

A LOOK AND ITS LESSONS

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A SERMON
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 DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*“Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD:
 look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.”
 Isaiah 51:1*

[Another sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #1050, A Bright Light in Deep Shades.]

THESE words were addressed to those who were already the people of God. No others could be thus exhorted to look unto the rock whence they were hewn, since they have never been hewn from it, nor to the hole of the pit whence they were dug, for they still are in the hole of the pit. They are lost and ruined, and they still remain in that condition. But the people of God have been broken off that rock by a blow from the divine hammer, they have been brought up from the horrible pit by the might of the divine arm, and their feet are now firmly fixed upon the Rock of Ages.

The people of God are here described as those “that follow after righteousness.” That is the direction in which their life generally flows. They are not perfect, but they want to be, they do not love that which is unrighteous, but they desire to be right in all things both before God and before men. They are also said to be those “that seek the LORD,” that is to say, they are those who could not live without seeking the Lord in prayer, or in public or private worship. Their great objective in life is to glorify God, to make Him famous among the sons of men, and they desire to devote all their time, and talents, and powers of every kind to His service and honor.

It is to such privileged people as these that the message of our text is addressed, and surely, they will give good heed to it. Yet the form in which the message is put implies that there is need for a special call to attention. Lest those who are addressed should fail to attend as earnestly as they ought, the command “Hearken to me,” puts the message before them in urgent and impressive tones. Come then, beloved, and listen to it, and let your inmost souls hear what the text has to say to you, “Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.”

So first, *let us look where we are told to look*, and secondly, *let us learn the lessons which that look is intended to teach us*.

I. First, then, LET US LOOK WHERE WE ARE TOLD TO LOOK, “unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.”

Look back then, first of all, to your *nature's original in the garden of Eden*. See that man and woman, perfect in beauty, without blemish from head to foot, and altogether spotless in mind and heart as they came fresh from their Creator's hand. They are placed in a garden which is as perfect as they are themselves, all that is fragrant to the smell, gratifying to the taste, and lovely to the eye they have in the greatest profusion.

The man's easy task was to dress and keep the garden which would have spontaneously yielded all that he and his required, and the tenure upon which he might have held that fair estate for himself and his heirs forever was very simple and clear, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

To eat of that tree would show that man had revolted from his allegiance to his Sovereign, that he had ceased to depend upon the God who had created him, and set up on his own account, and it would be, in fact, a declaration of war by finite man against the infinite JEHOVAH. Alas for us that our first parents were not proof against temptation! Mother Eve, deceived by the serpent, took of the forbidden fruit and ate of it, and gave some to her husband, and he also ate of it, and then their eyes were opened, and they perceived that they were naked to their shame before God, and they hid themselves when they heard His voice in the garden in the cool of the day.

Poor Adam, he was our covenant head, and there could not have been a covenant that would have been more easy to keep—only let the fruit of that one tree alone, and you and all your descendants shall enjoy perpetual happiness, only be obedient to the God who made you, and you shall bring upon yourself and all your posterity continual holiness and joy. It is foolish for anyone to complain because Adam was made our representative, for had we all been present to choose the man who would stand as our federal head, we should certainly have selected Adam, for there has never been another man so well qualified as he was for such a responsible position.

Yet, perfect man as he was, he fell, and terrible was the result of that fall both for himself and for all his posterity. Out of the garden he must go for he was no longer fit to remain in such a paradise as Eden was, and he must go where he would learn, by painful experience, the effects of his sin, where the earth would bring forth thorns and thistles, and its scanty harvests (compared with the abundance of Eden) should only be gained by long and toilsome labor.

