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A SERMON
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 AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?
 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
 Romans 7:24-25*

IF I chose to occupy your time with controversial matter, I might prove to a demonstration that the apostle Paul is here describing his own experience as a Christian. Some have affirmed that he is merely declaring what he was before conversion, and not what he was when he became the recipient of the grace of God. But such persons are evidently mistaken, and I believe willfully mistaken, for any simple-hearted, candid mind, reading through this chapter could not fall into such an error. It is Paul the apostle who was not less than the very greatest of the apostles—it is Paul, the mighty servant of God, a very prince in Israel, one of the King’s mighty men—it is Paul, the saint and the apostle, who here exclaims, “O wretched man that I am!”

Now, humble Christians are often the dupes of a very foolish error. They look up to certain advanced saints and able ministers, and they say, “Surely, such men as these do not suffer as I do, they do not contend with the same evil passions as those which vex and trouble me.” Ah! if they knew the hearts of those men, if they could read their inward conflicts, they would soon discover that the nearer a man lives to God, the more intensely has he to mourn over his own evil heart, and the more his Master honors him in His service, the more also does the evil of the flesh vex and tease him day by day. Perhaps this error is more natural, as it is certainly more common with regard to apostolic saints.

We have been in the habit of saying, *Saint Paul* and *Saint John*, as if they were more saints than any other of the children of God. They are all saints whom God has called by His grace and sanctified by His Spirit, but somehow we very foolishly put the apostles and the early saints into another list, and do not venture to look on them as common mortals. We look upon them as some extraordinary beings who could not be men of like passions with ourselves.

We are told in Scripture that our Savior was “tempted in all points like as we are,” and yet we fall into the egregious error of imagining that the apostles, who were far inferior to the Lord Jesus, escaped these temptations and were ignorant of these conflicts. The fact is, if you had seen the apostle Paul, you would have thought he was remarkably like the rest of the chosen family, and if you had talked with him, you would have said, “Why, Paul, I find that your experience and mine exactly agree. You are more faithful, more holy, and more deeply taught than I, but you have the selfsame trials to endure. Nay, in some respects you are more sorely tried than I.”

Do not look upon the ancient saints as being exempt either from infirmities or sins, and do not regard them with that mystic reverence which almost makes you an idolater. Their holiness is attainable even by you, and their faults are to be censured as much as your own.

I believe it is a Christian’s duty to force his way into the inner circle of saintship, and if these saints were superior to us in their attainments, as they certainly were, let us follow them, let us press forward up to, yea, and beyond them, for I do not see that this is impossible. We have the same light that they had, the same grace is accessible to us, and why should we rest satisfied until we have distanced them in the heavenly race? Let us bring them down to the sphere of common mortals.

If Jesus was the Son of man, and very man, “bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,” so were the apostles, and it is a flagrant error to suppose that they were not the subjects of the same emotions, and

the same inward trials, as the very meanest of the people of God. So far, this may tend to our comfort and to our encouragement when we find that we are engaged in a battle in which apostles themselves have had to fight.

And now, we shall notice this morning, first, *the two natures*, secondly, *their constant battle*, thirdly, we shall step aside and look at *the weary warrior*, and hear him cry, “O wretched man that I am,” and then we shall turn our eye in another direction, and see that fainting warrior girding up his loins to the conflict, and becoming *an expectant victor*, while he shouts, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

I. First then, THE TWO NATURES.

Carnal men, unrenewed men, have one nature—a nature which they inherited from their parents, and which through the ancient transgression of Adam, is evil, only evil, and that continually. Mere human nature, such as is common to every man, has in it many excellent traits, judging of it between man and man.

A merely natural man may be honest, upright, kind, and generous, he may have noble and generous thoughts, and may attain unto a true and manly speech, but when we come to matters of true religion, spiritual matters that concern God and eternity, the natural man can do nothing. The carnal mind, whose ever mind it may be, is fallen, and is at enmity to God, does not know the things of God, nor can it ever know them.

