

**THE HIGH PRIEST STANDING
BETWEEN THE DEAD AND THE LIVING
NO. 341**

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 21, 1860
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON
AT EXETER HALL, STAND**

*“And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation;
and, behold, the plague was begun among the people:
and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.
And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.”
Numbers 16:47-48*

WE have attentively read the passage which contains the account of this transaction. The authority of Moses and Aaron had been disputed by an ambitious man belonging to an elder branch of the family of Levi, who had craftily joined with himself certain factious spirits of the tribe of Reuben, who themselves also sought to attain to power by their supposed rights through Reuben the first born. By a singular judgment from heaven, God had proved that rebellion against Moses was a mortal sin. He had bidden the earth open its mouth and swallow up all the traitors, and both Levites and Reubenites had disappeared, covered in a living grave.

One would have imagined that from this time the murmurings of the children of Israel would have ceased, or that at least even should they have been daring enough to gather in little mutinous knots, yet their traitorous spirit never would have come to so great a height as to develop itself in the whole body openly before the Lord's tabernacle. Yet so was it. On the very morrow after that solemn transaction, the whole of the people of Israel gathered themselves together, and with unholy clamors surrounded Moses and Aaron, charging them with having put to death the people of the Lord.

Doubtless they hinged this accusation upon the fact that whenever Moses prayed God heard him, then they would say, “Had he prayed upon this occasion the people would not have been destroyed, the earth would not have opened her mouth, and they would not have been swallowed up.” They would thus attempt to prove the charge which they brought against these two great men of God.

Can you picture the scene now in your mind's eye? There is the infuriated mass of people, the spectacle of such a crowd as I see before me in this hall is overpowering, and were all this multitude in tumult against two men, the two might have sufficient cause for trembling, but this would be but as a grain of sand compared with that inconceivable number who were then gathered. A large part of those three millions would come up in one vast tumultuous host, whatever was proposed by any leader of the mob would no doubt have instantly been carried into effect, and had it not been for the awful majesty which surrounded the person of Moses, no doubt they would have torn him to pieces on the spot.

But just as they are rushing up like the waves of the sea, the cloudy pillar which hung above the tabernacle descends, and envelops in its fold, as with a protecting baptism, the whole of the sacred place. Then in the center of this cloud there blazed out that marvelous light called the Shekinah, which was the indication of the presence of Him who cannot be seen, but whose glory may be manifest. The people stand back a little, Moses and Aaron fall upon their faces in prayer, they beg of God that He would spare the people, for they have heard a voice coming out of the excellent glory saying, “Get thee up from this people, that I may destroy them in a moment.”

This time God's blow goes forth with His word, for the destroying angel begins to mow down the outer ranks of the vast tumultuous host, there they fall one upon another, Moses with his undimmed vision, looking over the heads of the people, can see them begin to fall beneath the scythe of death.

“Up,” saith he, “up Aaron, up, and take with thee thy censer, snatch fire from off the holy altar, and run among the people, for the plague has begun.” Aaron, a man of a hundred years of age, fills his censer, runs along as if he was a youth, and begins to swing it towards heaven with holy energy, feeling that in his hand was the life of the people, and when the incense is accepted in heaven, death stops his work.

On this side are heaps upon heaps of corpses slain by God’s avenging angel, and there stand the crowd of living people, living only because of Aaron’s intercession, living simply because he had waved that censer and burned that incense for them, otherwise, had the angel smitten them all, they would all have lain together as the leaves of the forest lie in autumn—dead and sear.

I think you can now in your imaginations picture the scene. I desire to use the picture before us as a great spiritual type of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for that erring multitude of the sons of men, who “like sheep have gone astray, and have turned every one to his own way.” We shall look at Aaron this morning in a five-fold character. The whole scene is typical of Christ, and Aaron, as he appears before us in each character is a most magnificent picture of the Lord Jesus.

I. First, let us look at Aaron as the LOVER of the people.

You know who it is to whom *we* give that name of “Lover of my soul.” You will be able to see in Aaron the lover of Israel, in Jesus the lover of His people.

Aaron deserves to be very highly praised for his patriotic affection for a people who were the most rebellious and stiffnecked that ever grieved the heart of a good man. You must remember that in this case *he* was the aggrieved party. The clamor was made against Moses and against Aaron, yet it was Moses and Aaron who interceded and saved the people. They were the offended ones, yet were they the saving ones.

