

MESSENGERS WANTED

NO. 687

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 22, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send,
and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”
Isaiah 6:8.*

GOD’S great remedy for man’s ruin of man is the sacrifice of His dear Son. He proclaims to the sons of men that only by the atonement of Jesus can they be reconciled unto Himself. In order that this remedy should be of any use to any man, he must receive it by faith, for without faith men perish even under the gospel dispensation. Now, there cannot be faith without hearing; for, according to God’s arrangements, “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Then arises the serious inquiry, “how can they hear without a preacher?” To this practical point the matter is brought—there must be a proclamation of the message of mercy, or men cannot know it, cannot believe it, and consequently cannot be benefited by it. The great connecting link sought for in the text is a messenger to bear the tidings of salvation, and the inquiry of the olden time is the question of today also, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” The word of the salvation avails not until it is declared into the ear; it must be published, or men cannot hear it; and not hearing, they cannot believe; and not believing, they cannot be saved.

There is at the present moment great lack of men to tell out the story of the cross of Jesus Christ, and many considerations press that lack upon our hearts. Think how many voices all mingle into this one—“Who will go for us?” Listen to the wounds of Jesus as they plaintively cry, “How shall we be rewarded? How shall the precious drops of blood be made available to redeem the souls of men unless loving lips shall go for us to claim by right those who have been redeemed by blood?” The blood Jesus cries like Abel’s blood from the ground, “Whom shall I send?” and His wounds repeat the question, “Who will go for us?” Does not the purpose of the eternal Father also join with solemn voice in this demand? The Lord has decreed a multitude unto eternal life. He has purposed, with a purpose which cannot be changed or frustrated, that a multitude whom no man can number shall be the reward of the Savior’s sacrifice; but how can these decrees be fulfilled except by the sending forth of the gospel, for it is through the gospel, and through the gospel alone, that salvation can come to the sons of men. I think I hear the awful voice of the purpose mingling with the piercing cry of the cross appealing to us to declare the Word of life. I see the handwriting of old Eternity bound in one volume with the crimson writing of Calvary, and both together write out most legibly the pressing question—“Who shall go for us to bring home the elect and redeemed ones?”

The very sins of men, horrible as they are to think upon, may be made an argument for proclaiming the gospel. Oh the cruel and ravenous sins which destroy the sons of men, and tear their choicest joy in pieces! When I see monstrous lusts defiling the temple of God, and many gods and many lords usurping the throne of the Almighty, I can hear the loud cry, “Who will go for us?” Do not perishing souls suggest to us the question of the text? Men are going down to the grave perishing for lack of knowledge,

the tomb engulfs them, eternity swallows them up, and in the dark they die without a glimmer of hope. No candle of the Lord ever shines upon their faces; by these perishing souls we implore you this morning to feel that heralds of the cross are needed—needed lest these souls be ruined everlastingly! Needed that they may be lifted up from the dunghill of their corruption, and made to sit among princes redeemed by Christ Jesus. The cry swells into a wail of mighty pathetic pleading; all time echoes it, and all eternity prolongs it; while heaven, earth, and hell give weight to the chorus.

Beloved, there are two forms of missionary enterprise conducted by two classes of agents. I so divide them merely for the occasion, they are really not divided by any rigid boundary. The first is the agency of those specially dedicated to the ministry of the Word, who give themselves wholly to it, who are able, by the generous effort of the Christian Church, or by their own means, to set their whole time apart for the great work of teaching the truth of God. As there are but few in this assembly who can do this, I shall not translate my text in its reference to ministers, although it has a loud voice to such, but I shall rather refer to another and equally useful form of agency, namely, the Christian Church as a whole—the believers who, while following their secular avocations, are heralds for Christ and missionaries for the cross. Such are needed here, such are wanted in our colonies, such might find ample room in the great world of heathendom, men and women, who, if they did not stand up beneath the tree to address the assembled throng, would preach in the workshop; who, if they did not teach the hundreds, would at the fireside instruct the twos and threes. We want both sorts of laborers, but I may do more good on this present occasion by stirring up this second sort; for though all of you cannot become preachers, for if all were, and talked at random as the Plymouthites, the church would become a mere vacuum, a huge gaping void. You may all be teachers of Christ in another sense, you can all give yourself to the work of God in your own calling, and promote your Master's glory perseveringly in your daily avocations. I lift up an earnest cry in God's name for consecrated men and women, who, not needing to wait till the Church's hands can support them, shall support themselves with their own hands, and yet minister for Christ Jesus wherever providence may have cast their lot.

