

SECRET SINS DRIVEN OUT BY STINGING HORNETS

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A SERMON
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*“Moreover the LORD thy God will send the hornet among them,
until they that are left, and hide themselves from thee, be destroyed.”
Deuteronomy 7:20*

LET us spiritualize the story of the conquest of Canaan by the children of Israel. Canaan was given to Abraham and to his seed by a covenant of salt. Our body, soul, and spirit are given to Christ Jesus to be His portion and His heritage, and the newborn principle within us which represents the seed of Israel is to conquer the whole of our manhood for Christ, that He may have possession of it in all its powers and passions, parts and faculties.

When our Lord Jesus Christ died, He died not only for our souls but also for our bodies, and He did not purchase a right to a part of us only but to the entire man. He contemplated in His passion the sanctification of us wholly, spirit, soul, and body, that in this triple kingdom He Himself might reign supreme without a rival.

It is the business of the newborn nature which God has given to the regenerate to assert the rights of the Lord Jesus Christ. “My soul, so far as you are a child of God, you must conquer all the rest of yourself which yet remains unblest. You must subdue all your powers and passions to the silver scepter of Jesu’s gracious reign, and you must never be satisfied till He who is the King by purchase becomes also the King by gracious coronation, and reigns in you supreme.”

Although Israel had Canaan of right, the Hivites and Jebusites and seven mighty nations had it in possession, and alas! we are made painfully to feel that though Christ has a right to us, and He alone should reign in our mortal bodies, yet sin has a dwelling place in us.

Those old sins, which were born with us, and seem as if they will never die till we ourselves are wrapped in our winding sheets, have entered into us and will dwell in us. I may say of our nature what was said in Egypt during the plague of frogs, “Behold these filthy things have come up into our chambers, and into our ovens, and our kneading troughs,” there is no part of our heart too hot or too sacred for sin to intrude into it. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint, from the sole of the foot even to the head naturally, there is nothing but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. Sin has entrenched itself in our nature, and it is not to be cast out by our mere talking of it nor by our best resolutions.

Our sins have chariots of iron, as those of us know who have to contend with them, and their cities are walled up to heaven, their entrenchments are so strong. Our sins have so worked themselves into our flesh that our flesh cries out, “Spare them.” “Surely the bitterness of death is past,” said Agag, when he came delicately before Samuel.

And thus our sins come so delicately to us, assume such pleasant shapes, and are so congenial, that something whispers, “Let them live, it is hard to slay them, so difficult to cut them up root and branch, for they are in possession and the new nature is but a babe. But the old nature is the old man, and it is a very unequal fight between a babe and an old man.”

The new nature has just emerged into an atmosphere which is not congenial with it, while the old nature has everything to help it, the devil from beneath, the world from without, and even the cares of business, of life, all seem to act as allies to the old nature. Meanwhile the new nature has to fight alone, except that the Eternal Spirit is our helper, and He who is the Father of our new nature is also its support

and its succor, else long ago it had died and been utterly cut off by the hosts of its foes. Christ and holiness have a right to us, but sin is in possession.

What then, beloved? Why this, that since sin has no right to any part of us, we go about a good and legal warfare when we seek, in the name of God, to drive it out. O my body, you are a member of Christ, shall I take you and subjugate you to the Prince of Darkness? O my soul, Christ has suffered for your sins, and redeemed you with His most precious blood. Shall I allow your memory to become a storehouse of evil, or your passions to become firebrands of iniquity? Shall I surrender my judgment to be perverted by error, or my will to be led in fetters of iniquity? No, my soul, you are Christ's, and sin has no right to you.

Sin shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under law but under grace. Christ has bought us and paid for us. God has willed us over to Christ, we belong to Him, we are His portion and His reward. Sin has no legal right then, but it has got possession, and you know that is nine points of the law. But we will dispute the nine points. We will bring the one grand point, that God the Judge of all has decided that the blood-bought belong to Christ, and we will fight it out even to the death against these our sins.

We are told if we read this chapter in a spiritual sense, that we must in no way suffer any kind or sort of truce with sin. I believe that many believers—I hope they are believers—have given up warring with a part of their sins. They are not drunkards, they are not thieves, they are not given to uncleanness of walk or language, but theirs may be a hasty temper, and they do not try to subdue that. They think that that is constitutional, and they plead for it as though it must be spared. This one tribe—these Jebusites—must be spared according to their sinful talk.