Aaron had a special part in the matter, for no doubt the conflict of Korah especially was rather against the priesthood, which belonged exclusively to Aaron, than against the prophetic dispensation which God had granted to Moses.

Aaron must have felt when he saw Korah there and the two hundred and fifty men, all of them with their censers, that the plot was against *him*, that they wished to strip from him his mitre, to take from him his embroidered vest, and the glittering stones that shone upon his breast, that they wished to reduce him to the position of a common Levite, and take to themselves his office and his dignity. Yet, forgetting himself, he does not say, “Let them die, I will wait awhile till they have been sufficiently smitten.” But the old man with generous love hastened into the midst of the people, though he was himself the aggrieved person.

Is not this the very picture of our sweet Lord Jesus? Had not sin dishonored Him? Was He not the Eternal God, and did not sin therefore conspire against Him as well as against the Eternal Father and the Holy Spirit? Was He not, I say, the one against whom the nations of the earth stood up and said, “Let us break His bands asunder, and cast His cords from us.” Yet He, our Jesus, laying aside all thought of avenging Himself, becomes the Savior of His people.

*“Down from the shining seats above,
With joyful haste He fled;
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,
And dwelt among the dead.”*

Oh! generous Christ, forgetting the offenses which we have committed against You, and making atonement by Your own blood for sins which were perpetrated against Your own glory!

Well, you note again that Aaron in thus coming forward as the deliverer and lover of his people, must have remembered that he was abhorred by this very people. They were seeking his blood, they were desiring to put him and Moses to death, and yet all thoughtless of danger, he snatches up his censer and runs into their midst with a divine enthusiasm in his heart. He might have stood back, and said, “No,

they will slay me if I go into their ranks, furious as they are, they will charge this new death upon me and lay me low.” But he never considers it. Into the midst of the crowd he boldly springs.

Most blessed Jesus, You might not only think thus, but indeed You did feel it to be true. You did come unto Your own, and Your own received You not. You did come into the world to save a race that hated You, and oh, how they proved their hatred to You, for they did spit upon Your cheeks, they did cast calumny and slander upon Your person, they did take the heir and say, “Come, let us kill him that the inheritance may be ours.”

Jesus, You were willing to die a martyr, that You might be made a sacrifice for those by whom Your blood was spilt. Jesus transcends Aaron, Aaron might have feared death at the hands of the people, Jesus Christ did actually meet it, and yet there he stood even in the hour of death, waving his censer, staying the plague, and dividing the living from the dead.

Again, you will see the love and kindness of Aaron, if you look again, Aaron might have said, “But *the Lord* will surely destroy *me* also with the people, if I go where the shafts of death are flying they will reach me.” He never thinks of it, he exposes his own person in the very forefront of the destroying one. There comes the angel of death, smiting all before him, and here stands Aaron in his very path, as much as to say, “Get you back! Get you back! I will wave my incense in your face, destroyer of men, you can not pass the censer of God’s high priest.”

Oh, You glorious High Priest of our profession, You might not only have feared this which Aaron might have dreaded, but You did actually endure the plague of God, for when You did come among the people to save them from JEHOVAH’s wrath, JEHOVAH’s wrath fell upon You. You were forsaken of Your Father. The plague which Jesus kept from us slew Him, “The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” The sheep escaped, but “His life and blood the Shepherd pays, a ransom for the flock.”

Oh, You lover of Your church, immortal honors be unto You! Aaron deserves to be beloved by the tribes of Israel, because he stood in the gap and exposed himself for their sins, but You, most mighty Savior, You shall have eternal songs, because, forgetful of Yourself, You did bleed and die, that man might be saved!

I would again for one moment, draw your attention to that other thought which I have already hinted at, namely, that Aaron as a lover of the people of Israel deserves much commendation, from the fact that it is expressly said, he *ran* into the host. I am not just now sure about Aaron’s age, but being older than Moses, who must have been at this time about ninety years of age, Aaron must have been more than a hundred, and probably, a hundred and twenty or more.

It is no little thing to say that such a man, clad no doubt in his priestly robes, ran, and that for a people who had never shown any activity to do him service, but much zeal in opposing his authority. That little fact of his running is highly significant, for it shows the greatness and swiftness of the divine impulse of love that was within.