Now, when a man becomes a Christian, he becomes so through the infusion of a new nature. He is naturally “dead in trespasses and sins,” “without God and without hope.” The Holy Spirit enters into him and implants in him a new principle, a new nature, a new life. That life is a high, holy, and supernatural principle, it is in fact, the divine nature, a ray from the great “Father of Lights,” it is the Spirit of God dwelling in man. Thus, you see, the Christian becomes a double man—two men in one.

Some have imagined that the old nature is turned out of the Christian, not so, for the Word of God and experience teach the contrary, the old nature is in the Christian unchanged, unaltered, just the same, as bad as ever it was, while the new nature in him is holy, pure, and heavenly, and hence, as we shall have to notice in the next place—hence arises a conflict between the two.

Now, I want you to notice what the apostle says about these two natures that are in the Christian, for I am about to contrast them. First, in our text the apostle calls the old nature “the *body* of this death.” Why does he call it “the *body* of this death”? Some suppose he means these dying bodies, but I do not think so. If it were not for sin, we would have no fault to find with our poor bodies. They are noble works of God, and are not in themselves the cause of sin. Adam in the garden of perfection, felt the body to be no encumbrance, nor if sin were absent should we have any fault to find with our flesh and blood.

What then, is it? I think the apostle calls the evil nature within him a body, first, in opposition to those who talk of the relics of corruption in a Christian. I have heard people say that there are relics, remainders and remnants of sin in a believer. Such men do not know much about themselves yet. Oh! it is not a bone, or a rag which is left, it is the whole body of sin that is there—the whole of it, “from the crown of the head to the sole of the feet.” Grace does not maim this body and cut away its members, it leaves it entire, although blessed be God, it crucifies it, nailing it to the cross of Christ.

And again, I think he calls it a body because it is something tangible. We all know that we have a body, it is a thing we can feel, we know it is there. The new nature is a spirit, subtle, and not easy to detect, I sometimes have to question myself as to whether it is there at all. But as for my old nature, that is a body, I can never find it difficult to recognize its existence, it is as apparent as my flesh and bones. As I never doubt that I am in flesh and blood, so I never doubt but what I have sin within me. It is a body—a thing which I can see and feel, and which, to my pain, is always present with me.

Understand then, that the old nature of the Christian is a body, it has in it a substance, or as Calvin puts it, it is *a mass* of corruption. It is not simply a shred, a remnant—the clout of the old garment, but the whole of it is there still. True, it is crushed beneath the foot of grace, it is cast out of its throne, but it is there, there in all its entireness, and in all its sad tangibility, a body of death.

But why does he call it a body of *death*? Simply to express what an awful thing this sin is that remains in the heart. It is a body of *death*. I must use a figure which is always appended to this text, and very properly so. It was the custom of ancient tyrants, when they wished to put men to the most fearful punishments, to tie a dead body to them, placing the two back to back, and there was the living man, with a dead body closely strapped to him, rotting, putrid, corrupting, and this he must drag with him wherever he went.

Now this is just what the Christian has to do. He has within him the new life, he has a living and undying principle, which the Holy Spirit has put within him, but he feels that every day he has to drag about with him this dead body, this body of death, a thing as loathsome, as hideous, as abominable to his new life as a dead stinking carcass would be to a living man.

Francis Quarles gives a picture at the beginning of one of his emblems of a great skeleton in which a living man is encased. However quaint the fancy, it is not more singular than true. There is the old skeleton man, filthy, corrupt and abominable. He is a cage for the new principle which God has put in the heart. Consider a moment the striking language of our text, "*The body of this death, it is death incarnate, death concentrated, death dwelling in the very temple of life.*"

Did you ever think what an awful thing death is? The thought is the most abhorrent to human nature. You say you do not fear death and very properly, but the reason why you do not fear death is because you look to a glorious immortality. Death in itself is a most frightful thing.