This was a necessary discipline of love, which was enforced by the very mercy of God, since Adam's nature was no longer what it had been before. He began by doubting the truth of God's word, and then he went further, and imagined that he might do as he pleased, and be his own god, that he might disobey God and yet be a gainer, for he believed the lie of the serpent, "Ye shall not surely die, for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

Our earthly father had set himself up as a rival to our Father in heaven, and because he was our representative, we were all doomed to be born into this world rebellious in our very nature, prone to evil even from our birth. You, child of God, stand tonight at the foot of the cross, "accepted in the Beloved," but look back to the place where you once stood in the person of your representative, the first Adam. You then stood outside the garden of Eden, and sorrowfully gazed upon the "flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

You do not fear that sword now, for it has been sheathed in your Savior's heart, and its flames have been quenched in His blood, and therefore you can now stand at the cross-foot, and by and by, you shall stand at the gate of pearl, nay, more, you shall pass through that gate, and stand before the throne of the Eternal, a soul reclaimed, restored, and perfected, and made meet to dwell forever with the thrice-holy One. But while you think of your present privileges, and of the bliss that is in store for you, do not forget to look back "unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged."

Let us now look back, and see our original in another light. Let us look at *human nature as it is now*, and see how it became tainted by our first parents. But when I say, "Let us look at human nature as it is now," I remember that this is a sight which I am unable to reveal to you in all its horrors, for man, by nature, is exceedingly sinful, and "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually."

Our heart, by nature, is a very forge of the devil, and when man speaks blasphemy, it is but the sparks flying out of the forge, and when he works iniquities, these are but the glowing coals which Satan has fanned into a flame. "The prince of the power of the air...now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation in times past," whatever change grace may have wrought in us now.

Recollect, believer in Jesus, that your heart was, by nature, as black as the heart of Judas. Whatever sin there may have been in any other man, the germ of that sin was in your nature, there was no

superiority about you, by nature, to any other member of the human race. However excellent your parents may have been—and God forbid that I should disparage them!—it is still true, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” It must be so. From defilement—and that is in the parents—there can only come defilement, there cannot be a crystal stream from an impure fountain.

Your nature, then, whatever God may have made it now, was that of a fallen being, a revolted being, one who had gone astray from God. The heart is, naturally, a cage of unclean birds, a den of evil beasts, and he who has been taught to see all its abominations is the most horrified at them.

We read of the fountains of the great deep that were broken up in the days of Noah, but there are deeps of iniquity and transgression in every human heart, which, if they were not restrained by education, by the laws of the land, and by the voice of conscience, would pour forth in a terrible flood that would ruin the sinner and ruin society at the selfsame time. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” We never do know it until the Spirit of God convinces us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and it is well for Christians, who have been thus taught of the Spirit, oftentimes to look back to the rock whence they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence they were dug.

Now let us look back upon *human nature as it has been seen in the history of mankind*. What a strange creature man is! How near akin to deity when grace changes his whole nature, how near akin to devilry when he is left to himself! What crimes are there that men have not committed? The true story of the human race is a disgrace to us all. You cannot read the history of mankind without discovering the fact that for cruelty to men, no beast has ever equaled man, and that for perfidy, treachery, and deceit, no serpent with its cunning, its fascination, and its deadly venom, can be compared with man.

What fierce lion, ranging across the plains of Africa, has ever been equal in destructive force to a conqueror at the head of a victorious army? And what cobra, lurking by the wayside ready to slay its victim, has ever been so full of venom as certain men have shown in the pursuit of their ambitions, utterly careless of the lives and happiness of their fellow men?

There have been men who have let loose the cruel dogs of war, and waded through rivers of human blood that they might sit upon a throne. The great ones of the earth have perpetrated horrible infamies, and the lowest of the low have not been a whit better when the power has been in their hands. Sin has reigned equally among princes and peasants, and every man, unless renewed by grace, is capable of committing any crime that other men have committed.

Some of you doubt that assertion, and feel inclined to say what Hazael said to Elisha when the prophet foretold what he would do when he had the power, “What, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” He did not believe that it was possible that he could do such deeds, yet he did them when he had the opportunity, and none of us know what we might have done if we had been placed in the positions that others have occupied, and had been exposed to the temptations that assailed them.

If the grace of God has saved us, let us be the last people in the world to begin boasting, but looking back upon the crimes of which others have been guilty, let us contemplate what we might have done if we had not been divinely restrained, and so let us again look back unto the rock whence we were hewn, and unto the hole of the pit whence we were dug.