But oh, beloved, I have no more right as a Christian to suffer bad temper to dwell in me than I have to suffer the devil himself to dwell there. I know it has been said very often that grace is often grafted on a crab-stock. So it is, but in this spiritual husbandry the graft will influence all below as well as that which is above it. What is the fruit of it? Is it a crab? No. The fruit does not come from the crab, but from the better nature, and though I be grafted upon a crab, yet my fruit must partake of the new nature, and I must bring forth sweet fruit.

Some people think—or perhaps they may not know it—that they are *naturally* troubled with pride, that they have *naturally* a high spirit, or a haughty temper, and when they are told of it they grow rough with whomsoever dares to mention it, and they think this is not a sin. But oh, beloved, pride in a Christian is one of the most loathsome vices. What can there be in you and in me to be proud of? Owing all we have to the gift of God, having nothing but what He gives us, and going back to our own poverty unless God keeps us, how dare we lift up our head?

God smote Nebuchadnezzar, and made him go and eat grass like the ox, and his hairs grew like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds claws, all because of his pride. And some of God's dear children have been suffered to make dreadful falls of it, and all because they were lifted up and said, "I shall never be moved, my mountain standeth firm."

We must beware of these sins, and not make a truce or parley with them. I must not say of any one sin, "I cannot help it, and therefore I will not contend with it." Beloved, down with them! Down with them all! In the name of God we must destroy them, or else they will destroy us.

I may say of our sins what a Scotch officer said to his soldiers when taken in an ill position. Said he, "My lads, there are the enemy! Kill them, or they will kill you." And so must I say of all sins. There they are! Destroy them, or they will destroy you. Your only way of entering into eternal life is by being more than a conqueror through Him who has loved you. You know how it is written, "To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the hidden manna," but to such only. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

And as we are not thus to excuse some sins and permit them to live, so, above all, we must not fall into a dispirited state of mind and suppose we never can drive sins out. I do not think we shall ever be perfect in this life, but how near to perfection a Christian may come is a question which I should not like to discuss in words, but prefer endeavoring to find out in practice. How much a believer may be like

Christ I will not venture to affirm, but certainly there have been some men upon earth of whom we might say without exaggeration that you might take them for an example, for their Master seemed to live again in them.

There is no need that you should always give way to pride, or sloth, or covetousness, or any other form of sin. You are able to overcome them—not in your own strength—the weakest of them would be too much for you in that. But you may overcome them through the blood of the Lamb. “This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith,” and our faith will be able to subdue these sins.

Just as faith of old put to flight the armies of the aliens, so can it even to this day. Do not, then, dear friends, ask, “How shall I dispossess them, for they are greater and mightier than I?” but go to the strong for strength, and wait humbly upon God, and He, the Mighty God of Jacob, will surely come to the rescue, and you shall have to sing of victory through His grace.

There is a word of encouragement given in the chapter to those who have a tendency to doubt in this matter. Israel was reminded that God brought them out of Egypt. He delivered them from the house of bondage. And you are reminded, dear friends, that you are saved. Christ has done a greater work for you than remains to be accomplished in you. To bear the weight of your sins and to break the iron yoke of spiritual bondage from off your necks required that Christ should die. But that being done, it is, comparatively, but a light work to deliver you from indwelling sin. The greater work is done.

JEHOVAH became man in human flesh. He lived on earth. God, the Word, was made flesh and dwelt among us, and in due time stooped in His obedience even to death, the death of the cross. All your sins have been destroyed by Christ, and there is no condemnation for you to dread since Christ has died. You are forgiven, the yoke is snatched from off your shoulders. You are made free by the Son, and you are free indeed. You are in the wilderness it is true, but you have come through the Red Sea, wherein your sins have been drowned. Your enemies, your old sins, you shall see no more forever.

The manna falls about your camp, the fiery, cloudy pillar leads you through the wilderness. And since you have seen what God has done, will you be afraid as to the future? Courage, courage! He never begins without intending to finish. It shall never be said of Him, “This man began to build, but was not able to complete the structure.” Courage, courage! He has not brought you out of Egypt that you may be destroyed. What would the heathen say concerning your God, if after all you should fall and perish?

You shall win the day, you shall have every inch of the promised land, only be you strong and be very courageous, for the Lord will surely drive out your sins, and take your body, soul, and spirit, as a consecrated and holy possession forever.