Now, inbred sin has about it all the unknown terror, all the destructive force, and all the stupendous gloom of death. A poet would be needed to depict the conflict of life with death—to describe a living soul condemned to walk through the black shades of confusion, and to bear incarnate death in its very bowels. But such is the condition of the Christian. As a regenerate man, he is a living, bright, immortal spirit, but he has to tread the shades of death. He has to do daily battle with all the tremendous powers of sin, which are as awful, as sublimely terrific as even the powers of death and hell.

Upon referring to the preceding chapter, we find the evil principle styled, "the old man." There is much meaning in that word "old." But let it suffice us to remark that in age the new nature is not upon an equal footing with the corrupt nature. There are some here who are sixty years old in their humanity, who can scarce number two years in the life of grace.

Now, pause and meditate upon the warfare in the heart. It is the contest of an infant with a full-grown man, the wrestling of a babe with a giant. Old Adam, like some ancient oak, has thrust his roots into the depths of manhood, can the divine infant uproot him and cast him from his place? This is the work, this is the labor.

From its birth, the new nature begins the struggle, and it cannot cease from it until the victory be perfectly achieved. Nevertheless, it is the moving of a mountain, the drying up of an ocean, the threshing of the hills, and who is sufficient for these things? The heaven-born nature needs and will receive, the abundant help of its Author, or it would yield in the struggle, subdued beneath the superior strength of its adversary and crushed beneath his enormous weight.

Again, observe that the old nature of man, which remains in the Christian, is *evil*, and it cannot ever be anything else but evil, for we are told in this chapter, that "in me"—that is, in my flesh—"there dwelleth no good thing." The old Adam-nature cannot be improved, it cannot be made better, it is hopeless to attempt it. You may do what you please with it, you may educate it, you may instruct it, and thus you may give it more instruments for rebellion, but you cannot make the rebel into the friend; you cannot turn the darkness into light, it is an enemy to God, and an enemy to God it ever must be.

On the contrary, the new life which God has given us cannot sin. That is the meaning of a passage in John where it is said, "The child of God sinneth not, he cannot sin because he is born of God." The old nature is evil, only evil, and that continually, the new nature is good, wholly good, it knows nothing of sin except to hate it. Its contact with sin brings it pain and misery, and it cries out, "Woe is me that I dwell in Meshech, that I tabernacle in the tents of Kedar."

I have thus given you some little picture of the two natures. Let me again remind you that these two natures are essentially unchangeable. You cannot make the new nature which God has given you less divine. The old nature you cannot make less impure and earthly. Old Adam is a condemned thing. You may sweep the house, and the evil spirit may seem to go out of it, but he will come back again and bring with him seven other devils more wicked than himself.

It is a leper's house, and the leprosy is in every stone from the foundation to the roof, there is no part sound. It is a garment spotted by the flesh, you may wash, and wash, and wash, but you shall never wash it clean, it were foolish to attempt it. Whilst on the other hand the new nature can never be tainted—spotless, holy, and pure, it dwells in our hearts, it rules and reigns there, expecting the day when it shall cast out its enemy, and without a rival it shall be monarch in the heart of man forever.

II. I have thus described the two combatants, we shall now come in the next place to THEIR BATTLE.

There was never deadlier feud in all the world between nations than there is between the two principles, right and wrong. But right and wrong are often divided from one another by distance, and therefore, they have a less intense hatred. Suppose an instance, right holds for liberty, therefore right hates the evil of slavery. But we do not so intensely hate slavery as we should do if we saw it before our eyes, then would the blood boil when we saw our black brother, smitten by the cow-hide whip.

Imagine a slaveholder standing here and smiting his poor slave until the red blood gushed forth in a river, can you conceive your indignation? Now, it is distance which makes you feel this less acutely. The right forgets the wrong because it is far away. But suppose now that right and wrong lived in the same house, suppose two such desperate enemies cribbed, cabined, and confined within this narrow house, *man*, suppose the two compelled to dwell together, can you imagine to what a desperate pitch of fury these two would get with one another.

