacrifice of ourselves*. When the birds of temptation come down upon it, let us drive them away. Thirdly, let us anxiously guard *those separate sacrifices of devotion* which come out of our dedicated lives. When anything comes down to disturb us in prayer or praise, let us resolve that we will drive it away. Oh that the Spirit of all grace may bless this discourse to us that we may thereby be excited to holy watchfulness!

I. First, with regard to THE GREAT SACRIFICE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. This has been, and always will be, the great object of attack by the enemies of God. One would have said, if one had not known human nature, that the doctrine of the substitutionary Sacrifice, Christ dying in our stead, would, of all events, have commanded the loving confidence of every human heart. It is so wonderful a system, this plan by which justice is vindicated and mercy is magnified, that one instinctively expects all men to reverently accept it. It would seem too grave a charge to bring against our apostate race that they would set to work to quibble at the divine expedient, and so pick holes in their own salvation, and try to contradict the kindest hope that God Himself could set before them. But so it has been. The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. It is still to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, though it is indeed the power of God, and the wisdom of God. It has happened according to the Word of the Lord, "Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense." Therefore, dear friends, all of you who by faith approach the Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, and who base your hopes of heaven thereon, watch lest the vultures come down upon the Sacrifice, and be ready to drive them away.

Note well, that *the sacrifice which Abraham guarded was of divine ordination*. Jehovah Himself had told him what creatures to kill, how to divide them, and how to arrange the pieces upon the altar. He did nothing according to his own invention; he offered no will-worship; but he did everything as it was prescribed to him. Because this sacrifice was divinely appointed, he could not bear that kites and crows should peck at it, and tear it at their pleasure. It is even so with the Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ; my blood boils that so many men should dare to assail that which the Lord Jehovah has appointed. It was God who devised the plan, it was God who gave His Son out of His own bosom to die, it is God

Himself who has commended that plan to our hearts, and made us put our trust in His great Sacrifice. Oh, it brings the tears into our eyes, and the blood into our cheeks, that any should trample on the precious blood, and speak ill of the vicarious sufferings of Christ! Whoever the men may be, yes, though they were angels from heaven, we could not have patience with them. We cannot help regarding those as worse than carrion crows who would desire to touch this most sublime though simplest of all doctrines, that Jesus Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree. They dare to say that it is immoral to suppose that our sin could be transferred to Christ, or His righteousness to us. Thus, to charge the essential act of grace with immorality is to profane the sacrifice of God, and count the blood of Jesus an unholy thing. It is not for us to speak sweetly of those who deal scurvily with Christ. If they are enemies of Christ, our Sacrifice, they cannot be friends of ours. We shake the dust from our feet against those who reject the doctrine of a crucified Savior, slain in the sinner's stead. They are no brethren of ours who reject the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. We are anxious to drive off those who peck at our Lord's substitutionary Sacrifice, because that Sacrifice is of divine appointment.

Next, we see a further reason for guarding the Sacrifice in the fact that *it is of most solemn import*. That sacrifice was so to Abram. It meant, you know, a covenant. The sacrifice, as Abram had presented it at God's appointing, was the token of his being brought into covenant relationship with God. Now, to my mind, it is one of the most delightful truths of Scripture, though so much neglected, that God's people are in covenant with God, by a covenant of grace. An old Scotch theologian was known to say that he who understood the two covenants, understood the whole science of theology, and I believe it is so. The very pith of the whole business lies in that broken covenant of works by which we are ruined, and in that everlasting covenant of grace, ordered in all things and sure, by which we are saved. The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is the "blood of the everlasting covenant," even as He says to us at the communion table, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood." If you take His Sacrifice away, of course you take the covenant away. Those who deny the vicarious Sacrifice have no faith in the covenant; in fact, they never speak of such a thing, but place it among the obsolete terms which their forefathers used, but which they themselves have altogether renounced. From their teaching the covenant is gone, and when that is gone, my brethren, what is left? If the covenant is forgotten, what remains to be our support when, like David, we come to our dying beds? Alas for us if we cannot then exclaim, "Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure"! We cannot let the vultures tear this Sacrifice, for it is to us the token of the covenant, and if there is no covenant of grace, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain, and we are still under the curse of the broken law. If you are still out of covenant with God, what hope, what safety, what peace, what joy is there for you? Away, you kites, who are hovering over the Sacrifice with ill intent! You may pretend to be harmless as doves, but we cannot allow you to profane the covenant, and peck at the Sacrifice.