I must come still more closely home as I earnestly invite all here who love the Lord to look back upon *what we were, and what we did, in our unregenerate condition*. Some of us may well hide our faces, and hold our tongues as we think of what we did before we were converted, “whereof we are now ashamed.” Some here can remember the time when “the seat of the scornful” was loved by them, and they had not learned to love the place they now occupy in God’s house and among His people. Lips that are now consecrated to the praise of God were then defiled with oaths and blasphemies.

Blessed be God for saving the gross open offenders, “and such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” As you look back to that horrible pit, bless the name of the Lord that He brought you up out of it.

Others of us, who were graciously restrained by God from falling into the grosser vices, can never look back without tears to our unregenerate days. We did evil as far as ever we could, and if we did not go further into it, it was because there were blessed checks that held us in, and even those bonds and restraints we hated, and would have broken them had we dared to do so. How grieved we are now that we should ever have resisted as we did the appeals of divine mercy, the strivings of the Spirit, the admonitions of our godly parents, and the warnings of Christian friends!

However painful the process may be, I ask every brother and sister here to look back unto the rock whence they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence they were dug. It is very easy for you to get conceited and proud, but it would help to preserve you from such folly and sin if you would only recollect what you used to be before the grace of God made such a change in you. You would not want to sing to your own praise and glory, but you would walk humbly before the Lord, and give all the honor to Him for what grace has wrought in you. This will make it a most profitable exercise for us to look back to see what we were before our conversion.

There is only one more look that I ask you to give, and that is the saddest and most terrible of all—*look so far as you can at the state of the lost*. There is a land of darkness and of the shadow of death, where the very light is as darkness, and where despair reigns supreme. There are no sights to be seen in that land but such as cause the eyes to weep, and no sounds to be heard but such as grate upon the ear, for He who knows all about it has told us that there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in that dead world of the lost.

Stand at a distance from that place where the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and if you can bear it, try to think what must be the condition of spirits that are at this moment, while you are sitting here, banished from the presence of God, and condemned to reap the results of the deeds done in the body. Think also that, but for divine grace, we should have been there too.

There are some here who, but for a special interposition of providence, might have been there now. Had that accident on the railway terminated differently you would have been there, my dear hearer. Had that fever proved fatal, you would have been there, my friend. Had that vessel veered just a little from her course in that dense fog, you, being unregenerate, would have been there to weep and wail forever.

There is one who, before his conversion, was at death's door, and at hell's gate scores of times. I want you, my brother, to think of that, and then you will say, "Had it not been for grace divine, I should have been this night among those lost spirits instead of being here among my brethren and sisters in Christ, rejoicing in what the Lord has done for me, and praising and magnifying His holy name."

Great as is the distance between the heights of heaven and the depths of hell, so great has been the Lord's mercy toward you whom He has redeemed. So, looking away even to the abode of the lost, and trying to realize from how terrible a doom the Lord has delivered you, remember the rock whence ye have been hewn, and the hole of the pit whence you have been dug.

II. Now, in the second place, LET US LEARN THE LESSONS WHICH THIS LOOK IS INTENDED TO TEACH US.

I have already hinted at one result of looking back in the way I have described, but may again remind you that *it ought to humble us*. How apt we are to be proud! If there is one man here who says, "I am not proud, I am very humble," I say to him, "My dear brother, you must excuse me, but I should not be surprised if you are the proudest man here, for he who imagines he is humble proves by that every fact how very proud he is."

We are all proud. Pride can hide under a beggar's rags as well as under an alderman's robes. Pride is a weed that will grow on a dunghill as well as in a palace garden, but it ought never to be allowed to grow in the heart of a Christian. Yet I think—yea, I know that I have seen it in some who profess to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some professors are proud because they have got on in the world, and have raked together a big heap of money, but of all kinds of pride, that is one of the most contemptible, for a man is no more of a man because there is more gold and silver in his house than in other people's. The man must be judged

apart from his money. There is many a millionaire who is miserably poor, and many a truly rich man who scarcely ever has a shilling to spare. It is paltry pride that is proud of pelf, and on the other hand, I have known others, who had no money to make them proud, who were not a whit more humble than the purse-proud people, for pride can come in at the back door as easily as at the front.

