

ISRAEL'S HOPE; OR, THE CENTER OF THE TARGET

NO. 2199

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

*“Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy,
and with Him is plenteous redemption.”*
Psalm 130:7.

WHEN he penned this psalm, the writer, David, was in deep distress, if not of circumstances, yet of conscience. He constantly mentions iniquities, and begs forgiveness. He felt like a shipwrecked mariner, carried overboard into the raging sea. Thus he reviews the situation—“Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord.” Yet he lived to tell the tale of deliverance. His prayer from among the waves was a memory worth preserving, and he preserves it. The mercy of God to him he weaves into a song for us, and in this our text is found.

Two things the rescued sufferer tells us. First, that *as God delivered him from the power of sin, so He will deliver all His praying, wrestling, believing people.* That is the last verse of the Psalm—“He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” The argument is—He delivered me. What am I more than others? The gracious Lord who saved me will save all those who call upon Him in truth. He delivered me, though laden with iniquities, and His pardoning mercy is unfailing, and therefore He can and will rescue others from their uttermost distresses. This is a good line of reasoning, for the Lord's ways are constant, and He will do for all believers what He has done for one of them.

The other thing which the Psalmist sets before us is this; *we are wise if we apply to God alone for help.* He says, “I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait. My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.” He incidentally tells us that it is vain to wait upon man, and put our trust in any human support, for the way of deliverance lies alone in reliance upon God, immediately and alone. We are not to depend upon outward means, but upon the God who lends efficacy to all means. Why is it that we need to be told of this? Why is faith in God so rare? To go first to the Lord is to save time. Straightforward always makes the best runner, and to go straight to God is not only our duty, but it will be our happiest course. The psalm encourages us to this by the assurance that the Lord can and will help all that seek Him, and it urges us to let that seeking be distinctly and directly turned to the Most High, to Him alone, and to none other. To join another ground of confidence with the Lord is a sort of practical idolatry which is to the wounding of faith.

May we learn well the lesson of this psalm! When we meet with a man who has been in special trouble, and he has escaped from it, we are anxious to know how it came to pass, in order that, if we are cast into similar trial, we also may resort to the same door of hope. You meet with a man that has long been sorely afflicted, and to find him full of joy at his relief is a pleasure and a personal comfort. You heard him lamenting for years, and now you hear him rejoicing, and this excites your wonder and your hope. It is as though a cripple saw another lame man leaping and running. He very naturally inquires, “How is this?” The other day you saw a blind man, begging in the street, and now he has eyes bright as that which sparkle on the face of a gazelle, and you cry in astonishment—“Tell me who was the oculist that operated on your eyes, for I may be in the same case, and I would be glad to know where to go.” Here, then, we have a gate of knowledge opened before us. The Psalmist found salvation and deliverance in going direct to God, and trusting in Him; let us follow his example, and in all times of distress, caused by our own iniquity, or by anything else, let us repair to the throne of grace, for the Most High will deal

with us also even as He dealt with His servant of old time, to whose cries, out of the depths, He lent an attentive ear. This psalm is called "*De Profundis*," its teaching is not only profound but practical.