Ah! and was it not so with Christ? Did He not haste to be our Savior? Were not His delights with the sons of men? Did He not often say, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.” His dying for us was not a thing which He dreaded. “With desire have I desired to eat this passover.”

He had panted for the moment when He should redeem His people. He had looked forward through eternity for that hour when He should glorify His Father, and His Father might glorify Him. He came voluntarily, bound by no constraint, except His own covenant engagements, and He cheerfully and joyfully laid down His life—a life which no man could take from Him, but which He laid down of Himself.

While I look with admiration upon Aaron, I must look with adoration upon Christ. While I write Aaron down as the lover of his race, I write down Jesus Christ as being the best of lovers—the friend that sticks closer than a brother.

II. But I now pass on to take a second view of Aaron as he stands in another character. Let us now view Aaron as THE GREAT PROPITIATOR.

Wrath had gone out from God against the people on account of their sin, and it is God's law that His wrath shall never stay unless a propitiation is offered. The incense which Aaron carried in his hand *was* the propitiation before God, from the fact that God saw in that perfume the type of that richer offering which our Great High Priest is this very day offering before the throne.

Aaron as the propitiator is to be looked at first as bearing in his censer that which was necessary for the propitiation. He did not come empty-handed. Even though God's high priest, he must take the censer, he must fill it with the ordained incense, made with the ordained materials, and then he must light it with the sacred fire from off the altar, and with that alone. With the censer in his hand he is safe, without it Aaron might have died as well as the rest of the people. The qualification of Aaron partly lay in the fact that he had the censer, and that that censer was full of sweet odors which were acceptable to God.

Behold then, Christ Jesus as the propitiator for His people. He stands this day before God with His censer smoking up towards heaven. Behold the Great High Priest! See Him this day with His pierced hands, and head that once was crowned with thorns. Mark how the marvelous smoke of His merits goes up forever and ever before the eternal throne. 'Tis He, 'tis He alone who puts away the sins of His people.

His incense, as we know, consists first of all of His positive obedience to the divine law. He kept His Father's commands, He did everything man should have done, He kept to the full the whole law of God, and made it honorable.

Then mixed with this is His blood—an equally rich and precious ingredient. That bloody sweat—the blood from His head, pierced with the crown of thorns, the blood of His hands as they were nailed to the tree, the blood of His feet as they were fixed to the wood, and the blood of His very heart—richest of them all—all mixed together with His merits—these make up the incense—an incense incomparable—an incense peerless and surpassing all others.

Not all the odors that ever rose from tabernacle or temple could for a moment stand in rivalry with these. The blood alone speaketh better things than that of Abel, and if Abel's blood prevailed to bring vengeance, how much more shall the blood of Christ prevail to bring down pardon and mercy! Our faith is fixed on perfect righteousness and complete atonement, which are as sweet frankincense before the Father's face.

Besides that, it was not enough for Aaron to have the proper incense. Korah might have that too, and he might have the censer also. That would not suffice—he must be the ordained priest, for mark, two hundred and fifty men fell in doing the act which Aaron did. Aaron's act saved others, their act destroyed themselves.

So Jesus, the propitiator, is to be looked upon as the ordained one—called of God as was Aaron. Settled in eternity as being the predestinated propitiation for sin, He came into the world as an ordained priest of God, receiving His ordination not from man, neither by man, but like Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God, without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, He is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Stand back, sons of Korah, all of you who call yourselves priests.

I can scarce imagine that any man in this world who takes to himself the title of a priest, except he take it in the sense in which all God's people are priests—I cannot imagine that a priest can enter heaven. I would not say a thing too stern or too severe, but I do most thoroughly believe that an assumption of the office of priest is so base a usurpation of the priestly office of Christ, that I could as well conceive of a man being saved who called himself *God*, as conceive of a man being saved who called himself a priest. If he really means what he says, he has so trespassed upon the priestly prerogative of Christ, that it seems to me he has touched the very crown jewels, and is guilty of a blasphemy, which, unless it be repented of, shall surely bring damnation on his head.

Shake your garments, you ministers of Christ, from all priestly assumption, come out from among them, touch not the unclean thing. There are no priests now specially to minister among men. Jesus

Christ and He only is the priest of His church, and He has made all of us priests and kings unto our God, and we shall reign forever and ever.