It is a sad thing when a Christian gets proud of his graces, and says, "I am a very different man from what I used to be, and very different also from most other Christians. I live nearer to God. I pray more, I think I walk more circumspectly than others do." Perhaps he adds, "I glorify God for this." Mind that you do, my dear brother, for it is very easy to descend from glorifying God to glorifying yourself. You may even be bowing down before the detestable idol of self-righteousness at the very time that you imagine you are glorifying God.

The great cure for this evil is to pray to God to keep you humble, and it will tend toward that end if you often look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence you were dug. I have often told you what an old ploughman said to me long ago, "Depend upon it, sir, if you and I get an inch above the ground, we get just that inch too high." And I am persuaded that he was right. Lying in the dust before God is the safest and best posture for us. If we think we have anything of which we have reason to be proud, we are only deceiving ourselves.

Yet there are professing Christians who seem to have quite forgotten what they used to be—forgotten that they were purged from their old sins by a miracle of mercy, and that they were made Christians by the almighty grace of God. If they remembered these things, they would walk humbly before the Lord, as they used to do.

When they first joined the church, they loved all their fellow members, and thought that each one of them was better than themselves, but now they are constantly picking holes in this or that brother's character, and finding fault with one sister or another. When they first made a profession of religion, they were half afraid to unite with God's people, lest they should be an injury to the church and weaken it through their shortcomings, but now they look down with contempt upon those who are far better than they are ever likely to be.

Such high looks and such proud spirits will have to be brought down if they are really the children of God, and though the process may be a very painful one, the result of it will be highly beneficial to them. They think themselves wonderfully fine fellows, but they forget that they would have been in hell if it had not been for the infinite mercy and loving-kindness of the Lord.

It is a good thing when these who have been so proudly crowing over others get their combs cut by being made to feel that, after all, they are sinners just as others are, and that if they are saved sinners, their salvation is not to be ascribed to themselves, but to the grace of God through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior.

This backward look to what we used to be will not only help to humble us, *it will also tend to encourage us*. "To encourage us?" someone asks. Yes, for if when we were dead in trespasses and sins, the Lord quickened us by His Spirit, how is it possible for Him to cast us away now that we are adopted into His family? If He has reclaimed us from the dominion of sin and Satan, will He not do for us what is, after all, a less work by keeping us from going back to the old state of bondage? Would He have saved us if He had intended us to be lost at the last?

Oh, no! He who hath brought us up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and has set our feet upon a rock, and put a new song in our mouth, even praise unto our God, will never let us go back to that state from which He delivered us. If we wander from Him, as we are so prone to do, He will heal our backslidings, and cause us again to rejoice in the God of our salvation.

Then, dear friends, this backward look *tends to make us tender towards others*, and to encourage us to hope for their salvation. A true Christians should never feel, "I am too good to associate with such sinful people as I see all around me." If he would look back to the rock whence he was hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence he was dug, he would never allow such a thought as that to linger in his mind for even a minute.

I hear now and then of a minister who is said to have “a very select congregation.” It seems to be the rule, whenever there is a very small number of people attending a place of worship, to say that the preacher is of such a high intellectual order that his ministry is not attractive to the masses, but that the few who go to hear him make up in quality what they lack in quantity. Well, I have occasionally had the opportunity of testing that statement, and I have come to the conclusion that such congregations are neither intellectually nor spiritually better than others, nor half as good as some with which I am acquainted.

If I were to feel that I was too good to mix with the worst of men in the hope of being of service to them, or that I was too pure to have anything to do with my fellow sinners, I would be imitating the Pharisee who says, “Stand by, for I am holier than thou,” and I should have forgotten the rock where I was hewn, and the hole of the pit whence I was dug.

O beloved, if you recall your own condition as sinners, you will love those who are still “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity,” and your great desire will be to bring them to Jesus even as you yourself were brought to Him. Sometimes, when I have been preaching, I have had this thought in my mind, “I will not tell my hearers that God can save the greatest sinners because He saved John Bunyan and John Newton, but I will tell them that He can save all other sinners because He saved *me*.” When I have had that thought uppermost in my mind, I have found that I could preach with great tenderness to those who were out of the way. It was this feeling that led Charles Wesley to write—

*“He breaks the power of cancell’d sin,
He set the prisoners free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood avail’d for me.”*

This ought also to be the thought and feeling of every Christian, “What He has done for me, He can do for others. There is no one living who is too far gone for His sovereign mercy. As He was able to save me, I will go to others with the hope and belief that He is able to save them, and try to encourage them to see whether there is not salvation for them—even for them.”