Let me freely speak with you as concerning the great salvation which, as fallen creatures, we all need. In that matter our sole resort must be to God alone, for "salvation is of the Lord." God has been pleased, in these last days, to reveal Himself in a glorious manner, suitable to our salvation. He was always to be seen in creation by those whose sight was not darkened by moral evil, and doubtless angelic eyes always beheld Jehovah in all the works of His hands. He was to be seen under the old law in types and shadows, and believing men and women were enabled, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, to behold the Lord in His temple. But in these last days the Lord has spoken to us by His Son, whom He has made heir of all things, and in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. There is the Father most clearly to be seen, and now, if we read that Israel is to hope in the Lord, and if we see that the way of salvation lies in relying upon "the Lord," we must read between the lines, and understand that the glorious Lord must ever be the object of faith according as He at this time reveals Himself. It is written, "They that know Your name will put their trust in You"; that is to say, they trust, as they know how He reveals Himself. At this moment the manifestation of God stands thus; His dear Son has descended from the highest heavens, and taken upon Himself our human nature, so that He is God and man in one sacred and mysterious Person. In that complex form, the Word made flesh dwelt among men on earth some thirty years and more, and then He took upon Himself the weight of human sin, and bore it upon His shoulders up to the cross. He was arrested by the hand of divine justice, and treated by justice as if He had been a sinner, though sinner He could never be. He was numbered with the transgressors, and given over to wicked men, who, in their willful malice, scourged Him, spit upon Him, crowned Him with thorns, and condemned Him to a felon's death. He died, not for any iniquity of His own, but for the transgression of His people was He smitten. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; yes, "He was made a curse for us," and even more, "He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." "He died, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." If, then, we would trust God for our personal salvation, we must confide in Him as He manifests Himself for that purpose, and as we perceive that God sets forth Christ to be the propitiation for our sin, we must accept that ordained way of putting away our sin. This is the way in which "with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption," and thus it is that "He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." We trust in the Lord God as He reveals Himself in the person of His Son Christ Jesus, who has displayed in His own self the love and the justice of God, and has shown how these were equally glorified by the way of redemption through the substitution, and sacrifice of One who is the fellow of the Highest, and yet next-of-kin to man. Our Lord has buried our sin in His sepulcher, and has gone up into heaven to plead there with God for transgressors, and at the same time to prepare a place for as many as believe in Him, and so are saved by His plenteous redemption. Understand, then, that if we read in the text, "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption," we now, today, in the light of the gospel, read it thus—"Let the seeking sinner, who would be redeemed from all his iniquities, trust in God as He is seen in and through Jesus Christ, for there forgiveness is freely given through plenteous redemption, and sin is no longer marked or imputed to the believer, because the sacrifice of Jesus has blotted it out, and removed it forever."

This is the introduction of our discourse. May the Holy Spirit now grant His anointing both to preacher and hearers!

I. The chief point to which I desire you to give earnest heed is this; in obtaining gospel blessings THE FIRST EXERCISES OF FAITH MUST BE TOWARDS GOD IN CHRIST JESUS, and not towards the blessings themselves. "Let Israel hope in the Lord." We do not read, "Let Israel hope" for mercy, but we read, "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy." Neither does it say, "Let Israel hope for plenteous redemption," but it is worded thus, "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is plenteous redemption." To me this has the look of a very encouraging truth; the sinner is not to hasten with his first thoughts to the mercy that he wants, nor even to the promise of God to which he may look, but he is to go to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, as the Lord of mercy and fountain of redemption. The first exercise of our faith is to deal immediately with the Lord God as He meets us in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here let me say that *this is the most natural order which faith can follow*. Look first to the Giver, and then to the gift. Look for the Helper, and then for the help. Do not be saying, "I long to be forgiven. I labor to believe that I am forgiven. I desire to be saved. I want to know that I am saved." This is looking for the fruit, when you have need first to find the tree. Your first business, as a seeker of pardon and salvation, is to believe in Jesus Christ, that is, to trust yourself with the divine savior. The natural order is, believe in the Promiser, and then you will believe the promise. You never say to yourself, "I should like to be able to take that man's word. I will sit down and try to make my mind confident of the truth of what he says." This would be a foolish and futile method of procedure. You follow a much more reasonable course, you inquire about the individual's character and standing, you find out who he is, and what he is, and what he has done, and thus you gather arguments for confidence and faith. You cannot help believing the promise when once you believe in the Promiser. If you find a merchant to be an eminently upright and substantial man, you do not hesitate to take his checks, in fact, you would be glad to have your purse full of them. Faith prizes the promises of her faithful God, and calls them precious.

Apply this rule, and deal with heavenly things in due order. You seek pardon. Do not look continually at this priceless mercy at first, but look to the pardoning God. You will soon believe in forgiveness if you cause the first exercise of your faith to refer to the Forgiver, even Christ Jesus Himself. When you have believed *in Him*, as able to say, "Your sins are forgiven you," then you will believe in sins being forgiven. This is the natural order of things. So, also, if you desire to believe for salvation, and to be assured that you have it, or may have it at once, the simple course—the natural course—is to believe in the Savior. To be healed, you believe first in the Healer. When you have believed in the Savior, then you will believe in the salvation. If you know that Jesus can save you, if you desire to be saved, you will trust Him to save you. You will be readily able to believe that you can be saved when you trust in Jesus as able to save to the uttermost. Poor trembling heart, do not look at the blessing, and say, "Alas, it is too great!" Look at the Savior Himself! Is anything too great for Him to give who gave His heart's blood to redeem? Do not say, "My heart is so hard, it cannot be changed." Look at the Savior; is anything impossible to Him to whom the Father has committed all power? Is He not mighty to save? Fix your eye, first and foremost, upon Him who is both God and man, and has therefore power and sympathy, majesty and mercy, omnipotence and brotherliness. I pray you; do not consider so much the greatness of the effect as the unlimited power of the Cause. I may doubt my washing, but not when I believe in the cleansing virtue of the precious blood. It may be difficult to believe in my salvation, but not to believe in my Savior. It may be hard to hope for heaven, but the text sets me an easier task—"Let Israel hope *in the Lord*." When I open my window God-wards, and look towards the Lord Jesus, I see glorious things in the light of the rising sun, even things which I could not have seen if I had not first turned towards the light. "In the beginning God"; this, according to the first chapter of Genesis, is the natural order of all divine work; do not attempt to alter it.