The evil thing says, "I will turn you out, you intruder, I cannot be peaceful as I would, I cannot riot as I would, I cannot indulge lust as I would, out with you, I will never be content until I slay you." "Nay," says the newborn nature, "I will kill you, and drive you out. I will not suffer stick or stone of you to remain, I have sworn war to the knife with you, I have taken out the sword and cast away the scabbard, and will never rest till I can sing complete victory over you, and totally eject you from this house of mine." They are always at enmity wherever they are, they were never friends and never can be. The evil must hate the good, and the good must hate the evil.

And mark, although we might compare the enmity to the wolf and lamb, yet the newborn nature is not the lamb in all respects. It may be in its innocence and meekness, but it is not in its strength, for the newborn nature has all the omnipotence of God about it, whilst the old nature has all the strength of the evil one in it, which is a strength not easily to be exaggerated, but which we very frequently underestimate. These two things are ever desperately at enmity with one another. And even when they are both quiet, they hate each other none the less.

When my evil nature does not rise, still it hates the newborn nature, and when the newborn nature is inactive, it has nevertheless a thorough abhorrence of all iniquity. The one cannot endure the other, it must endeavor to thrust it forth. Nor do these at any time allow an opportunity to pass from being revenged upon one another.

There are times when the old nature is very active and then how will it ply all the weapons of its deadly armory against the Christian. You will find yourselves at one time suddenly attacked with anger, and when you guard yourself against the hot temptation, on a sudden you will find pride rising, and you will begin to say to yourself, "Am I not a good man to have kept my temper down?"

And the moment you thrust down your pride, there will come another temptation, and lust will look out of the window of your eyes, and you will desire a thing upon which you ought not to look, and ere you can shut your eyes upon the vanity, sloth in its deadly torpor surrounds you, and you give yourself up to its influence and cease to labor for God.

And then when you bestir yourselves once more, you find that in the very attempt to rouse yourself you have once more awakened your pride. Evil haunts you, go where you may, or stand in what posture you choose!

On the other hand, the new nature will never lose an opportunity of putting down the old. As for the means of grace, the newborn nature will never rest satisfied unless it enjoys them. As for prayer, it will seek by prayer to wrestle with the enemy. It will employ faith, and hope, and love, the threatenings, the promises, providence, grace, and everything else to cast out the evil.

“Well,” says one, “I don’t find it so.” Then I am afraid for you. If you do not hate sin so much that you do everything to drive it out, I am afraid you are not a living child of God. Antinomians like to hear you preach about the evil of the heart, but here is the fault with them, they do not like to be told that unless they hate that evil, unless they seek to drive it out, and unless it is the constant disposition of their newborn nature to root it up, they are yet in their sins.

Men who only believe their depravity, but do not hate it, are no further than the devil on the road to heaven. It is not my being corrupt that proves me a Christian, nor knowing I am corrupt, but that I hate my corruption. It is my agonizing death struggle with my corruptions that proves me to be a living child of God. These two natures will never cease to struggle so long as we are in this world. The old nature will never give up, it will never cry truce, it will never ask for a treaty to be made between the two. It will always strike as often as it can. When it lies still it will only be preparing for some future battle.

The battle of Christian with Apollyon lasted three hours, but the battle of Christian with himself lasted all the way from the Wicket Gate to the River Jordan. The enemy within can never be driven out while we are here. Satan may sometimes be absent from us, and get such a defeat that he is glad to go howling back to his den, but old Adam abides with us from the first even to the last. He was with us when we first believed in Jesus, and long ere that, and he will be with us till that moment when we shall leave our bones in the grave, our fears in the Jordan, and our sins in oblivion.

Once more observe that neither of these two natures will be content in the fight without bringing in allies to assist. The evil nature has old relations and in its endeavor to drive out the grace that is within, it sends off messengers to all its helpers. Like Chedorlaomer, the King of Elam, it brings other kings with it when it goes out to battle. “Ah!” says old Adam, “I have friends in the pit.” He sends a missive down to the depths, and willing allies come therefrom—spirits from the vast deep of hell, devils without number come up to the help of their brother.