But there is a notion among some Christians, who are but little instructed, and who know nothing of experience, that sanctification is an instantaneous work. There are some who think that the moment they believe in Jesus they shall never be troubled with any sin again, whereas, it is then that the battle begins. The moment sin is forgiven it ceases to be my friend, and becomes my deadly foe. When the guilt of sin is gone, then the power of sin becomes obnoxious, and we begin to strive against it.

Every now and then we hear of friends who cannot understand my teaching on this point. They say they do not feel anything of uprising sin within themselves. Oh, beloved, I wish you did, for I am afraid you know nothing of the Gospel life if you do not. I will not give a penny for your religion, if it has no inward conflict. Even virtuous heathens have got farther than that, for some of them have written that they felt themselves to be as two men contending or fighting, and surely Christians have got farther still, or ought to have.

This, I know, be it what it may with you, I have to fight every day to get but one inch nearer to heaven, and I feel it will be wrestling to the last moment, and that I shall have a scuffle upon Jordan’s brink with my corruptions.

Remember how John Knox had it. He had fought with men, I may say had fought with beasts at Ephesus, and yet at his last expiring moments he had the sternest struggle he had ever known with self-righteousness. You would have thought, Surely John Knox could not be self-righteous. The man who had denounced all trusting in good works, was yet vexed with the very same thing he had denounced.

And so it will be with you. No matter how near you live to God, or how closely you follow Christ, you will have more or less of evil to contend with still. Nay, I must say, the more holy you get, the more you will have to fight against sin. The whiter a garment becomes, the more easily is a spot seen, and the more you get like Christ, the more you will detect how unlike you are.

A spiritual sense will be quickened, so that you will discover that to be sin which you did not think to be evil. And you will often feel when you are most progressing in grace, as if you are not growing at all, or if so, certainly it seemed to be downward.

When I think myself most unholy, I am most holy, and when I bemoan my own sinfulness, then am I most likely to be accepted of God. It is best to think little of one's self, but whether or no, take this for granted, you will have to drive out your sins little by little. They will not be cast out at once—it will be a life-work, and you will never have to take off your armor and sheath your sword, till you go to the warrior's bed and rest in the grave.

I now wish to call your attention specially to the verse before us.

It appears that after a long conflict with Canaan, yet still some of these old inhabitants would exist. They hid themselves in caves, and so on, but they were to be fetched out by a very singular means—namely, hornets. These hornets were to discover them and bring them out—perhaps sting them to death, or if not, make them come out to be slain by the children of Israel.

Three things are to be noticed, then, this morning. The first is, *sins which are left and saved in us, even in us who have for many years been followers of Christ*. Secondly, *a singular means of destroying them*. And then thirdly, *a suggestive lesson for us all, teaching us to examine our own hearts for these secret sins*.

I. And first, dear friends, SINS WHICH ARE LEFT AND HIDDEN.

John Bunyan very wisely describes the town of Mansoul after it had been taken by Prince Immanuel. The Prince rode to the Castle called the Heart and took possession of it, and the whole city became His. But there were certain Diabolonians, followers of Diabolus, who never quitted the town. They could not be seen in the streets, could not be heard in the markets, never dared to occupy a house, but lurked about in certain old dens and caves.

Some of them got impudent enough even to hire themselves out for servants to the men of Mansoul under other names. There was Mr. Covetousness, who was called Mr. Prudent Thrifty, and there was Mr. Lasciviousness, who was called Mr. Harmless Mirth. They took other names, and still lived here, much to the annoyance of the town of Mansoul, skulking about in holes and corners, and only coming out on dark days, when they could do mischief and serve the Black Prince.

Now in all of us, however watchful we may be, though we may set Mr. Pry Well to listen at the door, and he may watch, and my Lord Mayor, Mr. Understanding, is very careful to search all these out, yet there will remain much hidden sin.

I think we ought always to pray to God to forgive us sins that we do not know anything about. "Thine unknown agonies," says the old Greek liturgy. And there are unknown sins for which those agonies make atonement. Perhaps the sins which you and I confess are not a tithe of what we really do commit. Our eyes are not sufficiently opened to know of the heinousness of our own sin, and it is possible that if we could fully know the extent of our own sinfulness it would drive us mad. It is possible that God in His mercy suffers us to be somewhat blind to the abominable accursedness of sin. He gives us enough of it to make us hate it, but not enough to drive us absolutely to despair. Our sin is exceedingly sinful.