To this I would add, *this is the necessary order*. It must be so; the Savior first, and then the salvation. Suppose for a moment that it were possible for you to obtain pardon without Christ, what good would it do you? I would remind you that no blessing is a covenant blessing, or a blessing at all, except as it is connected with Christ Jesus, and so with the Lord God. No comfort is worth having if Jesus does not comfort us. No forgiveness is worth the words which utter it if Jesus does not forgive. There is no coming to the Father except by Christ. If, therefore, I imagine that I have come to the Father without Christ, it is clear that I have not come. If I fancy that I have saving blessings apart from the appointed Savior, I am a deceived man. Beloved, do not seek after mercy, pardon, holiness, heaven, except through Christ Jesus our Lord, for you will be seeking counterfeits, shadows, delusions. Begin at the cross. See how Jesus puts it—"Come *unto Me*, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He does not first say, "Take My yoke upon you," but first "Come *unto Me*." He first gives us rest, and then afterwards we find it, but we begin with coming to Him. First Christ, and then His yoke. First Christ, and then rest. Do not ask for rest first, and then say, "I will come to Christ afterwards." This is an impossible order. Do not even say, "I must get a broken heart, and then come to Christ." No, come to Christ for a broken heart. I preach tonight to you a Savior who wants nothing of you, but who is ready to begin with you at the beginning, just where you are, in all your unworthiness and ill desert—in all your depravity and vileness. He is ready to take you up from the mire of the pit wherein you lie, and to look on you

with love in all the pollution with which you are disgraced. Come you, then, and begin with Jesus. It is the necessary order of your coming; first to Christ, and then to His yoke, and to His peace. Let your faith exercise itself, not so much on what you ought to be, or on what you hope to be, as on what Christ is, and on His ability to make you all that your heart pines after. Hear the good word of my text, and give good heed to it. Note well the permission of heavenly love—"Let Israel hope *in the Lord*."

Observe, also, that, as it is the natural order, and the necessary order, so it is evidently *the easiest order*. Sometimes it seems to a burdened heart to be more than difficult to believe in the pardon of innumerable sins; it appears impossible. Guilty one, do not try to believe in pardon in the abstract, but believe in Jesus the Sacrifice and Savior, who has once for all appeared to put away sin. Believe in the divine Substitute, and then you will believe that the forgiveness of your sins is a thing provided for by Him. Do not even say, "I can never be sanctified; such a wretched sinner as I am could never be made into a saint." Do not try to believe in sanctification, but rely upon the boundless power of Jesus to "make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight." For all parts of salvation, hope in the Lord, and look to His hand for the working thereof. Forget yourself now, and only think of Him who works all things according to the good pleasure of His will. Cease looking for the water, and look for the well. You will more readily see the Savior than see salvation, for He is lifted up, even He who is God, and beside Him there is none else. You will more easily fix your eye on Jesus than upon justification, sanctification, or any other separate blessing. When the work seems hard, look to *His* hand, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" You may fix your eye upon a covenant promise till it dazzles you, but if you see Jesus, the sight will strengthen your eyes, and you will see the promise in Him, and perceive it to be yes and amen to the glory of God. It is easier to believe in a personal Christ than in impersonal promises. That poor woman who was sick, in Jesus Christ's day, might have said to herself, "It is impossible that I should be healed," but then she thought not so much of the healing as of the Healer, and when she saw Jesus walking about among the crowds, healing all manner of diseases, and when she believed that God was in Him, why, then she inferred that He could heal her disease, and she came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment. She sought *Him*, and so sought healing. Do keep in this line, let not the devil take you off it—that the first object of your faith should be the Lord Jesus, for by Him, as the ladder which God has set up, you can climb to the highest place of privilege, and lay hold upon the choicest gift of grace. This is the way even to God Himself, and the only way which our human feet can tread. Consider well who Christ was, and what He has done, and then you will conclude that He can save even you. By looking *to Him* you will be saved, and what is easier than to look? To hope in God is a far more simple matter than to search for signs and evidences in yourself, or to labor to force yourself up into certain states of mind. Answer the question, "Will He save me?" by looking to see what kind of a Savior Jesus is, and when you perceive the glory of His person, the perfection of His obedience, and the merit of His blood, you will be convinced that you may safely trust in Him according to His command, for He commands you to believe. Jesus declares, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Let us come at once, for it is the nearest and best road to peace.