And next, we must guard this Sacrifice, because *there God most fully displays His grace*. It was at the place of the sacrifice which Abram had offered that God was pleased to come and reveal Himself to the patriarch as He had not done before. "And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp passed between those pieces. In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram." The place of sacrifice is the place of revelation. Where the blood is shed there grace is manifested. If you would see God in the wilderness, you must go to the place where the sacrifices were offered, for the place of sacrifice was the place where God met His people. The mercy seat where God displayed His grace to men was sprinkled with blood. It must always be so. God cannot meet with sinful men except in Him who is the one Mediator between God and man, whose Sacrifice has reconciled us unto Himself. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission," and without remission there is no fellowship. Therefore, as we love the mercy of God, we must contend for the Sacrifice of Christ, and we must not bear that it should be ignored, much less that it should be decried. True religion is gone when the vicarious work of Jesus is questioned. In the forefront of all preaching must be the cross. "In this sign we conquer," as Constantine saw in his dream. There is no conquest over human hearts except by the story of the death of Jesus for the sins of men. Deprive us of the Sacrifice, and behold an army which has lost both its banners and its weapons of war. The gates of hope are closed against the guilty when the atonement is denied. The windows through which light should come to the penitent are sealed against a single beam of hope when once you take away the sacrificial death of Jesus

Christ our Lord. Therefore will we drive away the ravenous birds as long as we have a hand to move. As we love the souls of men, we will spend our last breath in the defense of our Lord's substitution. Can we bear to see man's last refuge taken away? God forbid! Away, you evil birds! The heroes of old chased the harpies from their feasts, much more would we drive you from the altar of our God.

We will do this all the more because, as I have said to you before, *this is the chief point of attack*. Every doctrine of revelation has been assailed, but the order of battle passed by the black prince at this hour runs as follows—"Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the crucified King of Israel." If they can carry the bastion of substitution, if they can throw down the great truth of atonement, then all the rest will go, as a matter of course. The cross taken away, indeed, there is nothing left worth defending. If the ark of the Lord is taken, what remains to Israel? Write *Ichabod*, for the glory has departed. Therefore let us gather up our strength, that we may vigorously chase the vultures from the altar of the living God.

"How are we to do it?" one asks. Well, we can all of us help in this struggle. First, *by a constant, immovable faith in Jesus Christ our crucified Savior for ourselves*. Oh, rest in Him, my beloved! Rest more in His great Sacrifice every day, rest more intelligently, more happily, more implicitly in that finished work of His which He has worked out for all His people. Looking unto Jesus; coming unto Jesus; resting in Jesus; following Jesus; let that be a complete description of your lives. Every day let your own heart be more united to the Well-beloved Bridegroom, love Him best of all as you see Him arrayed in wounds and bloody sweat. Are not these His choicest ornaments? I am sure your hearts are never so stirred with holy feeling as when you dwell at Calvary, and behold the Surety of the covenant dying for you. Think more and more of Him who loved you to the death, and thereby redeemed you from the death which your own sins deserved. Sing to a grave, sweet melody—

*"The ever-blessed Son of God
Went up to Calvary for me;
There paid my debt, there bore my load
In His own body on the tree."*

Let your own confidence be strong, and then *very frequently make an open declaration of your faith in the atoning Sacrifice*. I say "very frequently," for I think the oblation of our confession of Christ should be presented continually in these days. The more frequently we bring forward the truth of the atonement the better, when so many are covering it, quibbling at it, or contradicting it. Many of our Non-Conformist churches are accustomed to have communion once a month, and think that quite often enough; it may be so, but we delight to bring before the eyes of men on every first day of the week the tokens of the Redeemer's Sacrifice. The tokens are not objects of superstitious reverence to us, but yet they are very dear, as sweetly reminding us of His body broken for our sake, and His blood poured forth for our redemption. As long as that ordinance is observed, there will be a memorial of Christ's death of the most instructive and impressive kind. But whether you can use the emblems or not, declare the truth itself. Let your conversation be full of Christ crucified, and if there is any question anywhere about this matter, take your stand, and let all know that you have seen that Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. On this point there can be no difference among really regenerate men. This is one of the dividers of the chaff from the wheat. This great magnet will not draw to itself any but the metal which is akin to itself. Take care that there is no hesitancy about this truth. When the birds come down upon the Sacrifice, let your childlike faith in Christ, and your clear statement of the truth about Him, help to drive them away. Those who are not in love with the doctrine will not long court your company. To some of us it is felt to be a duty to make as bold a defense as we can of this imperishable truth, and we would, if we knew of still plainer words, use them constantly.