And then, not content with that, the flesh says—“Ah! I have friends in this world,” and then the world sends its fierce cohorts of temptation, such as the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. What a battle, when sin, Satan, and the world, make a dead-set upon the Christian at once. “Oh,” says one, “it is a terrible thing to be a Christian.” I assure you it is. It is one of the hardest things in the world to be a child of God, in fact, it is impossible unless the Lord makes us His children and keeps us so.

Well, what does the new nature do? When it sees all these enemies, it cries unto the Lord, and then the Lord sends it friends. First comes in to its help, JEHOVAH in the everlasting counsel, and reveals to the heart its own interest in the secrets of eternity. Then comes Jesus with His blood. “Thou shalt conquer,” says He, “I will make thee more than a conqueror through my death.” And then appears the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. With such assistance, this newborn nature is more than a match for its enemies. God will sometimes leave that new nature alone, to let it know its own weakness, but it shall not be for long, lest it should sink in despair.

Are you fighting with the enemy today, my dear Christian brethren? Are Satan, the flesh, and the world—that hellish trinity—all against you? Remember, there is a divine trinity for you. Fight on, though like Valiant-for-Truth, your blood runs from your hand and glues your sword to your arm. Fight on! for with you are the legions of heaven, God Himself is with you, JEHOVAH NISSI is your banner, and JEHOVAH ROPHI is the healer of your wounds. You shall overcome, for who can defeat omnipotence, or trample divinity beneath his foot?

I have thus endeavored to describe the conflict, but understand me, it cannot be described. We must say, as Hart does in his hymn, when after singing the emotions of his soul, he says—

*“But, brethren, you can surely guess,
For you perhaps have felt the same.”*

If you could see a plain upon which a battle is fought, you would see how the ground is torn up by the wheels of the cannon, by the horse hoofs, and by the trampling of men. What desolation is to be seen, where once the golden crops of the harvest grew. How the ground is soaked with the blood of the slain. How frightful the result of this terrible struggle.

But if you could see the believers’ heart after a spiritual battle, you would find it just a counterpart of the battlefield—as much cut up as the ground of the battlefield after the direst conflict that men or fiends have ever waged. For, think, we are combating man with himself, nay, more, man with the whole world, nay, more, man with hell, God with man, against man, the world and hell. What a fight is that! It were worth an angel’s while to come from the remotest fields of ether to behold such a conflict.

III. We come now to notice THE WEARY COMBATANT.

He lifts up his voice and weeping he cries, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” It is the cry of a panting warrior. He has fought so long that he has lost his breath, and he draws it in again, he takes breath by prayer, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” He will not give up the conflict, he knows he cannot, and he dare not. That thought does not enter into his mind, but the conflict is so sore, the battle so furious, that he is almost defeated, he sits down to refresh himself and thus he sighs out his soul, like the panting hart longing for the water brook, he says, “O wretched man that I am.”

Nay, it is more than that. It is the cry of one who is fainting. He has fought till all his strength is spent, and he falls back into the arms of his Redeemer with this fainting gasp, “O wretched man that I am!” His strength has failed him, he is sorely beaten in the battle, he feels that, without the help of God he is so totally defeated that he commences his own wail of defeat, “O wretched man that I am.”

And then he asks this question, “Who shall deliver me?” And there comes a voice from the Law, “I cannot and I will not.” There comes a voice from Conscience, “I can make you see the battle, but I cannot help you in it.” And then there comes a cry from old Human Nature, and that says, “Ah! none can deliver you, I shall yet destroy you, you shall fall by the hand of your enemy, the house of David shall be destroyed, and Saul shall live and reign for ever.” And the poor fainting soldier cries again, “Who shall deliver me?” It seems a hopeless case, and I believe that sometimes the true Christian may think himself hopelessly given over to the power of sin.

The wretchedness of Paul, I think, lay in two things which are enough to make any man wretched. Paul believed the doctrine of human responsibility, and yet he felt the doctrine of human inability. I have heard people say sometimes—“You tell the sinner that he cannot believe and repent without the help of the Holy Spirit, and yet you tell him that it is his duty to believe and repent. How are these two to be reconciled?” We reply that they do not want any reconciliation, they are two truths of Holy Scripture, and we leave them to reconcile themselves, they are friends, and friends do not need any reconciliation.