To come first of all to God in Christ Jesus is *the wisest course*. You are too bewildered to know which blessing to seek, therefore seek Jesus Himself, and He will be unto you wisdom. It is easier to come to the cross than to the separate blessings which come of it. Take the straight road, which lies plain before your face.

In faintness and trembling of heart we dare not appropriate a mercy; our palsied hand cannot grasp a favor, and therefore it is our wisdom to fall at Jesus' feet, and let Him give us what seems good to Him. Through our ignorance we know not what to ask, and through our doubt we are afraid to ask, therefore, let us leave all with our Lord. We need the wine and oil, but we are sorely wounded, and shall do well to lie still, and let Him pour them in. When the Good Samaritan is come, all is come. Let us, therefore, neither cry for wine nor oil, but for HIM—we know His name. The wisdom of the prayer is seen in its completeness. At first sinners, conscious of their ill desert, cry to be saved from hell and this is the most of their prayer; but suppose the Lord should give them this, and not change their natures, would they be one whit the better? If there were no fires of Tophet, so long as a man has sin within him, he creates his own hell. In seeking the Lord Jesus, a man finds escape from punishment, and much more. No man knows enough to be able to ask for an all-round salvation; he will only seek this or that which seems to

him most pressingly needful. We are too ignorant, too much the creatures of feeling, too partial, too childish, to make a catalog of what we need, but we can ask for Jesus, and He is all in one. How excellent is that hymn of ours with the refrain—

“Give me Christ, or else I die!”

We have asked all when we have asked for the Savior anointed of the Lord. When our hope is in God, through the Mediator whom He has appointed, we hope in Him in a way which renders our hope sure and steadfast, and this is the highest wisdom. In laying hold upon Jesus, you have obtained not only something, but everything. In looking first to Jesus, you have sought for the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and you know the promise that all other things shall be added. If you need strength, comfort, guidance, fruitfulness, and anything else that makes up eternal salvation, behold, you have it in your Lord. Nothing that is needed for a soul between this present state of trial and the perfection of heaven is omitted from Christ, “you are complete in Him.” If, therefore, you make Him the first object of your faith, and lay hold upon Him, rather than upon any or all blessings, you are delivered from anxiety as to whether your ignorant prayers have comprehended all you need, and this must be a wise course to follow.

It is therefore *the most profitable course* for needy souls like ourselves. By grasping our Lord, and hoping in Him, we fill our hands, not with brass or silver, but with gold of Ophir. Let others hope where they may, but let Israel, the prince, hope in the Lord, from whom he has already won such royal favors. I see at times, in the newspaper, “Principals only will be dealt with,” and in our heavenly business we had better keep to this rule. Go not to the servants; make all your applications to the Master, and in your dealings with Him seek not so much His gifts as Himself, for the Giver is ever greater than what He gives. The bottle of water which Hagar carried for Ishmael is a poor thing compared with that well of God beside which Isaac abode. Fruit from a choice tree is well, but apples of gold in baskets of silver are not to be despised, but, if one can have the tree planted in his own garden, he is far richer. Our Lord is the apple tree among the trees of the forest, and to possess HIM is to have the best of the best, yes, all things that can be desired. Covenant blessings are streams, but our Lord Jesus is the wellhead. Believe for the infinite, immutable, inexhaustible “deep which lies under,” and you may sink as many wells as you please.