Coming at once to the text, we shall first of all have a little to say concerning *the person needed*; secondly, about *the persons offering themselves*; and thirdly, upon *the work which they will be called to do*.

I. THE PERSON WANTED, as describe in the questions, “Whom shall *I* send? Who will go for us?”

The person needed is viewed from two points. He has a character bearing two aspects. The person wanted has a divine side—“Whom shall *I* send?” Then he has a human aspect—“Who will go for *us*?” But the two meet together—the human and divine unite in the last words, “*for us*.” Here is a man, nothing more than a man of human instincts, but clad through divine grace, with superhuman, even with divine authority.

Let us look, then, at this two-sided person. He is *divinely chosen*—“Whom shall *I* send?” As if in the eternal counsels this had once been a question, “Who shall be the chosen man, who shall be the object of My eternal love, and in consequence shall have this grace given him that he should tell others of the unsearchable riches of Christ?” Beloved, what a mercy it is to us who are believers that *to us* this is no more a question; for sovereignty has pitched upon us and eternal mercy, not for anything good in us, but simply because God would have it so, has selected us that we may bring forth fruit unto His name. As we hear the question, let us listen to the Savior's exposition of it. “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.” It is from the fountain of election that all mercies spring. The workers for the living God are a people chosen by the Most High. He sends whom He wills. He makes choice of this man and not another, and

in every case exercises His own sovereign will. He gives no account of His matters, but answers once and for all to every carping criticism, “May I not do as I will with My own?”

This question indicates a person *cheerfully willing*, and this is what I meant by the human side of the messenger. “Who will *go for us?*” The man sought for is one who will go with ready mind; there would be no need to ask, “Who will go?” if a mere slave or machine without a will could be sent. Beloved, the purpose of God does not violate the free agency, or even the free will of man. Man is saved by the will of God, but man is made willing to be so saved. The fault is not in the hyper-Calvinist that he insists upon sovereignty, nor in the Arminian that he is so violent for free agency; the fault is in both of them, because they cannot see more truths of God than one, and do not admit that truth is not the exclusive property of either, for God is a sovereign, and, at the same time, man is a responsible free agent. Many among us are perpetually seeking to reconcile truths of God which probably can never be reconciled except in the divine mind. I thank God that I believe many things which I do not even wish to understand. I am weary and sick of arguing and understanding, and misunderstanding. I find it true rest and joy, like a little child, to believe what God has revealed, and to let others do the puzzling and the reasoning. If I could comprehend the whole of revelation I could scarcely believe it to be divine; but inasmuch as many of its doctrines are too deep for me, and the whole scheme is too vast to be reduced to a system, I thank and bless God that He has deigned to display before me a revelation far exceeding my poor limited abilities. I believe that every man who has Jesus, has Him as a matter of his own choice; it is true it is caused by divine grace, but it is there—it is there. Ask any man whether he is a Christian against his will, and he will tell you certainly not, for he loves the Lord and delights in His law after the inward man. Your people are not led unwillingly to You in chains, O Jesus, but Your people shall be *willing* in the day of Your power. We willingly choose Christ, because He has from of old chosen us

In the matter of holy work, every man who becomes a worker for Jesus is so because he was chosen to work for Him; but he would be a very poor worker if he himself had not chosen to work for Jesus. I can say that I believe God ordained me to preach the gospel, and that I preach it by His will; but I am sure I preach it with my own will, too, for it is to me the most delightful work in all the world, and if I could exchange with an emperor, I would not consent to be so lowered. To preach the gospel of Jesus Christ is one of the sweetest and noblest employments, and even an angel might desire to be engaged in it. The true worker for God must be impelled by divine election, but yet he must make and will make, by divine grace, his own election of his work.