But what seems a difficulty as a matter of doctrine is clear as daylight as a matter of experience. I know it is my duty to be perfect, but I am conscious I cannot be. I know that every time I commit sin I am guilty, and yet I am quite certain that I must sin—that my nature is such that I cannot help it. I feel that I am unable to get rid of this body of sin and death, and yet I know I ought to get rid of it.

These two things are enough to make any man miserable—to know that he is responsible for his sinful nature, and yet to know that he cannot get rid of it—to know that he ought to keep it down, and yet to feel he cannot—to know that it is his business to keep God’s law perfectly, and walk in the commandments of the law blameless, and yet to know by sad experience that he is as unable to do so as he is to reverse the motion of the globe, or dash the sun from the center of the spheres.

Now will not these two things drive any man to desperation? The way in which some men avoid the dilemma is by a denial of one of these truths. They say, "Well, it is true I am unable to cease from sin," and then, they deny their obligation to do so, they do not cry, "O wretched man that I am," they live as they like and say they cannot help it.

On the other hand, there are some men who know they are responsible, but then they say, "Ay, but I can cast off my sin," and these are tolerably happy. The Arminian and the hyper-Calvinist both of them get on very comfortably, but the man who believes these two doctrines as taught in God's Word, that he is responsible for sin, and yet that he is unable to get rid of it, I do not wonder that when he looks into himself he finds enough to make him sigh and cry, to faint and despair, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death."

And now says one, "Ah, I would not be a Christian if that is the way in which he faints—it seems he is always to be fighting with himself, and even until he despairs of victory." Stop a moment. Let us complete the picture. This man is fainting, but he will be restored by and by. Think not that he is hopelessly defeated, he falls to rise, he faints but to be revived afresh.

I know a magic, which can awaken his sleeping hopes, and shoot a thrill along the freezing current of his blood. Let us sound the promise in his ear, see how soon he revives. Let us put the cordial to his lips, see how he starts up and plays the man again. "I have almost been defeated" says he, "almost driven to despair. Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy; though I fall, yet shall I rise again." And he lets fly against him once more, shouting, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." So on he goes again, more than a conqueror, through Him that has loved him.

IV. This brings me to this last point, that **THE CHRISTIAN IS TO BE A CONQUEROR AT LAST.**

Do you think that we are forever to be the drudges and the slaves of sin? Am I forever to be the galley slave of my own nature, to tug for freedom and never to escape? Am I always to have this dead man chained to my back, and sniff the pestiferous exhalations of his putrid body? No, no, no, that which is within my heart is like a caged eagle, and I know that soon the bars which confine me shall be broken, the door of my cage shall be opened, and I shall mount with my eye upon the sun of glory, soaring upward, true to the line, moving neither to the right hand nor to the left, flying till I reach my eyrie in the everlasting rocks of God's eternal love.

No, we that love the Lord are not forever to dwell in Meshech. The dust may besmear our robes, and filth may be upon our brow, and beggared may be our garment, but we shall not be so forever. The day is coming when we shall rise and shake ourselves from the dust, and put on our beautiful garments. It is true we are now like Israel in Canaan. Canaan is full of enemies, but the Canaanites shall and must be driven out. Amalek shall be slain, Agag shall be hewn in pieces, our enemies shall, every one of them, be dispersed and the whole land from Dan to Beersheba shall be the Lord's.

Christians, rejoice! You are soon to be perfect, you are soon to be free from sin, totally free from it, without one wrong inclination, one evil desire. You are soon to be as pure as the angels in light, nay, more, with your Master's garments on, you are to be "holy as the holy one." Can you think of that? Is not that the very sum of heaven, the rapture of bliss, the sonnet of the hilltops of glory—that you are to be perfect?