I believe that, in every case wherein the soul finds peace, this is *the actual order*. We may go about after pardon, renewal, and holiness, but we find no rest unto our souls while hunting for these. As a matter of fact, we look unto HIM and are lightened, and not by any other means. If, by aiming even at repentance, we are taken off from the Lord, we are taken off the right road. It is possible even to look to faith in such a manner as to forget the object of faith. It is not my hand, but what my hand grasps that saves me when I lay hold on Christ. It is not my eye, but what my eye sees which saves me when I look to Jesus. In very deed no heart can find salvation in that which comes forth from itself; its hope lies alone in the Lord, to whom it must trust for everything. Beware of trusting to an anchor which lies on your own deck, or to a confidence which depends in the least degree on yourself. “Let Israel hope in the Lord.” Now the Lord is not self, nor will He be joined with self. The Lord is beyond and outside of all that the creation can find within, or hope to produce from itself. Mercy and redemption are with the Lord, not with self. Why, then, should we look where, in the very nature of things, these are not, and cannot be? Why not look to the Lord, in whom alone all heavenly treasures abide?

This, then, is my message to every man who desires salvation, “Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption.” Do not let him begin by hoping in mercy and redemption, for these are not to be found apart from the Lord—but go at once to that divine Person with whom there is mercy and plenteous redemption, then both of those will be granted him. I wish I knew how to put this so plainly that every bewildered and cast-down spirit would catch my meaning, and accept its counsel. I would also have preachers learn a lesson from the point I have been driving at. Let them not so much preach sinners to Christ as preach Christ to sinners. I am persuaded that a full and clear declaration of what Jesus is, as to His person, offices, character, work, and authority, would do more to produce faith than all our exhortations. “Whosoever believes in Him has everlasting life,” but how shall they believe unless they hear of Him?

The very best topic for the immediate conversion of men is Christ crucified—the doctrine that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. I know one that came in here full of evil, living an unchaste life, and the text was, “He that believes in Him has everlasting life.” There would not seem to be anything about the sermon to convince of sin, but the charming mercy of God won that heart, and that heart, being won by love, learned at once to hate evil, and to serve the Lord Jesus in all that is pure, and lovely, and of good report. There sat in this very house, not long ago, side by side with one who is still in the service of Satan, a woman, who had not attended the house of God for years. Nothing was heard but the simple proclamation of the grace of God in Christ Jesus to the guilty, but she was shot down by the side of her companion; the thought of the amazing mercy and infinite love of God, in giving His Son to die, touched her heart, and she began to weep, whereat her companion upbraided her, but she answered, “I have found mercy.” That was enough for her; she made no other excuse for her emotion. I pray that the same effects may follow this sermon. I bid you hope in the Lord. Look not to abstract mercy; look not to any feelings or resolves in yourselves; look not even to the hearing of the word, or to promises alone, but look to Jesus, who still lives, and who is in the midst of His people at this time, waiting to receive all who are willing to come to Him. While I tell you this, I am praying the Holy Spirit to bless the Word to your souls, so that, at once, without delay, you may look only to the Lord, and may trust in Him, and be saved. You are allowed to do so, for the text says, “Let Israel hope in the Lord.” If the Scripture permits, who shall forbid?

II. Another form of the same truth now invites our attention—ALL EXERCISES OF FAITH IN REFERENCE TO OTHER THINGS MUST BE IN CONNECTION WITH THE LORD. I began with our first exercise of faith, but I would not end there. As the stars called “the Pointers” always point to the polestar, so must our faith always look to God in Christ Jesus. Having begun with Jesus, our faith must not look elsewhere. Let Israel always hope in the Lord, for with Him is what she still requires. What do you need tonight, dear friend? Ask, and you shall receive, but ask only of the Lord. Knock, but knock still at the same door. Plead, but when you are pleading, still plead the name of Jesus. Whenever you are expecting a heavenly favor, expect it from the Father, through His dear Son, by the Holy Spirit. Whenever you are longing, long for nothing more than there is in Christ, and whenever you obtain a mercy, remember that you have received it only because you have by faith received Jesus, and so have become a child of God. Whenever you rejoice in a mercy, take care that you do not so much glory in *it* as in the Lord from whom it came. Hope still in the Lord, and never have any hope in yourself, for that would be a fruitless, groundless, rootless, sapless hope. You are still to find mercy and plenteous redemption in the Lord alone.