If I should have any person here so weak as to depend for his salvation upon the offerings of another man, I conjure him to forego his deception. I care not who your priest may be. He may belong to the Anglican or to the Romish church. Ay, and to any church under heaven. If he claims to be anything of a priest more than you can claim yourself—away with him—he imposes upon you.

He speaks to you that which God abhors, and that which the church of Christ should abhor and would detest, were she truly alive to her Master's glory. None but Jesus, none but Jesus, all other priests and offerings we disdain. Cast dirt upon their garments, they are not and they cannot be priests, they usurp the special dignity of Jesus.

But let us note once more in considering Aaron as the great propitiator that we must look upon him as being ready for his work. He was ready with his incense, and ran to the work at the moment the plague broke out. We do not find that he had need to go and put on his priestly garments, we do not find that he had to prepare for performing the propitiatory work, but he went there and then as soon as the plague broke out. The people were ready to perish and he was ready to save.

Oh, my hearer, listen to this, Jesus Christ stands ready to save you now, there is no need of preparation, He has slain the victim, He has offered the sacrifice, He has filled the censer, He has put to it the glowing coals. His breastplate is on His breast, His mitre is on His head, He is ready to save you now. Trust Him, and you shall not find need for delay. Rely upon Him, and you shall not find that He has to go a day's journey to save you, "He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

You who know not Christ, hear this! You are lost and ruined by the fall. Wrath is gone out from God against you. That wrath will consume you to the lowest hell, unless some one can propitiate God on your behalf. You cannot do it. No man can do it, no prayers of yours, no sacraments, nay, though you could sweat a bloody sweat, it would not avail, but Christ is able to make propitiation. He can do it, and He alone, He can stand between you and God, and turn away JEHOVAH's wrath, and He can put into your heart a sense of His love.

Oh, I pray you, trust Him, trust Him. You may not be ready for *Him*, but He is always ready to save, and indeed I must correct myself in that last sentence, *you are* ready for Him. If you be never so vile, and never so ruined by your sin, there needs no preparation and no readiness. It was not the merit of the people that saved them, nor any preparation on their part, it was the preparedness of the high priest that saved them.

He is prepared. He stands on the behalf of those who believe on Him. Would that you would now believe on Him and trust your soul in His hands, and oh, believe me, your sins which are many shall be all forgiven, the plague shall be stayed, nor shall God's wrath go out against you, but you shall be saved.

III. Let me now view Aaron as THE INTERPOSER.

Let me explain what I mean. As the old Westminster Annotations say upon this passage, "The plague was moving among the people as the fire moves along a field of corn." There it came, it began in the extremity, the faces of men grew pale, and swiftly on, on it came, and in vast heaps they fell till some fourteen thousand had been destroyed.

Aaron wisely puts himself just in the pathway of the plague. It came on, cutting down all before it, and there stood Aaron the interposer with arms outstretched and censer swinging towards heaven, interposing himself between the darts of death and the people. "If there be darts that must fly," he seemed to say, "let them pierce me, or let the incense shield both me and the people. Death," saith he, "are you coming on your pale horse? I arrest you, I throw back your steed upon his haunches. Are you coming, you skeleton king? With my censer in my hand I stand before you, you must march over my body, you must empty my censer, you must destroy God's High Priest, ere you can destroy this people."

Just so was it with Christ. Wrath had gone out against us. The law was about to smite us, the whole human race must be destroyed. Christ stands in the forefront of the battle. "The stripes must fall on Me,"

He cries, “the arrows shall find a target in My breast. On Me, JEHOVAH, let Your vengeance fall.” And He receives that vengeance, and afterwards up-springing from the grave He waves the censer full of the merit of His blood, and bids this wrath and fury stand back.

On which side are you today, sinner? Is God angry with you, sinner? Are your sins unforgiven? Say, are you unpardoned? Are you abiding still an heir of wrath and an inheritor of death? Ah! then would that you were on the other side of Christ. If you do believe on Christ, then let me ask you, do you know that you are completely saved? No wrath can ever reach you, no spiritual death can ever destroy you, no hell can ever consume you, and why? What is your guard, what is your protection?

I see the tear glistening in your eye as you say, “There is nothing between me and hell save Christ. There is nothing between me and JEHOVAH’s wrath save Christ. There is nothing between me and instant destruction save Christ. But He is enough. He with the censer in His hand—God’s great ordained Priest—He is enough.”