Now allow me to suggest that among the sins which lurk in us there is the old one of unbelief. You have had a very great deliverance my dear brother, and you think you have no more unbelief left in you. You do not know that old villain Unbelief is never to be taken by the heels, or if he be put in the stocks, he soon manages to escape and get his liberty.

You will have unbelief this very afternoon if you happen to meet with a trouble, and though now you say, "I never can stagger at the promise through unbelief," I should not wonder but what a little

depression of spirits, perhaps weariness in God's service, might make you to be as doubting as ever you were in your life. Do not harbor the pleasing delusion that your unbelief is dead. It is hidden, but it will come out again.

Especially among these lurkers I must mention pride. Oh, we think, "How could I be proud? Why I—I have been through such an experience of my own weakness and sinfulness that I cannot be proud."—little thinking that all the while we are talking we are saying about the proudest thing that we could possibly say.

I talked once, I remember, with a man who thought himself a very eminent Christian. He told me that what with affliction and experience the Lord had wiped pride completely out of him. I said, "He must have hit you very hard, brother." I thought while he was talking he was the incarnation of pride, but I did not recollect that I myself was probably quite as bad for thinking I should not like to have talked as he did.

Pride is such a cunning thing. It likes to wear the robes of a prince, but it is satisfied to wear the rags of a beggar if it cannot. As long as it may get into our hearts, it cares not what shape it assumes. That detestable sin of pride, we can all condemn it in other people, and yet probably we have each one got a leaven of it, even in our spirits at this very moment. You are a proud thing, my brother. You are a proud thing, my sister. There is still pride lurking in us all.

And beside these there is also a great amount of wrath and ill temper in us. Oh! we think there is no one so good tempered as we are, we have not betrayed ourselves into an angry word for months. Yes, but it is very easy to be good tempered when you have it all your own way. It is a very easy thing to be amiable, and kind, and loving, and never to be angry when the wife is so kind, and the children obedient, and the servants attentive, and business prospers. But my dear brother, how would it be if matters were to change, and they may very soon?

Suppose you were irritated as brother So-and-so is—how then? You know we are not to judge the man by the circumstances—we must judge him intrinsically by himself. A barrel of gunpowder is not very dangerous to sit upon or to have under one's bed at night, or to make a pillow of. It is a very safe thing indeed, provided that there is no fire anywhere about. It has not blown up, and yet it has been under one's couch all the while.

Ah! but if the sparks had happened to fly, as they do fly in your neighbor's house across the road, can you say that your powder is quite different from his powder? And I think sometimes when we think we have destroyed anger, and put down the tendency of wrath, it is only because the Canaanite has hidden himself and we cannot see him, but he is still there, and may come out again one day.

So is it often with our discontent and rebellion. I do not know that I am discontented, several of you can say the same. You feel happy this morning, grateful and thankful, you can sing—

***"I would not change my blest estate
For all the earth calls good or great."***

Yes, but you must not be too sure that you have no discontent left in your heart. Now suppose—and the supposition is so easy to make—suppose your best beloved should sicken and die. You can bless a giving God, could you bless a taking God? Suppose that your riches took to themselves wings, and every one of them should fly away, could you still praise the God who is as good when He takes as when He gives?

Brethren, we know not what spirit we are of. When we fancy we could run with the horsemen, it were well to recollect that we have not always been able to run with the footmen. And when we fancy such and such a friend behaved ill in deep affliction, it were well if we remembered ourselves often, lest we also should repine, for discontent may be one of the sins lurking in our soul.

Moreover, idolatry is a sin that is often found there. You do not know that you idolize your child, and you will never know it until that child dies, and then you will find it out. You do not know that you

idolize your substance, but if it were gone, and you had to give it up, and were ready like Job's wife to say, "Curse God and die," you would then discover that it was your golden calf. Idolatry has been the sin of all ages and all times.

Those dear children of God, whose hearts should tell of JEHOVAH, and JEHOVAH alone, have need to keep careful watch, lest at the same time they indulge self-confidence, which is only another form of idolatry—the worship of ourselves instead of God. Let us beware lest we indulge in self-satisfaction, and think that our righteousness is something satisfactory after all. It is a blessed thing to find idolatry out, but it will hide itself if it can.

It is well to consider the question, "How is it these things hide themselves in us? Other people find them out—how is it we cannot find them?" It is certain that you can detect other men's faults, but you cannot detect your own. The lookers-on often see more than the players, and we sometimes perceive more at a distance than when we approach nearer. The fact is that partiality to ourselves blinds us to our own imperfections, and makes us see the mote in our brother's eye though there is a beam in our own.