I am afraid that sometimes we seek *mercies* apart from God the Giver, or apart from Christ, the channel of their bestowal, and this is always ill of us. Avoid such dangerous error. I read in the papers, frequently, allusions to “Providence.” I know what I intend by Providence, but I do not know what the newspapers mean by it. I fear it is only a convenient phrase, a conventional expression, which is not to be too carefully examined. They do not mean a living, foreseeing, providing, and working Personality; that would be too much like religion. They admit a certain something, “a power which makes for righteousness,” a nonentity called “Providence.” I have too often heard Christian people talk about thanking Providence. What is that? Do you mean, “thank God”? If so, say it boldly! It is God that provides. God arranges, God overrules, God works out His gracious designs. Again, how often do we hear of “Nature” doing this, and “Nature” being that, and “Nature” producing the other! What do you mean? An infidel, some time ago, was speaking in the open air, and he orated very eloquently about the elevating influences of nature, and what a blessing it was to study nature. A friend in the crowd said to him, “That is very pretty, but would you have the goodness to tell me what Nature is, which does all this?” The orator answered tartly, “Every fool knows what Nature is.” “Well,” said the questioner, “then it will be easy to tell us.” “Nature,” said the speaker, “Well, Nature is Nature.” Just so. That is where it ended. And so it is with very many people when they talk about Providence or Nature. Let us not speak without knowing what we mean, or without declaring our meaning. We do not erect an altar, and inscribe it TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. We know the Lord, and are known of Him, and therefore we would speak of Him as our hope, our trust, our joy. We know no providence apart from Jehovah-Jireh, the God who foresees and provides. To us there is no fickle *chance*, but the Lord reigns. Equally to us is there no blind, inexo-

rable *fate*, but the Most High decrees and works out His wise and sovereign will. Therefore do not let God's Israel talk as if they hoped in luck or fate, but let them "hope in the Lord," and avow their reliance upon a personal God, who is working for them evermore, "for with Him is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption."

Now, dear brother, do you want *mercy*? In your prayers for pardoning mercy, quote the Savior's sacrifice. Do you want sparing mercy? Mention Him whom God did not spare in the great atoning day. Do you want restoring mercy? Plead Him whom God brought again from the dead. Do you want to behold the light of Jehovah's countenance? Plead Him who said, "Why have You forsaken Me?" In hoping for mercy, set the eye of your hope upon the Lord Jesus, and let no mercy be hoped for by you apart from Him. Recollect what happened to Uzziah. He was a man of God, and a king, but when he had grown very great, he thought that he would act as priest for himself, and go into the sanctuary of the Lord, and burn incense on his own account, without the Lord's appointed priest; but he was struck with leprosy, and not only was he thrust out, but he, himself, hastened to go out of the temple. I tremble for those in whom I see any sign of going before God in right of their own character. I fear that among God's own professing people there are some who are so conscious of their own knowledge, and growth, that they pray without Christ, praise without Christ, and talk of being no longer in need of confessing sin. They dare to act without humbly depending upon the presence of the great high priest, and then they fall into sin, and thus they are struck with leprosy, and, perhaps, to their dying day they can never enter into such fellowship with God as once they knew. I would do nothing without Jesus. I would not even wish to repent except my eye was upon the cross. I would not hope to think a holy thought except as my soul still gazed upon Jesus my all. Away, away with every idea of mercy except it is mercy received through Jesus, for He alone is full of grace and of His fullness must we receive. I would bind you, brethren, if I could, to the cross as your one hope. I pray the Lord bind me forever to the cross; the wounds my only fountains of hope, the blood and water my only cleansing. Go you who have a righteousness of your own, and hope elsewhere, but the lone hope of my soul is the bleeding, dying, buried, risen, coming Savior. "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy," and with Him alone; all the exercises of faith about mercy must always be tethered to the cross. Mercy flows through Christ alone.

So is it with "*plenteous redemption*." What a grand utterance that is—"plenteous redemption!" I would like to dwell upon it. Is there not rare music in the sound? It means plenteous forgiveness for plenteous sin, through a price paid, a ransom given. In Christ only can you find this. "*With Him* is plenteous redemption." Do not dream of finding redemption in ordinances, in prayers, in tears, or in anything but the life and death and person of the Son of God. "*With Him* is plenteous redemption." A great price He has paid, and therefore a great debt is blotted out. Great offenses are forgiven, but only through the precious blood of our adorable Redeemer.