Ah, brothers and sisters, if you have put between you and God, baptisms and communions, fastings, prayers, tears and vows, JEHOVAH shall break through your refuges as the fire devours the stubble. But if, my soul, Christ stands between you and JEHOVAH, JEHOVAH cannot smite you, His thunderbolt must first pierce through the Divine Redeemer ere it can reach you, and that can never be.

My dear hearers, do you perceive this great truth, that there is nothing which can save the soul of man, save Jesus Christ standing between that soul and the just judgment of God? And oh, I put again the personal inquiry to you, are you sheltered behind Christ? Sinner, are you standing today beneath the cross? Is that your shelter? Is the purple robe of Jesu’s atonement covered over you?

Are you like the dove which hides in the clefts of the rock? Have you hidden in the wounds of Christ? Say, have you crept into His side, and do you feel that He must be your shelter till the tempest be overpast? Oh, be of good cheer, he for whom Christ is the intercessor, is a rescued man. Oh, soul, if you are not in Christ, what will you do when the destroying angel comes? Careless sinner, what will become of you when death arrests you? Where will you be when the judgment trumpet rings in your ears, and sounds an alarm that shall wake the dead? Sleepy sinner, sleeping today under God’s Word, will you sleep then, when JEHOVAH’s thunders are let loose, and all His lightnings set the heavens in a blaze?

I know where then you shall seek a shelter! You shall seek it where you cannot find it, you shall bid the rocks fall upon you, and ask the mountains to hide you, but their stony bowels shall know of no compassion, their hearts of adamant shall yield you no pity, and you shall stand exposed to the blast of vengeance and the shower of the hot hail of God’s fury, and nothing shall protect you, but as Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed from off the face of the earth, so must you be destroyed, and that forever and ever, because you believed not on Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

IV. But we cannot tarry longer here, we must again pass to another point. We have viewed Aaron in three characters—as the lover, the propitiator, and the intercessor, now fourthly, let me view him as THE SAVIOR.

It was Aaron, Aaron’s censer, that saved the lives of that great multitude. If he had not prayed the plague had not stayed, and the Lord would have consumed the whole company in a moment. As it was, you perceive there were some fourteen thousand and seven hundred that died before the Lord. The plague had begun its dreadful work, and only Aaron could stay it.

And now, I want you to notice with regard to Aaron, that Aaron, and especially the Lord Jesus, must be looked upon as a gracious Savior. It was nothing but love that moved Aaron to wave his censer. The people could not demand it of him. Had they not brought a false accusation against him? And yet he saves them. It must have been love and nothing but love.

Say, was there anything in the voices of that infuriated multitude which could have moved Aaron to stay the plague from before them? Nothing! nothing in their character! nothing in their looks! nothing in their treatment of God’s High Priest! and yet he graciously stands in the breach, and saves them from the devouring judgment of God! Oh! brothers and sisters—if Christ has saved us He is a gracious Savior

indeed. Often as we think of the fact that we are saved, the tear falls down our cheek, for we never can tell why Jesus has saved *us*.

*“What was there in you that could merit esteem?
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas ‘Even so, Father!’ you ever must sing,
‘Because it seem’d good in Thy sight.’”*

There is no difference between the glorified in heaven and the doomed in hell, except the difference that God made of His own sovereign grace. Whatever difference there may be between Saul the apostle and Elymas the sorcerer, has been made by infinite sovereignty and undeserved love. Paul might still have remained Saul of Tarsus, and might have become a damned fiend in the bottomless pit, had it not been for free sovereign grace, which came out to snatch him as a brand from the burning.

Oh, sinner, you say, “There is no reason in me why God should save me,” but there is no reason in any man. You have no good point, nor has any man. There is nothing in any man to commend him to God. We are all such sinners, that hell is our deserved portion, and if any of us be saved from going down into the pit, it is God’s undeserved sovereign bounty that does it, and not any merits of ours. Jesus Christ is a most gracious Savior.

And then again, Aaron was an unaided Savior. Even Moses did not come with Aaron to help him. He stood alone in the gap with that censer—that one solitary stream of smoke dividing between the living and the dead. Why did not the princes of Israel come with him? Alas! they could have done nothing, they must have died themselves. Why did not all the Levites come with him? They must have been smitten if they had dared to stand in the place of God’s High Priest. He stands alone, alone, alone! and herein was he a great type of Christ, who could say, “I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me.”