The two meet together in this—the man is sent by the Three in One, who here asks, “Who will go for us?” Every faithful Christian laborer labors for God. Brothers, when we tell others the story of the cross, we speak of *God the Father*. It is through our lips that the prodigal son must be reminded that the hired servants have bread enough and to spare. It may be through us that he will be shown his rags and his disgrace; through us he will discover more clearly the disgrace of feeding swine. The Spirit of God is the efficient agent, but it is by us that He may work. It is by us that the divine Father falls upon the neck of His prodigal child. *He* does it, but it is through the teaching of His Word in some form or other. The promises are spoken by our lips, the sweet invitations are delivered by our tongues. We, as though God did beseech them by us, are to pray them in Christ’s stead to be reconciled to God. God the Father says to you, my dear hearers, who know and love Him, “Will you go for Me and be an ambassador for Me?” Nor must we forget our tender *Redeemer*. He is not here, for He is risen. He will come again, but meanwhile He asks for someone to speak for Him, someone to tell Jerusalem that her iniquity is forgiven; to tell His murderers that He prays for them, “Father, forgive them,” to assure the blood-bought that they are redeemed; to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them who are bound. From His throne of glory Jesus says, “Who will go for Me and be a speaker for

Me?” Moreover, that blessed *Spirit*, under whose dispensational power we live at the present hour, has no voice to speak to the sons of men audibly except by His people; and though He works invisibly and mysteriously in the saints, yet He chooses loving hearts, and compassionate lips, and tearful eyes to be the means of benediction. The Spirit descends like the cloven tongue, but He sits upon disciples—there is no resting place for the Spirit of God nowadays within walls, and even the heaven of heavens contains Him not, but He enthrones Himself within His people. He makes us God-bearers, and He speaks through us as through a trumpet to the sons of men. So you see that the adorable Trinity cry to you, you blood-bought, blood-redeemed sons of God, and says, “Are you seeking to promote our glory? Are you effecting our purposes? Are you winning those purchased by our eternal sacrifice?” Turning to the Church assembled, the Lord pronounces those ancient questions, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?”

II. By God’s help, we would say a little upon THE PERSON OFFERING HIMSELF. “Here am I; send me.”

The person offering himself is described in the chapter at very great length—he must be an Isaiah. Being an Isaiah, he must, in the first place, *have felt his own unworthiness*. My brother, my sister, if you are to be made useful by God in soul-winning, you must pass through the experience which Isaiah describes in the chapter before us. You must have cried in bitterness of spirit, “Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips!” God will never fill you with Himself until He has emptied you of your own self. Till you feel that you are weak as water, you shall not see the splendor of the divine power. May I ask, then, those of you who feel desirous to serve God, this experimental question, “Have you been made fully conscious of your own utter unfitness to be employed in any work for God, and your own complete unworthiness of so great an honor as to become a servant of the living God? If you have not been brought to this, you must begin with yourself; you cannot do any good to others—you must be born-again, and one of the best evidences of your being born-again will be a discovery of your own natural depravity and impurity in the sight of God.

Now, beloved, I want you to notice how it was that Isaiah was made to feel his unworthiness. It was first *by a sense of the presence of God*. “I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.” Have you ever had a consciousness of the presence of God? The other day I was prostrated in soul, utterly prostrated, with this one word “I Am!” There is everything in that title, the I Am! God is the truest of all existences. With regard to all other things, they may or may not be, but I Am! It came with such power to me. I thought, Here am I sitting in my study, whether I am, or whether that which surrounds me really is, may be a question, but, God *Is*—God *is here*. And when I speak God’s Word in His name, though I am nothing, God is everything, and as to whether or not His Word shall be fulfilled there cannot be any question, because He still is called, not, “I Was,” but “I Am,” infinite, omnipotent, divine. Think of the reality of the divine presence, and the certainty of that divine presence everywhere, close here, just now! “I Am!” O God, if we are not, yet You Are! I scarcely think that any man is fit to become a teacher of others till he has had a full sense of the glory of God crushing him right down into the dust, a full sense of that word, “I Am.” You know a man cannot pray without it, for we must believe that He Is, and that He is the rewarder of them who diligently seek Him; and if a man cannot pray for himself, much less can he rightly teach others. There must be the fullest conviction of the reality of God, an overwhelming sight and sense of His glory, or else you cannot benefit your fellows.