"Plenteous redemption." Why, that means deliverance from the bondage of many lusts, freedom from the thralldom of strong passions, a ransom of captives from fierce taskmasters. My God, I long to be so delivered, and redeemed, and there is with You all grace and power, and provision for plenteous deliverance by redemption, but this is found in Christ alone. I charge you, my hearers, do not look for escape from the slavery of sin apart from the redemption of Christ. Do not expect to overcome the smallest sin except by the blood of the Lamb. There is nothing, I believe, more deceiving than the notion of the unregenerate heart that it is seeking after holiness, though it is destitute of the power of the Holy Spirit, and takes no thought of the merit of Jesus Christ. We need grace plenteously, and plenteous redemption, in fact; but all of all that we receive must come to us from the Lord, by Jesus Christ the Mediator.

"Plenteous redemption" includes in its range of meaning great growth in grace, abounding usefulness, high spirituality, and perfect preparedness for heaven; for all these we must hope in the Lord, for they are with Him. Never think to have redemption in the least or in the highest degree apart from your hope in the Lord—your trusting in Christ Jesus.

The pith and marrow of what I have said is this; *hope distinctly in the Lord*. There are many stars, but let one alone of all the train be the object of your believing eye. Lay the foundation of your hope in the Lord; go on building up your comfort in the Lord Jesus, and in Him bring forth the top stone. Begin with Christ, and end with Christ. As Christ grows more to you, take care that self grows less and less. If

your Christianity puffs you up, it is not Christ's Christianity. I spoke just now of King Uzziah, let me refer to him once more. Read in the Second of Chronicles, chapter twenty-six, at the fifteenth verse—"He was marvelously helped, till he was strong." When he became strong, he went off the lines, and we read, "When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction." Mind *that*. God will always help us while we are weak. When we are strong; what shall I say? Then are we weak, and have need to fear, for we are being lifted up already, or we should not count ourselves strong—poor, puny creatures that we are! God will always bless us as long as we confess our dependence upon His blessing. He will always fill us as long as we are empty. He will always feed us as long as we are hungry. He will be your all in all so long as you are nothing. But the moment you boast in yourself, and say, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," you will be left to learn that you are naked, and poor, and miserable. Woe becomes the day in which dust and ashes set up somebody! Nebuchadnezzar is proud, and soon finds a rapid descent from the throne to eating grass like cattle. Worms, in the presence of the Lord, do all they may do when they *hope*, they do all they can do when they hope *in Him*. They have nothing but sin, and He has *mercy* upon them. They are slaves to evil, but He has *plenteous redemption* with which to set them free. The poorest, weakest, saddest among us may hope in the Lord, for He can do all things; therefore, let us end our meeting with each one of us hoping in the Lord, and let us continue in our faith in "the God of hope," till we receive the heaven we hope for through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 130, JOHN 3.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—551, 560, 538.

A LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

London, April 13, 1891.

DEAR FRIENDS—This sermon is issued this week instead of the discourse of last Lord's-day morning, because I am spending a few days in retirement so as to be rested, and ready for the *College Conference*, which commences April 20. This Conference is a great muster of ministers, and my very soul is on fire with a desire for a special blessing from the Lord when I am addressing them, and, indeed, through all the meetings. I would entreat every reader to pray that this Conference may be greatly influential in establishing the brethren in the faith, and in arousing in them a great passion for souls. By this means their churches and congregations will become partakers of the benefit. We need not merely "a little reviving," but a second Pentecost. What we need we will seek, and what we seek we will expect. God has great things in reserve, which he will give in answer to prayer.

In the midst of the week, which some lovingly call *the Feast of Tabernacles*, one evening is given up to the College Annual Supper; and on that occasion gifts are sent in for the support of THE COLLEGE. It would greatly cheer me if many of my readers, who cannot be present in person, would nevertheless have fellowship in the work by sending in their help by April 22. The funds coming in for different parts of the Lord's work under my care have been rather smaller of late. This causes me no anxiety; for the Lord can soon fill the coffers; but I think His people ought to be informed of it, lest any should suppose that their aid is not wanted. I would be glad of help from all the members of my "larger congregation." Brethren, *I suggest*: I do no more. And yet I do beg your prayers for the Lord's work.

Yours heartily, for Jesus' sake,
C. H. SPURGEON.

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