Do not think then, that when Christ prevails with God, it is because of any of your prayers, or tears, or good works. He never puts your tears and prayers into His censer. They would mar the incense. There is nothing but His own prayers, and His own tears, and His own merits there. Do not think that you are saved because of anything that you have ever done or can ever do for Christ. We may preach, and we may be made in God’s hand the spiritual fathers of thousands of souls, but our preaching does in no way help to turn away the wrath of God from us. Christ does it all, entirely and alone, and no man must dare to stand as His helper.

Sinner, do you hear this, you are saying, “I cannot do this or that.” He asks you not to do anything, you say, “I have no merits.” Man, He does not want any, if you would help Christ you will be lost, but if you will leave Christ to do it all, you shall be saved. Come now, the very plan of salvation is this, to take Christ to be your all in all, he will never be a part-Savior, He never came to patch our ragged garments, He will give us a new robe, but He will never mend the old one. He did not come to *help* build the palace of God, He will quarry every stone and lay it on its fellow, He will have no sound of hammer, or any mortal help in that great work.

Oh that this voice could ring through the world while I proclaim again those words, the deathblow of all Popery, legality, and carnal merit, “Jesus only, Jesus only.” “There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Nor does He need a helper, “He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” “He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.”

He was, then, you will perceive, a gracious Savior, and an unaided one, and once more, Aaron as a Savior was all-sufficient. Death came up to the very feet of Aaron, there lay a dead man, there lay a mother, a child, a prince, a hewer of wood, a drawer of water—there they lay. There stood a strong man in his agony, and implored that he might not die, but he fell backward a corpse. There stood up a prince of Israel and must he die? Yes, he must fall. All-devouring death, like a hungry lion, came howling

onward, amidst the screams and shrieks of the people, but there he stood, that censer seemed to say, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further.”

What a miracle that the censer should stop the reign of death. Up to this mark the waves of that shoreless sea are flowing, *there* men stand on the *terra firma* of life. Aaron stands, and as God’s High Priest with that censer alone, he puts back grim death, the whole host of Israel, if they had been armed and had carried bows, could not have driven back the pestilence, nay, all the hosts of armed men that ever stained the earth with blood could not have driven back God’s plagues. Death would have laughed at them, yea, he would have trodden in among their ranks and cut them in pieces, but Aaron alone is enough, fully sufficient, and that through the burning of the incense.

Oh, sinner, Christ is an all-sufficient Savior, *able* to save, you cannot save yourself, but He *can* save you. Oh, sinner, all sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, it matters not how base and vile you may have been, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” Though the remembrance of your sin bring scarlet into your face, do you blush to think what a wretch you have been, has your life been foul adultery, has it been blasphemy, lying, hatred of God’s people, and what not—I add to this another, if you will—lasciviousness, debauchery, murder—if all these crimes were there, the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, would be able still to cleanse you from all sin.

Though you had committed every crime in the catalog of iniquity, sins which we cannot mention, yet “Though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as white as snow.”

And you say, “How can I partake of this?” Simply by trusting Christ with your soul. “He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned.” This was Christ’s commission to the apostles, He bid them go forth and preach this great truth, and again I proclaim it, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not must be damned.” He that believeth not shall be damned, be his sins never so few, he that believeth shall never be lost, though his sins may have been never so many. Trust you your soul with Christ, and your sins are at once forgiven, at once blotted out.

V. And now I come to my last point, and that is, Aaron as THE DIVIDER—the picture of Christ.

Aaron the anointed one stands here, on that side is death, on this side life, the boundary between life and death is that one man. Where his incense smokes the air is purified, where it smokes not the plague reigns with unmitigated fury. There are two sorts of people here this morning, we forget the distinction of rich and poor, we know it not here. There are two sorts of people, we forego the distinction of the learned and unlearned, we care not for that here. There are two sorts here, and these are the living and the dead, the pardoned, and the unpardoned, the saved and the lost.