The source of Isaiah’s sense of nothingness was that Isaiah *saw the glory of Christ*. My dear friends, have you ever sat down and gazed upon the cross till, having read your own pardon there, you have seen that cross rising higher and higher till it touched the heavens and overshadowed the globe? Then you have seen and felt the glory of Him who was lifted up, and have bowed before the regal splendor of

divine love, incarnate in suffering humanity, and resplendent in agony and death. If you have ever beheld the vision of the crucified, and felt the glory of His wounds, you will then be fit to preach to others. I have sometimes thought that certain brothers who preach the gospel with such meager power and such lack of unction have no true knowledge of it. There is no need to talk of it with bated breath. It is sneered at as being such a very simple tale—"Believe and live," but after all, no philosopher ever made such a disclosure; and if a senate of discoverers could sit through the ages they could not bring to light any fact equal to this, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Well may you open your mouth boldly when you have such a subject as this to speak upon; but if you have never perceived its glory, you are utterly incapable of fulfilling God's errand. Oh, to get the cross into one's heart, to bear it upon one's soul, and above all, to feel the glory of it in one's whole being is the best education for a Christian missionary whether at home or abroad.

It will strike you too, dear friends that the particular aspect in which this humiliation may come to us will probably be *a sense of the divine holiness*, and the holiness of those who see His face. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts!" was the song which overawed the prophet. What messengers are those who serve so holy a God? Free from earth and all its grossness, like flames of fire they flash at His command. Who then, am I, a poor creature, cribbed, cabined, and confined within this house of clay? Who am I, a sinful worm of the dust, that I should aspire to the service of so thrice holy a God? Oh let us serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling; fearful lest we should do mischief while seeking to do good, and pollute the altar while attempting to offer sacrifice upon it.

This is the first qualification necessary for the service of God; if you have it not, pray the Lord to give it to you. My dear hearers, you cannot go to heaven without it, much more do heaven's work—you must be made to know you are a sinner yourself, or you cannot call other sinners to Jesus; you must experience this disease in your own soul, and you must be made to loath it as before the Most High, or else you will be a nuisance and an encumbrance in the vineyard of the Master, and will be quite unfit for any practical purpose of holiness and grace.

The next preparation for Christian work is, we must possess *a sense of mercy*. Then flew one of the seraphims and took a live coal from off the altar. We explained in our reading that the altar is for sacrifice, and that the lips must be touched with a coal of that sacrifice. Then, being so touched, they derive two effects. In the first place, *the lips are purged of iniquity*; and in the next place, *they feel the influence of fire*, enabling them to speak with vehemence and force. Beloved hearer, you say, perhaps in zeal, "I desire to serve Christ and to tell abroad the story of His cross." Have you proved that story to be true? Were you ever washed in the fountain? How can you bid others come if you have never come yourself? Have your sins been put away? "I hope so." Do you know it? I question if you can preach with any power till you have a full assurance of your own salvation; to teach the gospel with "but" and "if" is a poor teaching. You Sunday school teachers cannot hope to do much good to others while you doubt your own acceptance in the Beloved. You must know that you are saved. Oh beloved, you must feel the touch of that live coal; you must feel that Christ gave Himself for you. You Little-Faiths may get to heaven, but you must keep in the back rank while here, we cannot put you in the front of the battle. Though God may make you of service, we cannot expect you to be eminently of service. The man who would serve God must know himself to be saved. The effect of that live coal will be to fire the lips with heavenly flame. "Oh," says one man, "a flaming coal will burn the lips so that the man cannot speak at all." That is just how God works with us; it is by consuming the fleshly power that He inspires the heavenly might. Oh let the lips be burnt, let the fleshly power of eloquence be destroyed, but oh for that live coal to make the tongue eloquent with heaven's flame; the true divine power which urged the apostles forward and made them conquerors of the whole world.