In many cases this ignorance arises from want of search. It is not pleasant work to seek out faults—"take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines," it is not easy work, we do not like finding out sin. Too many of us are lazy about religion. You do the work of God deceitfully, you do not search your hearts with candles and try yourselves as with crucibles, as in a furnace—you are not purified seven times over, and so sin escapes for want of a hearty search to find it out.

Besides, sin is so subtle, it changes its shape. If Satan cannot shoot us from above, he will do it from below. If he cannot assail us in the head, he will seek to cast us down by tripping us with the foot. Sins of every form, and shape, and hue, come upon us, and the great probability is that in trying to kill one sin we shall fall into another.

Often in aiming to attain to a virtue we have overshot the mark, and gone into a vice. We have wanted to honor God and humble ourselves, and then we have grown mean in spirit. We wanted to be noble and bold, and then we have grown hectoring. We wanted to be loving, and then we grew to be falsely charitable, tolerating sin. We wanted to be stern against sin, and have grown bitter against friends who have fallen into it. We mistake the narrow road, and break the hedge either on the right hand or on the left.

It is the subtlety of sin that makes it so hard for us to find it out. Besides, beloved, we have fallen into the bad habit of comparing and contrasting ourselves with others. We are constantly indulging in the supposition, "Oh, well, I am better than some." We look at our fellow Christians and see their inconsistencies, and say, "Well, I do not do that." The Pharisaic prayer is very common even among Christians I am afraid, "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men."

The preacher himself, though he might preach humility to you, sometimes gets to comparing himself with other preachers, and his hearers, he doubts not, do the same. Oh, you think, "I am more quick in God's work, more earnest than some Christians. I wish they would wake up too," but while we are censuring them, we are really laying a flattering unction to our own souls, by supposing we are so much better, and that we have cut off so much of our own sins.

Oh, beloved, take heed of comparing yourselves with others, for this is not wise. Come to Christ and look at Him, and then your faults will be apparent. View His perfection, and in the light of that your own infirmities will soon be discovered. But if you look at your brother's righteousness, which is but little better than yours and perhaps not so good, you will be apt to get proud and lifted up, and so fall into sin.

I shall not, however, enlarge upon this point. There are, no doubt, in all of us Canaanites still dwelling in the land that will be thorns in our side.

II. Now, secondly—A SINGULAR MEANS FOR THEIR DESTRUCTION—"THY GOD WILL SEND THE HORNET AMONG THEM."

These fellows resorted to caves and dens. God employed the very best means for their destruction. I suppose these hornets were large wasps, two or three times, perhaps, as large as a wasp, with very terrible stings. It is not an unusual historical fact, to find districts depopulated by means of stinging

insects. In connection with the journey of Dr. Livingstone, we can never forget that strange kind of guest which is such a pest to the cattle in any district, that the moment it appeared, they had either to fly before it or to die. The hornet must have been a very terrible creature, but it is not at all extraordinary that there should have been hornets capable of driving out a nation.

The hornet was a very simple means. It was no sound of trumpet, nor even the glitter of miracles. It was a simple, natural means of fetching these people out of their holes. It is well known that insects in some countries will sting one race of people and not another.

Sometimes the inhabitants of a country are not at all careful about mosquitoes or such creatures, when strangers are greatly pestered with them. God could therefore bring hornets which would sting the Hivites and Jebusites but not molest the Israelites, and in this way the Canaanites were driven out of their holes. Some died by the stings of hornets, and others were put in the way of the sharp swords of the men of Israel, and thus they died.

The spiritual analogy to this is, the daily trouble which God sends to every one of us. I suppose you have all got your hornets. Some have hornets in the family, your child may be a hornet to you—your wife, your husband, your brother, the dearest friend you have, may be a daily cross to you. And though a dead cross is very heavy, a living cross is heavier far. To bury a child is a great grief, but to have that child live and sin against you is ten times worse.

You may have hornets that shall follow you to your bedchamber—some of you may know what that means—so that even where you ought to find your rest and your sweetest solace, it is there that you receive your bitterest stings of trouble. The hornet will sometimes come in the shape of business. You are perplexed—you cannot prosper—one thing comes after another. You seem to be born to trouble more than other people. You have ventured on the right hand, but it was a failure. You pushed out on the left, but that was a break-down.