"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." Stand fast, each man in his place, in the defense of this central truth of our most blessed faith, and be prepared, for the sake of this, to endure all things from the adversary. Abram was an old man, and a vulture and especially a dozen vultures, eager for their prey, are not easy to deal with; they are very ugly customers, they show no respect for the sacrifice, and certainly not for those who would prevent them from dishonoring the sacrifice. Angry, and resolute, and free from every principle of reverence, nothing is finer play to them than to tear the great sacrifice of God. If we come in their way, they will aim at our eyes, and tear our faces, and our hands. Let them come on; we are prepared for their worst onslaughts. Be ready to endure anything for the sake of the doctrine of a

crucified Savior, made sin for us though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him; made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." The day shall come when he shall count himself most blessed who died for Christ, and earned the ruby crown of those who spilt their blood for His dear sake. Let us emulate them by being willing to sacrifice character, and friendship, and position, and all else, so that we may stand forth unquestionably clear upon this glorious truth, this article by which a church stands or falls. As churches receive it, they stand; as they reject it, they are outside the pale of the true household of faith. "When the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away." To this work let us give ourselves till the sun goes down, and we fall asleep to behold the vision of God.

II. But now, coming, perhaps, closer home to some of you dear friends, let us apply this example of Abram to ourselves in the matter of THE GRATEFUL SACRIFICE OF OUR LIVES. It is our reasonable service, that we present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God by our Lord Jesus Christ, and we must guard our consecration against the temptations which will assail it.

I am addressing tonight many of you who feel that you have *entered into covenant with God by Jesus Christ*. You are henceforth and forever Jehovah's covenanted ones, and in consequence of that covenant, through the Sacrifice of Christ, *you have become the Lord's*. Remember last Sunday night the text which finished, "And you became Mine." There was a sweet ring about those words to my ears, "You became *Mine*." "You are not your own, you are bought with a price." You know the sneer about the "mercantile atonement," but oh, I love the word "bought," and, as if to make it more mercantile still, the Holy Spirit has worded it even more plainly, "bought with a price." We take all those reproaches about the mercantile theory into our bosom, and hide them there, as greater riches than the treasures of philosophy. We are not ashamed of the Words of God Himself. And now, henceforth beloved, we do confess that we belong wholly to Christ, from the crown of our head to the sole of our feet; body, soul, and spirit; time, talent, thought, substance, all that we are, and all that we have. We have been "bought with a price," and henceforth we put in no claim to ourselves, for we belong absolutely to the Lord that bought us. Now, now the vultures will come! The carrion crows and kites will from afar behold this sacrifice, and they will hasten to the prey. You do not see them tonight, perhaps. No, but the traveler does not see these evil fowls, till all of a sudden the sky seems dark with them. The horrid, hideous creatures come like lightning for rapidity, and they are hungry as death when they arrive on the scene. You that are consecrated to God may expect that, though you do not see them, there are vultures looking down upon the sacrifice, and you must be prepared to drive them away.

"What sort of vultures will there be?" asks one. Well, there will come *doubts as to eternal things*. There will be questions about your own wisdom in giving yourself up to God. I hope you have been strangers to such birds of prey, but some of us have not been; doubts as to whether there is a God to serve; doubts as to whether there is a heaven, an eternal future, a blessed reward; doubts as to whether it is well to give up this world for the next, or not. Drive them away, brethren! Drive them away! When the birds come down upon the sacrifice, drive them away, as he did, who had all the riches of Egypt offered to him, yet "endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." This is what you and I must do; feel that it is but commonsense, sanctified commonsense, to be looking out for that which will endure forever, and to let these temporary things go, if it is needful that they go, that we may win the crown that fades not away.