Now, lastly, I think that this backward look will *tend to make us faithful to the Savior*, and fill us with a burning zeal for His glory. I do not know anything better that I could suggest to you as the subject of your meditations, when you are at home alone and quiet for a little while, than to look back to the days of your impenitency and unbelief. I know that you will not ascribe your salvation to your own merits or your own good works, but that you will ascribe it to the grace of God from first to last, and then the natural instinct of your renewed nature will make you fall down upon your knees and adore the infinite mercy of God in saving you.

He might have left you to perish as He has left so many others, but in His sovereignty, He looked with pity and love upon you and saved you. What did you do to help the Lord to save you? Help Him to save you? Why, you did all you could to hinder Him until, at last, His omnipotent love overcame the natural unwillingness of your heart, and made you willing in the day of His power. Oh, you ought to praise God! Gratitude and adoration should constantly rise from your heart unto Him who has done such great things for you.

I close by reminding every sinner here that God is able to save him, into whatever depths he may have fallen, for God has saved other sinners who were just like him. If you, my hearer, have been guilty of every crime in the calendar, you may still be cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus, which cleanses from all sin. There is power in His blood to blot out the blackest sin, and that power shall be realized by you if you give heed to this message, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

To believe is to trust, to rely upon, to depend upon, and if you do rely upon Jesus, all your iniquities shall not be reckoned unto you, but they shall be reckoned among those that were put away by Him when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Then all His merits shall be reckoned unto you,

there shall be a clear exchange made, Christ taking your sin, and you taking His righteousness. Oh, that you would believe on Him this very moment! May God give you grace to do so! Then shall you be able, with us who also have believed in Jesus, to look back to the rock whence thou wast hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence thou wast dug, and to adore and magnify the name of the Lord forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

GALATIANS 3

Verse 1. *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you,—*

Paul writes as if they had come under some kind of witchcraft and been deluded by it. This seemed to astonish the apostle, so he cries out to them “Who hath bewitched you,”—

1. *That ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?*

They had heard the plainest possible preaching from Paul and his companions. Jesus Christ had been so clearly set forth before them that they might, as it were, see Him as He hung upon the cross of Calvary. Yet, under some unhallowed spell, they turned aside from the faith of Christ.

2. *This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* [See sermon #1705, The Hearing of Faith].

“You profess to have received the Spirit, did the Spirit come to you by the works of the law, or through hearing and believing the Gospel?”

3. *Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*

“Did you begin right, and are you going to finish in some other way? Is the foundation laid in truth, and will you build falsehood upon it? Is the foundation Jesus Christ, the chief corner stone, and is the superstructure to be wood, hay, and stubble?”

4. *Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain?*

“Have you been made to suffer through conviction of sin? Have you even been persecuted for the truth’s sake? And are you going to give it up after all that?”

5. *He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

“Have those miracles been wrought in your midst by the power of faith or by the works of the law?”

6. *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*

That is the Scriptural doctrine, faith is counted or imputed for righteousness.

7. *Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*

Those who are justified by faith in Jesus, those whose faith is counted for righteousness, they are the children of believing Abraham—not those who are under the law of Moses.

8. *And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.*

Just as Abraham was blessed, so are the nations to be blessed, that is, by faith. By faith, they become his spiritual seed, by faith, they enter into His covenant, by faith, they receive the blessings of grace.

9. *So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*

Just as the believing Abraham was accounted righteous, so believing men, who are the spiritual seed of Abraham, are also accounted righteous.

10. *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*

Can any man perfectly keep the whole law of God? Has any man ever continued in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them? No, and therefore, all that the law does is to bring the

curse upon those who are under its dominion, and none of them can obtain salvation by the works of the law.

11. *But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.* [See sermons #814, Life by Faith, and #2809, Faith: Life].