Almost everybody you trust fails immediately, and those you do not trust are the people you might have safely relied upon. You seem to be infested with those hornets in your business, to make everything go ill with you. You have perplexity upon perplexity—nothing so serious as to be your ruin, but a deal of fretful trouble which keeps you uneasy.

Others have hornets in their bodies. Some have constant headaches, aches and pains pass and shoot along the nerves of others. If you could but be quit of it, you think, how happy you would be, but you have got your hornet, and that hornet is always with you.

But if I tried to get through the whole list of hornets, I should want all the morning, for there is a particular grief to every man. Each man has his own form of obnoxious sting which he has to feel. You will come running to your friend sometimes and say, “Oh, I have such a trouble. So-and-so has been saying such and such a thing of me. If I had not so many bad neighbors I should get on. This is the worst trouble a man could have.”

You do not know, you do not know. The heart knows its own bitterness. There is a skeleton in every house, every man has a shoe that pinches more or less, and there is not a Christian man on earth who has not a hornet.

But what are they for? They are sent with the same object with which God sent hornets into Canaan, namely, to drive out the Canaanites, and I shall have to show you that they do so. Your hornets drive you to prayer. Just put in the word hornet into the verse we have been singing—

*“Hornets make the promise sweet,
Hornets give new life to prayer,
Hornets bring me to His feet,
Lay me low and keep me there,”*

and you have just got the drift of what these daily hornets do. You would not pray if you had not trouble. I am afraid you would grow lax, cold, indifferent, but these sting you, and you say, “I must go to my

God for comfort under this pest, this nuisance.” Why, what a blessing that is for you to be stung to your Father’s feet!—blessed sting that brings you there. You would not value the promises half so much if it were not for the hornets. But you turn to some precious word of God that just suits your case, and you say, “I never saw such sweetness in that as I do now. Blessed be God for sending a passage so suitable to my condition.” The hornets take you to the promise, and seem to point you to the place where the milk and honey flow.

And how they also tend to lay you at His feet after you have been hasty in temper. After you have felt how proud you must have been, all because of the hornet that brought the pride out, you have gone to God and said, “Lord, I did not think I was such a fool. I should not have believed it. If anyone had said to me yesterday, ‘You would do so-and-so,’ I should have said, ‘Is thy servant a dog that I should do such a thing?’ But this has so troubled me, bit me in a sore place, irritated me, that I could not bear it, that I have done what I would not have done for all the world.”

That just shows what there was there before. You see, if sin had not been in you, it could not have come out. All the trouble in the world does not put sin in the Christian, but it brings it out. And just as disease is all the better when it is fetched out to the surface, that so its power in the interior may be destroyed, so is it a blessing—a painful blessing—when the hornet comes and makes us see the evil that otherwise would have lain hidden in us.

You know, my dear friends, practically, I dare say, what I mean. The other day you were in such a heavenly frame of mind—you had had half an hour alone, or had just come home from Tabernacle and enjoyed the service, and something patted you on the back and said, “How you are grown in grace!” You did not say it in words, but you did really think, “Well, I am getting on. There is something good in me after all.” When you got home, perhaps the meat was badly cooked, or there was something done the very opposite to what you had wished, and it seemed to be done on purpose to irritate you. You thought so, and without a moment’s consideration, you said some very strong words—very!

Then something came and touched you on the other shoulder and said, “Ah! is this growing in grace?” and you felt very humbled, taken down a great many notches. And when you went upstairs to bed, if you had gone up there without that hornet, your prayer would have been a Pharisee’s prayer, and as it was, when you got up, all you could say was, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” The hornet had done you a world of good. It might have fetched out a little bad temper, but for all that it had fetched out your pride and self-conceit.

The daily troubles we have are meant to drive us to God, to drive us to the promise, and also to show us where our weak points are, in order that we may contend with all our might against them. I believe, my dear friends, that the hardest-hearted, most cross-grained, and most unlovely Christians in all the world are those who never have had much trouble, and those who are the most sympathizing, loving, and Christlike, are generally those that have the most affliction.

The worst thing that can happen to any of us is to have our path made too smooth, and one of the greatest blessings that ever the Lord gave us was a cross. “I should never have been able to see,” said one, “if I had not been blind,” and said another, “I should never have been able to run the race set before me if I had not broken my leg.”