Possibly there will come to some of you younger folks fond *dreams of ambition*. Now you are content to be a Christian, satisfied to mix with poor people in holy service, quite pleased at an opportunity of teaching in a ragged school. Ah! But there may come a moment when Satan will show you the kingdoms of this world, and he will say, "All these will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me," and you may feel as if the service of Christ was not, after all, very respectable, that you could do better in the world, find choicer company, enter more select society. But drive, drive these carrion crows away, my brothers and sisters, there cannot be anything comparable in the world to the service of God, there cannot be anything so worthy of your noblest manhood as to be truly the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. When these fowls come down upon the sacrifice, drive them away.

Another wretched sort of black crows, however, assails men more frequently; they come in the form of *the cares of life*—the care of getting bread, the hardness of labor. Many a man has said, "Well now, I have many children, and I work hard, and I am poor; surely I must not seek first the kingdom of God

and His righteousness,” and straightway he begins to neglect the assembling of himself together with God’s people, and then he thinks that he must spend a part of the Sabbath in labor, and times that he used to spend in prayer are given up to meaner employment. But oh! If ever a man ought to cling to Christ more than at any other time, it is when he is poor. You that are burdened with cares, you are the people who need Christ most of all. If a man lived in a palace, and had no Christ to go to, I would call him a miserable being, but if you have to toil without the comforts of this life, so much the more reason that you should enjoy those eternal compensations which can help you to bear up in your struggle. Oh, let not, I pray you, the cares of this life take you from Christ! Live for Him; you cannot live without Him; do not try it. The heavier your difficulties, the more grace you need. Cling all the more closely, to your Lord when troubles come. When the birds come down upon the sacrifice—those carking cares, and wearinesses, and troubles of life—drive them away.

Perhaps I may be speaking to certain consecrated men and women, who have met with other horribly filthy fowls. Of course, you never saw vultures in their native state; if you did see them once, you would never want to see them again; they are such loathsome creatures. But there will come to godly men, sometimes, *temptations to sin*. The purest have been tempted to impurity; the most devout have been tempted to blasphemy; men full of integrity have been tempted to dishonesty, and the most truthful to falsehood. We cannot tell what we may be tempted to do. But here is our one business with these vultures; let us drive them away. You cannot help birds flying over your heads in the air, but do not let them alight, and build their nests in your hair. Temptations will come, but do not entertain them. Drive them away. Give the vultures the quarter-staff; make these horrible creatures feel that you cannot and will not permit them to take up a lodging anywhere near you. Abram drove them away; he would have no parley with them. He threw his staff at them, shouted at them, struck at them, and drove them away. God help us to do so with every foul temptation!

But there is a nasty, sleepy kind of vulture, called *idleness*; one of the vultures that sit and sleep by the hour together—and I think I have seen them around here sometimes. This vulture comes to some good men, who say they belong to Christ, but that question we must leave to their own consciences. It is a sleepy vulture, and they say that “they think they have labored long enough.” They used to be in the Sunday school when they were younger, but they are now weary of such constant toil. They used to be very earnest in the front rank, but now their position seems to be to sit in an arm-chair, and watch the battle, and see how other people fight. I have been slenderly cheered lately by a large number of brethren who have greatly sympathized with me, and helped me to fight the Lord’s battles by bravely looking on. They remind me of Mr. Gough’s story of Betty and the bear. She beat the bear with her broom with all her might, and her brave husband, who had climbed a ladder into the loft, helped her grandly by bidding her hit the bear harder and harder, while he looked on. I hope I may yet receive worthier help than this. Let us all be up and doing, and take our full share of the warfare. I exhort you, if the vulture of indolence comes your way, to drive it away. A nasty, dirty creature it is, after all, if it makes a man of God who is capable of Christian service, to a high degree, sit still, fold his arms, and say, “There is nothing more for me to do.”