According to the text *the man who will be acceptable must offer himself cheerfully*. “Here am I.” But how few of us have in very deed given ourselves to Christ? It is with most professors, “Here is my half guinea, here is my annual contribution,” but how few of us have said, “Here am I.” No, we sing of consecration as we sing a great many other things which we have not realized, and when we have sung it we do not wish to be taken at our word. It is not, “Here am I.” The man whom God will use must in sincerity be a consecrated man. I have explained that he may still keep to his daily work, but he must be consecrated to God in it; he must sanctify the tools of his labor to God, and there is no reason why they should not be quite as holy as the bronze altar or the golden candlestick.

You will observe that the person who thus volunteered for sacred service gave himself *unreservedly*. He did not say, “Here am I, use me where I am,” but “send me.” Where? No condition as to place is so much as hinted at. Anywhere, anywhere, anywhere—send me. Some people are militia-Christians—they serve the King with a limitation, and must not be sent out of England; but others are soldier-Christians who give themselves wholly up to their Lord and Captain; they will go wherever He chooses to send them. Oh come, my Master, and be absolute Lord of my soul! Reign over me and subdue my every passion to do and be, and feel all that Your will ordains. Blessed prayer! May we never be content till we get all that is to be gotten by way of joyful experience and holy power, nor until we yield all that is to be yielded by mortal man to the God whose sovereign right to us do we claim.

Notice one more thought, that while the prophet gives himself unreservedly, he gives *obediently*, for he pauses to ask directions. It is not, “Here am I; away I will go,” but “Here am I; *send* me.” I like the spirit of that prayer. Some people get into their head a notion that they must do something uncommon and extraordinary, and though it may be most unreasonable and most irrational, it is for that very reason that the scheme commends itself to their lack of judgment. Because it is absurd, they think it to be divine; if earthly wisdom does not justify it, then certainly heavenly wisdom must be called in to endorse it. Now, I conceive that you will find that whenever a thing is wise in God’s sight it is really wise, and that a thing which is absurd is not more likely to be adopted by God than by man; for though the Lord does use plans which are called foolish, they are only foolish to fools, but not actually foolish; there is a real wisdom in their very foolishness—there is a wisdom of God in the things which are foolish to man. When a project is evidently absurd and ridiculous, it may be my own but it cannot be the Lord’s, and I had better wait until I can yield up my whims, and subject myself to divine control, saying, “Here am I; send me.” Only be willing to be sent, and when the sending comes, go about in the strength of the Most High.

III. In the last place, and very briefly, THE WORK WHICH SUCH PERSONS WILL BE CALLED TO UNDERTAKE. Isaiah’s history is a picture of what many and many a true Christian laborer may expect. Isaiah was sent to preach very unpleasant truth, but like a true hero he was very bold in preaching it. “Isaiah is very bold,” says the apostle. Now if you are called of God either to preach or teach, or whatever it is, remember the things you have to preach or teach will not be agreeable to your hearers. Scorn on the man who ever desires to make the truth of God palatable to unhallowed minds. If he modulates his utterances or suppresses the truth which God has given him even in the slightest possible degree to suit the tastes of men, he is a traitor and a coward—let him be drummed out of God’s regiment, and driven from the army of God altogether. God’s servants are to receive God’s message, and whether men will hear or whether they will not, they are to deliver it to them in the spirit of old Micaiah, who vowed, “As the Lord my God lives, whatever the Lord said to me, that will I speak.” But this is not the hardest task; the most severe labor is this—we may have to deliver unpleasant truth to people who are resolved not to receive it, to people who will derive no profit from it, but rather will turn it to their own destruction. You see in the text that ancient Israel was to hear but not to receive; they were to be