Our infirmities are channels of blessing, our difficulties, trials, vexations, and perplexities, are most sweet and blessed means of grace to our souls. I think we ought to be very thankful to God for the hornet. Says one, “I am not.” “No trial for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

When you are in a sane mind, my dear brother, and God the Holy Ghost really teaches you to be wise, you will go and thank God for hornets. “Lord, I bless Thee that Thou hast not left me unchastised. I praise Thee for the cares and troubles which are so unpleasant to my flesh, by which that flesh is mortified. I thank Thee, Father.”

You never hear a child say this, but if it were a wise child, it would. “I thank Thee, my Father, for the rod. I thank Thee, O my God, that Thou hast not let me have my own will, that Thou hast blighted

my prospects, crossed my hopes, marred my plans, cast down my expectations, taken away my joys. I thank Thee, O Thou great Liberator, for having broken the golden bars of my cage to give my spirit liberty, and for having snapped the bonds of my captivity which bound me to the earth, that I might be able to mount upwards to Thyself.” Whenever you are singing God’s praise, say, “He sent us hornets, for his mercy endureth forever: let him be blessed evermore.”

There is one point I want you to notice in the text. It would be guilt on my part to pass it without observation, and that is, we are expressly told the hornets came from God. He sent them. “The LORD thy God will send the hornet.” This will help you perhaps to bear their stings another time. God weighs your troubles in scales, and measures out your afflictions, every drachm and scruple of them. And since they come therefore directly from a loving Father’s hand, accept them with grateful cheerfulness, and pray that the result which divine wisdom has ordained to flow from them, may be abundantly realized in your sanctification, in being made like Christ.

III. And now I have to close by observing that we have here A VERY SUGGESTIVE LESSON TO OURSELVES, a lesson which we have already anticipated, but let us repeat it.

It is this. What is my particular besetting sin? Have I been careful in self-examination? Have I issued a constant search warrant against the subtle forms of evil? If not, I must expect to have the hornet. God never punishes His children for sin penally, but He chastens them for it paternally. You may often discover what your sin is by the punishment, for you can see the face of the sin in the punishment—the one is so like the other.

Dear friend, what is your particular trouble today, what hornet stings you? Go to God with Job’s request, “Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me,” for if the consolations of God be small with you, it is because there is some secret sin in you.

Look at the trouble you have today, and see if you cannot discover the sin. A disobedient child—is it possible that you also are living in some act of disobedience to your heavenly Father? Is it a servant who annoys you? Is it possible that you also are an ill servant of the King, idle and indifferent to His command? Is it a loss in business? May it not be possible that you are not attending to God’s business, and therefore His church is a loser, and therefore He makes you a loser in your own business?

Is it sickness in the flesh? May there not be some spiritual sickness there, which is necessary to keep in check and to subdue? Has some one else treated you haughtily? May you not also be haughty? Has another slandered you, and are you smarting under it? Have you never spoken against the children of God? May you not have an itching tongue too, and God is making you feel the smart of it, that you may mind how you remove the bridle from the unruly tongue?

Has someone undervalued your labor, and spoken depreciatingly of your motives? May you not also have had hard thoughts concerning some of your brethren in Christian labors? Do you feel, just now, under great depression of spirit? Is it not possible that you have neglected to enter into fellowship with Christ in His suffering, and therefore He is bringing you down into it by main force?

I know not how it may be with you, beloved, but this I know, I have not searched my own soul as I would desire to do in the future. I would wish to find out everything that is within me that is evil, that it may be dragged forth and executed at once. It is stern work. It is work that never could be done, if it were not for that precious assurance that God is with us.

God, the mighty God of Jacob, will have us to be His people. He has prepared a heaven for a perfect people, and He will make us perfect that He may neither lose us, nor the place He has prepared for us. He has sworn by Himself He will never leave you. He will, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, drive out your lusts and corruptions, till you shall be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Come then, ye men of war, take to your harness, and buckle on your armor, and nerve your souls for combat. “Ye have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” “Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary” in yourselves, and now henceforth and forever fight the good fight for the crown that fadeth not away.

I have been speaking to saved ones, and to saved ones only. But you that are unsaved will have the hornets too, only those hornets will be of no use to you. They will sting you away from God, rather than to Him. Your troubles will only make you dislike and hate the Most High the more. Oh that His grace would visit you, and change your heart! and then, perhaps, your trials might be sanctified to fetch you to your Father's face. May it be so, and His shall be the glory evermore. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—DEUTERONOMY 7

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.