One vulture, too, that wants to be driven away, is that of *measuring yourselves with other people*. Some, judge that, they do all that is expected of them if they copy other people. Their guinea is always put underneath somebody else’s guinea. If they gave ten, it would not be too much for them, but still they are satisfied as long as they do as well as other people. Let us get out of this. If we are only going to be what other people are, we shall run great risks of being unprofitable servants. “Comparing themselves among themselves,” says the apostle, “they are not wise.” I will neither stand in another man’s shoes at the day of judgment, nor today, for, though I very frequently feel as though I were surer of any other man’s salvation than my own, yet at no time would I dare to run the risk of changing with anyone, for I do know something about myself, but I know nothing of any other man’s heart. Let no one make another man his measure and standard. I pray you not to do so, for if you do, it will be a vulture that will defile your sacrifice. The man who can live most completely to God shall be the happiest man even in this life. He, whose heart’s desire is, only to spend and be spent for Christ, shall find that he will win a peaceful state of heart, and this is a foreshadowing of heaven. I mean not that we should seek to win this poor and paltry world, which God has purposely put under our feet, but I mean that the meek “inherit the earth” in the highest and truest sense. He shall have the most of real happiness that is willing to lose happiness

and lose everything so that he may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith. Therefore, when any of the ravenous fowls of evil come down upon your life's sacrifice, drive them away.

III. And so I must close with only a few sentences upon this last point; **GUARD ALL THE SACRIFICES OF YOUR DEVOTION.** When, the fowls come down upon your sacrifices of prayer, and praise, and meditation, drive them away. Have you noticed that if all day long there is not a knock at the door, there will be one if you retire to pray? It is wise to do as the Savior says, "Enter into your closet, and *when you have shut the door*, pray to your Father that sees in secret." That shutting of the door means that we are to seek secrecy, and to prevent interruption. A little boy, who was accustomed to spend time every day in prayer, went up into a hayloft, and when he climbed into the hayloft, he always pulled the ladder up after him. Someone asked him why he did so. He answered, "As there is no door, I pull up the ladder." Oh, that we could always in some way cut the connection between our soul and the intruding things which lurk below! There is a story told of me and of some person, I never knew who it was, who desired to see me on a Saturday night, when I had shut myself up to make ready for the Sabbath. He was very great and important, and so the maid came to say that someone desired to see me. I bade her say that it was my rule to see no one at that time. Then he was more important and impressive still, and said, "Tell Mr. Spurgeon that a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ desires to see him immediately." The frightened servant brought the message, but the sender gained little by it, for my answer was, "Tell him I am busy with his Master, and cannot see servants now." Sometimes you must use strong measures. Did not our Lord tell His messengers, on one occasion, to salute no man on the way? Courtesy must give place to devotion. It is incumbent on you that you should be alone with your Lord, and if intruders force an entrance, they must be sent about their business.

Alas! If you send men and women away, evil birds will still not be so dismissed. Wandering thoughts and inward troubles—how shall these be chased away? That door must be well shut which keeps the devil out. He comes in at the smallest opening, for he is a serpent, and serpents get in where other creatures cannot; they have a wriggling way with them. Satan will twist himself in to us when we hope we are beyond his reach. Drive him away, brother! He will go if you resist him. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." He will not stand fire if you are determined to have a shot at him. As to vain thoughts which harass and distract you, seriously determine that you will drive them away. All your thoughts of sorrow, dismiss them at the mercy seat. As for all business thoughts, do not entertain them. Say what Abraham said to the servants, "Abide here while I go and worship God yonder." Tell the world, "So far may you come, but no farther—I must, I will keep my sacrifice of praise and prayer before the Lord." Sir Thomas Abney had been accustomed to have family prayer at a certain time. He was made Lord Mayor of London. His hour of family prayer being sometime about the time of the banquet, he begged to be excused for a little, for he had an urgent engagement with a special friend. He then went and called his family together, to meet with God in prayer. Do the same, if even a banquet should come down upon you; quit the table for the altar, and your guests for your God. When our time for prayer draws near, if all the twelve apostles were to preach in our street, we ought not to give up our private prayer for the sake of hearing them all. When the birds come down upon the sacrifice, drive them away, however fine they may look; drive off the golden eagles as well as the crows. This will require great watchfulness. Cast yourselves upon the power of the Holy Spirit. He alone can help us, even with our infirmities, much more with our distractions. Let us cry to Him, that His divine overshadowing may be both shield and great reward to us while we attempt to draw near to God in private worship.