No temptation shall reach you from eye, or ear, or hand, nor if the temptation could reach you would you be hurt by it, for there will be nothing in you that could in any way foster sin. It would be as when a spark falls upon an ocean, your holiness would quench it in a moment. Yes, washed in the blood of Jesus, afresh baptized with the Holy Spirit, you are soon to walk the golden streets, white-robed and white-hearted too, and perfect as your Maker, you are to stand before His throne and sing His praises to eternity.

Now, soldiers of Christ, to arms again! Once more rush into the fight, you cannot be defeated, you will overcome. Though you faint a little, yet take courage, you shall conquer through the blood of the Lamb.

And now, turning aside for a minute, I shall conclude by making an observation or two to many now present. There are some here who say, "I am never disturbed in that fashion." Then I am sorry for you. I will tell you the reason of your false peace. You have not the grace of God in your hearts. If you had, you would surely find this conflict within you.

Do not despise the Christian because he is in the conflict, despise yourself because you are out of it. The reason why the devil lets you alone is that he knows you are his. He does not need to trouble you much now, he will have time enough to give you your wages at the last. He troubles the Christian because he is afraid of losing him, he thinks that if he does not tease him here, he shall never have the chance to do it in eternity, so he will bite him, and bark at him while he may. That is why the Christian is vexed more than you are.

As for you, you may well be without any pain, for dead men feel no blows. You may well be without the pricking of conscience, for men that are corrupt are not likely to feel wounds, though you stab them from head to foot. I pity your condition, for the worm that dieth not is preparing to feed upon you, the eternal vulture of remorse shall soon wet his horrid beak with the blood of your soul. Tremble, for the fires of hell are hot and unquenchable, and the place of perdition is hideous beyond a madman's dream.

Oh, that you would think of your last end. The Christian may have an evil present, but he has a glorious future, but your future is the blackness of darkness forever. I adjure you by the living God, you that fear not Christ, consider your ways. You and I must give an account for this morning's service. You are warned, men, you are warned! Take heed to yourselves, that you think not this life to be everything. *There* is a world to come, there is "after death the judgment." If you fear not the Lord, there is after judgment eternal wrath and everlasting misery.

And now, a word to those who are seeking Christ. "Ah!" says one, "Sir, I have sought Christ, but I feel worse than I ever was in my life. Before I had any thoughts about Christ I felt myself to be good, but now I feel myself to be evil." It is all right, my friend. I am glad to hear you say so. When surgeons heal a patient's wound, they always take care to cut away the proud flesh because the cure can never be radical while the proud flesh remains. The Lord is getting rid of your self-confidence and self-righteousness. He is just now revealing to your soul the deadly cancer which is festering within you.

You are on the sure road to healing if you are on the way to wounding. God wounds before He heals, He strikes a man dead in his own esteem before He makes him alive. "Ah," cries one, "but can I hope that I ever shall be delivered?" Yes, my brother, if you now look to Christ. I care not what your sin nor what your despair of heart, if you will only turn your eye to Him who bled upon the tree, there is not only hope for you, but there is a certainty of salvation.

I myself, while thinking over this subject, felt a horror of great darkness rush over my spirit as I thought what danger I was in lest I should be defeated, and I could not get a glimpse of the light into my burdened spirit, until I turned my eye, and saw my Master hanging on the cross. I saw the blood still flowing, faith laid hold upon the sacrifice, and I said, "This cross is the instrument of Jesu's victory, and it shall be the means of mine." I looked to His blood, I remembered that I was triumphant in that blood, and I rose from my meditations humbled, but yet rejoicing, cast down, but not in despair, looking for the victory. Do likewise.

"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," believe that. You are an awakened, conscious and penitent sinner, therefore He came to save you. Believe His Word, trust Him. Do nothing for your own salvation of yourself, but trust Him to do it. Cast yourself simply and only on Him, and as this Bible is true, you shall not find the promise fail you—"He that seeketh findeth, to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

May God help you by giving you this new life within! May He help you to look to Jesus, and though long and hard be the conflict, sweet shall be the victory.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.