preached to, and the only result was to be that their heart was to be made fat and their ears dull of hearing. What? Is that ever to be the effect of the gospel? The Bible tells us so. Our preaching is a savor of death unto death, as well as of life unto life. "Oh," says one, "I should not like to preach if that is the case." But remember, brother, that the preaching of the cross is a sweet savor of Christ either way. The highest object of all to a Christian laborer is not to win souls! That is a great objective, but *the* great objective is to glorify God; and many a man has been successful in this who did not succeed in the other. If Israel is not gathered, still, if we bear our testimony for God, our work is done. No farmer thinks of paying his men in proportion to the harvest. He pays his workers for work done, and so will it be with us, by God's grace, and if I happen to be a very successful laborer here, I boast not, nor claim any large reward on that account. I believe that had I preached the gospel with earnestness and waited upon God, and if He had denied me conversions, my reward would be as great at the last, in some respects, because the Master would not lay to my door a failure which could not be attributed to myself.

Now, Christian brothers and sisters, it would be a very pleasant thing for me to ask you whether you would go for God in your daily vocation and tell of Jesus to sinners who are willing to hear of Him—you would all be glad to do that. If I were to ask which sister here would take a class of young women, all anxious to find Christ, why you would all hold up your hands! If I could say, "Who will take a class of boys who long to find the Savior?" You might all be glad for such an avocation; but I have to put it another way lest you should afterwards be dispirited. Who among you will try and teach the truth of God to a drunken husband? Who among you will carry the gospel to despisers and profligates, and into places where the gospel will make you the object of rage and derision? Who among you will take a class of ragged roughs? Who among you will try and teach those who will throw your teaching back upon you with ridicule and scorn? You are not fit to serve God unless you are willing to serve Him anywhere and everywhere. You must with the servant be willing to take the bitter with the sweet; you must be willing to serve God in the winter as in the summer. If you are willing to be God's servant at all, you are not to pick and choose your duty and say, "Here am I, send me where there is pleasant duty." Anybody will go then; but if you are willing to serve God at all, you will say today, "Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads, I will, by the Holy Spirit's aid, be true to my following."

Now, though I have said nothing particularly with regard to foreign missions, I have preached this sermon with the view that God will stir you all up to serve His cause, and particularly with the hope that the missionary feeling being begotten may show itself in a desire also to carry the gospel into foreign parts. Pastor Harms has lately been taken to his rest, but those of you who know the story of his life must have been struck with it—how an obscure country village, on a wild heath in Germany, was made to be a fountain of living waters to South Africa. The poor people had little care for the name of Jesus till Harms went there, and, notwithstanding that I have no sympathy with his Lutheran High-churchism and exclusiveness, I may say he went there to preach Christ with such fire that the whole parish became a missionary society, sending out its own men and women to preach Christ crucified. That ship, the "Candace," purchased by the villagers of Hermansburgh with their own money, went to and from South Africa, taking the laborers to make settlements, and to undertake Christian enterprise in that dark continent. The whole village was saturated with a desire to serve God and preach the gospel to the heathen, and Harms at the head of it acted with a simple faith worthy of apostolic times. I would that my God would give me what I should consider the greatest honor of my life—the privilege of seeing some of the brothers and sisters of this church devoted to the Lord and going forth into foreign parts. One gave his farm for students to be educated; another gave all he had, until throughout Hermansburgh it became very much like apostolic days when they had all things in common, the grand objective being that of sending the gospel to the heathen. The day may come when we who have been able to do something for

this heathen country of England, may do something for other heathen countries in sending out our sons and daughters.

Meanwhile, till that has been done, let us aid the Baptist Missionary Society, which was distinguished in its first efforts by that faith and zeal which I have preached among you, and deserves well to be sustained until such time—and mark you, I am not changing in my own visions of the future—until such time as we can see something better, and that time I hope is not long distant. Last year I asked you to give, and there was 192 pounds for the Home and Foreign Mission, which quite satisfied my ideas of your generosity, and I hope something like that same will be done today. We need much help. Remember it is for Home Missions as well as Foreign Missions, so that it deserves to have a double portion.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 6.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST!

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