Now, my dear hearers, I will keep you no longer, except to say this; those of you who came here tonight to hear the Word, I pray you do not go away without a blessing. Something or other has happened, perhaps, to distract you; drive it away. The Sacrifice of Christ is the thing you have to look to. Look unto the Lord Jesus, and be saved, and if anything comes between you and His atoning death, drive it away. Come tonight to Jesus. Why should it not be? It is the last time the preacher will be here on Thursday nights for a little while. Did he not ask for a closing and crowning blessing? It will be realized to the full if you are saved tonight. You can be saved; you shall be saved if you look to Jesus, the great Sin offering. Give yourselves up to the Savior *now*, upon the spot.

You that have believed in Jesus unto eternal life, and have just begun the divine life, it will not be long before you are beset with various temptations. Be prepared for those fowls, whose chief is the

prince of the power of the air, and labor to drive them away. You think that, since you are converted, it will be all plain sailing now. You make a mistake; it is now that the battle begins. Be prepared for conflict. I have no doubt Abram, being a sheik, carried a good staff with him. Be ready with a staff, borrowed from the good Shepherd, to drive away the temptations that are sure to assail young believers.

As for you dear old saints, you have offered your sacrifice, and it is towards evening, and the sun is going down, do not be surprised if you should feel a horror of great darkness, even at the last, but rest assured that the Lord will come, and cheer your darkness with the vision of His covenant love. Drive those doubts away, and those fears of death. You are going home; do not be afraid. Jesus is coming to meet you, therefore dismiss every fear. Stand by the sacrifice all day; stand by the sacrifice when night comes on, birds or no birds. Stand by the sacrifice whether you see a vision of glory or not. Stand by the sacrifice till you behold the Lamb on His throne. One thing I have made up my mind to, whether I find present joy or present sorrow, present commendation or present censure, I will be faithful to my Lord, and stand by the sacrifice until I die with one hand upon this Book, and another upon the horns of the altar. I would cry this night in the courts of the Lord's house, in the presence of all His people, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords, to the altar." I will be a sacrifice for Jesus because He is a Sacrifice for me. I count it all joy to preach Him and His cross if I may but win souls and be found in Him at the last. The Lord bless you, and be with you, my brethren, for Christ's sake!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—GENESIS 15.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—377, 670, 379.

TO THE CHURCH AT THE TABERNACLE:

BELOVED FRIENDS—I write you because my heart prompts me to do so, and because many of you desire it. We have not been in hearty union for so many years without feeling a living interest in each other. This should be more largely the fruit of church membership than it usually is. The idea of real brotherhood should be more tenderly and more practically realized. Let us each one labor after it, and take a deep personal interest in our fellow members, especially in those who are poor, or ill, or young, or despondent, or under peculiar temptations and afflictions.

Thus should we make up among ourselves a sort of mutual pastorate, and should each gain as well as bestow a blessing. Because there is so much of this brotherly concern among you, I feel peace of heart while absent; but because there is not more of it, I would stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.

We are all the children of one Father, and redeemed with the precious blood of the same Savior. Let us, therefore, feel a natural instinct of unity, and from the force of the inner life cleave to each other in love. We are likely to need more and more that strength which comes from perfect unity of heart. Attacks will be made upon us by the forces of error, and we must stand shoulder to shoulder, or rather heart to heart, in the hour of conflict. May the Lord Himself, by His Holy Spirit, enable us so to do!

My release from public service was greatly needed, for I have felt great prostration since last I wrote you. By your loving prayers I shall be strengthened, and enabled to use my rest for laying in new stores for future use. How much I desire that when I am again among you it may be in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of peace!

I desire to be remembered to each one as truly as if I could grasp every hand, and say, "God bless you," to each individual.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

November 17, 1887.

C. H. SPURGEON.

P.S.—So far as this letter applies to all my readers, it is for them; assuredly I include them all in every word of Christian affection, for it is to this larger church that I owe so much of substantial help in the various Christian enterprises committed to my charge.

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

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

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