What divides the true Christian from the unbeliever? Some think it is that the Christian takes the sacrament, the other not. That is no division, there be men who have gone to hell with sacramental bread in their mouths, others may imagine that baptism makes the difference, and indeed it is the outward token, the baptismal pool is the means by which we show to the world that we are buried in Christ’s grave, in type that we are dead to the world and buried in Christ, we rise up from it in testimony that we desire to live in newness of life by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

He who is baptized does in that way cross the Rubicon, he draws the sword and throws away the scabbard, he is the baptized one, and has a sign that can never be eradicated from him. He is dedicated through that baptism to Christ, but it is but an outward sign, for many have there been who have been baptized with water, who not having the baptism of the Holy Ghost, have afterwards been baptized in the fiery sufferings of eternal torment.

No! No! the one division, the one great division between those who are God’s people and those who are not, is *Christ*. A man in Christ is a Christian, a man out of Christ is dead in trespasses and sins. “He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ is saved, he that believeth not is lost.” Christ is the only divider between His people and the world.

On which side then, are you today, my hearer? Come, let the question go individually to you. Young man, on which side are you? Are you Christ's friend and servant, or are you His enemy? Old man, you with the grey head yonder, you have but a little while to live, on which side are you? Are you my Master's blood-bought one, or are you still a lost sheep? And you matron, you who are busied, perhaps even now in your thoughts upon your children, think not of them for a moment, on which side are you? Have you believed, have you been born again, or are you still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity?

You that stand yonder, let the question penetrate your thick rank now, where are you? Can you take the name of Christ upon your lips and say, "Jesus, I am Yours, and You are mine, Your blood and righteousness are my hope and trust," for if not, my hearer, you are among the spiritually dead, and you shall soon be among the damned unless divine grace prevent, and change, and renew you.

Please remember, brothers and sisters, that as Christ is the great divider now, so will He be in the day of judgment. Do you never think of that, *He* shall divide them the one from the other, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. It is the Shepherd's person that divides the sheep from the goats. He stands between them, and in that last day of days for which all other days were made, Christ shall be the great divider.

There the righteous clad in white, in songs triumphant glorified with Him, and there the lost, the unbelieving, the fearful, the abominable. What divides them from yon bright host? Nothing but the person of the Son of Man, on whom they look, and weep, and mourn, and wail because of Him. That is the impenetrable barrier that shall shut out the damned from eternal bliss. The gate which may let you in now will be the fiery gate which shall shut you out hereafter. Christ is the door of heaven, oh, dreadful day when that door shall be shut, when that door shall stand before you, and prevent you entering into the felicity which you shall then long for, when you cannot enter into it.

Oh! on which side shall I be, when all these transitory things are done away with, when the dead have risen from their graves, when the great congregation shall stand upon the land, and upon the sea, when every valley, and every mountain, and every river, and every sea, shall be crowded with multitudes standing in thick array?

Oh! when He shall say, "Separate my people, thrust in the sickle, for the harvest of the world is ripe," my soul, where shall you be? Shall you be found among the lost? Shall the dread trumpet send you down to hell, while a voice that rends your ear, shall call after you, "Depart from me, depart from me, you workers of iniquity into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Oh, grant that I may not be there, but among Your people may I stand. So may it be, may we be on the right hand of the Judge to all eternity, and remember that forever and ever Christ will be the divider, He shall stand between the lost and the saved, He shall interpose forever between the damned and the glorified.

Again, I put it to you, give me your ears for just one moment while I speak. What say you, sirs, shall this congregation be rent in twain? The hour is coming when our wills and wishes shall have no force. God *will* divide the righteous from the wicked then, and Christ shall be the dread division, I say, are we prepared to be separated eternally?

Husband, are you prepared to renounce today your wife forever, are you prepared when the clammy sweat gathers on her brow to give her the last kiss, and say, "Adieu, adieu, I shall never meet with you again"? Child, son, daughter, are you ready to go home and sit down at the table of your mother, and ere you eat, say, "Mother, I now forswear you once for all, I am determined to be lost, and as you are on the side of Christ, and I will never love Him, I will part with you forever."

Surely the ties of kinship make us long to meet in another world, and do we wish to meet in hell? Do you wish all of you to meet there—a grim company to lie in the midst of the flames. Will you abide in the devouring fire, and dwell in everlasting burning? No, your wishes are that you may meet in heaven, but you cannot unless you meet in Christ, you cannot meet in paradise unless you meet in Him. Oh that now the grace of God were poured upon you, that you might come unto Jesus.

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.