This passage is again and again repeated in the Scriptures, “The just shall live by faith.” There are no other just men living, there cannot be any other just men living, but those that live by faith.

12. *And the law is not of faith: but, the man that doeth them shall live in them.*

The law demands doing, the Gospel enjoins believing. The believing man comes in as an heir of the blessing, but the man who trusts to his own doing is an heir of the curse.

13. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:* [See sermons #873, Christ Made a Curse for Us, and #2093, The Curse: and the Curse for Us].

What a wonderful doctrine this is! We should have hesitated to use such language as this had not the Holy Spirit Himself moved Paul to write that Christ was “made a curse for us.” He who is most blessed forever, He who is the fountain of blessing and the channel of blessing to all who ever are blessed, was “made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:”—

14. *That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

Dear friends, are you living by faith upon the Son of God? Are you trusting in God? Are you believing His promises? Some think that this is a very little thing, but God does not think so. Faith is a better index of character than anything else. The man who trusts his God, and believes His promises, is honoring God far more than is the man who supposes that by any of his own doings he can merit divine approval and favor.

15. *Brethren, I speak after the matter of men; Though it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannuleth, or addeth thereto.*

If a covenant is once made, signed, sealed, and ratified, no honorable man would think of drawing back from it. Whatever happens afterwards, the covenant having been once made is regarded as an established fact, and it must remain.

16-17. *Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.*

This is sound reasoning. God made a covenant with Abraham, and said that in him and in his seed all nations should be blessed. All believers are in Christ, who is here called Abraham’s seed, and therefore they must be blessed. Whatever the law may say or may not say, it was not given until four hundred and thirty years after the covenant was made with Abraham, and therefore cannot affect it in any way.

18. *For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise:*

God gave it to Abraham by promise. It was a free gift, He did not bestow it upon the condition of merit on Abraham’s part. Isaac was born, not according to the power of the flesh, but according to promise, and the whole covenant is according to free grace and divine promise.

18-19. *But God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law?* [See sermon #128, The Uses of the Law].

What was the use of that?

19. *It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made;*

The law makes us know what transgression is, it reveals its true nature. Under the hand of the Holy Spirit, it makes us see the evil of sin. We might not have perceived sin to be sin if it had not been for the command of God not to commit it, but when the commandment comes, then we recognize sin and the evil of it.

19-21. *And it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.*

There could not have been a better law. Some talk about the law of God being too severe, too strict, too stringent, but it is not. If the design had been that men should live by the law, there could not have been a better law for that purpose, and hence it is proved that, by the principle of law, nobody ever can be justified, because even with the best of laws, all men are sinful, and so need that justification which comes only by grace through faith.

22. *But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.* [See sermon #1145, The Great Jail and How to Get Out of it].

All of us, by nature, are shut up like criminals in a prison that is so securely bolted and barred that there is no hope of escape for any who are immured within it. But why are all the doors shut and fastened? Why, in order that Christ may come and open the one only effectual door of salvation, “that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”

23. *But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.* [See sermon #2402, Under Arrest].

Well do I remember when I was “shut up” in this fashion. I struggled and strove with might and main to get out, but I found no way of escape. I was “shut up” until faith came, and opened the door, and brought me out into “the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

24. *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.* [See sermon #1196, The Stern Pedagogue].

The pedagogue was a slave who led the children to school, and sometimes whipped them to school. That is what the law did with us, it took us under its management, and whipped us, and drove us to Christ.

25. *But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*

Now we go to Christ willingly, cheerfully, joyfully, trusting in Him with all our hearts. The pedagogue’s work is done so far as we are concerned.

26. *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

We hear a great deal about the universal fatherhood of God, but it is all nonsense. There is no Scripture for it whatsoever. Those only are the children of God who are “the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”

27. *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

“He is everything to you. He covers you, He surrounds you. You do not stand before God in your own filthy rags, but you have put on Christ.”

28. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

What a mercy it is to be in Christ, so that you yourself are not seen any more, but only Christ, and you accepted in Him!

29. *And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

“According to the promise”—not according to your works, or your deserts, but “heirs according to the promise.”

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.