

SILKEN CORDS**NO. 3005**

A SERMON

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“I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.”
Hosea 11:4.

No man ever comes to God unless he is drawn. There is no better proof that man is totally depraved than that he needs to be effectually called. Man is so utterly “dead in trespasses and sins” that the same Divine Power which provided a Savior must make him willing to accept a Savior, or else he will never be saved. You see a ship upon the stocks. She is finished and complete. She cannot, however, move herself into the water. You see a tree. It is growing—it brings forth branches, leaves and fruit, but it cannot fashion itself into a ship. Now, if the finished ship can do nothing, much less the untouched log! And if the tree, which has life, can do nothing, much less that piece of timber out of which the sap has long since gone! Christ’s declaration, “Without Me you can do nothing,” is true of Believers, but it is just as true, and with a more profound emphasis, of those who have not believed in Jesus. They must be drawn, or else to God they never will come.

But many make a mistake about Divine drawings. They seem to fancy that God takes men by the hair of their heads and drags them to Heaven, whether they will or not and that when the time comes, they will, by some irresistible power, without any exercise of thought or reasoning, be compelled to be saved. Such people understand neither man nor God, for man is not to be compelled in this way. He is not a being so controlled—

“Convince a man against his will.
He’s of the same opinion still”

As the old proverb says, “One man may bring a horse to water, but 20 men cannot make him drink.” So, a man may be brought to know what repentance is and to understand what Christ is, but no man can make another man lay hold upon Christ. No, God Himself does not do it by compulsion. He has respect unto man as a reasoning creature. God never acts with men as though they were blocks of wood, or senseless stones. Having made them men, He does not violate their manhood. Having determined by man to glorify Himself, He uses means to show forth His Glory—not such as are fit for beasts, or for inanimate nature, but such as are adapted to the constitution of man. My text says as much as this, “I drew them with cords”—not the cords that are fit for bulls, but, “with cords of a man”—not the cart ropes with which men would draw a cart, but the cords with which a man would draw a man and, as if to explain Himself, the Lord puts it, “I drew them with bands of love.” Love is that mighty Power which acts upon man! There must be loving appeals to the different parts of his nature, and so he shall be constrained by Sovereign Grace.

Understand, then, it is true that no man comes to God except he is drawn—but it is equally true that God draws no man contrary to the constitution of man. His methods of drawing are in strict accordance with ordinary mental operations. He finds the human mind what it is and He acts upon it, not as upon matter, but as upon mind. The compulsions, the constraints, the cords that He uses, are “cords of a man.” The bands He employs are “bands of love.”

This is clear enough. Now I am about to try—and may the Lord enable me—to show you some of these cords, these bands, which the Lord fastens around the hearts of sinners. I may be the means in His hands of putting these cords around you, but I cannot pull them after they are on. It is one thing to put the rope on, but another thing to draw with all one’s might at that rope. So it may be that I shall introduce the arguments and, by the prayers of the faithful now present, God will be pleased, in His Infinite Mercy, to pull these cords and that your soul will be sweetly drawn, with full consent, with the blessed yielding of your will to come and lay hold upon eternal life!

I. First, *some are drawn to Christ by seeing the happiness of true Believers.*

A true Believer is the happiest being out of Heaven. In some respects, he is superior to an angel, for he has a brighter hope and a grander destiny than even cherubim and seraphim can know. He is one with Christ, which an angel never was. He is a son of God and has the Spirit of Adoption within him, which a cherub never had. There are some Christians who show this happiness in their lives. Watch them and you will always find them cheerful. If, for a moment, a cloud should pass over their brow, it is but for a moment—and soon they rejoice again. I know such people, and glad am I to think that I ever came across their path. Wherever they go, they make sunshine. Into whatever company they come, it is as if an angel shook his wings. Let them talk when they may, it is always for the comfort of others—with kindness upon their lips and the law of love within their hearts! Many a young person, watching such Christians as these, is led to say, “I wish I were as happy, I wish I were as joyful as they are. They always have a smile upon their face.” And I do not doubt that many have been brought to lay hold on Jesus through being drawn by that band of love!

And let me say to you, dear Friend, that this is a most fitting cord with which to draw you, for if you would know the sweets of life, if you would have peace like a river, if you would have a peace that shall be with you in the morning and go with you into your business—that shall be with you at night and close your eyes in tranquil slumber—a peace that shall enable you to live and shall strengthen you in the prospect of death—no, that shall make you sing in the midst of the black and chill stream—be a Christian! My testimony is that if I had to die like a dog. If this life were all and there were no hereafter, I would prefer to be a Christian for the joy and peace which, in this present life, godliness will afford. “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” It has the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. You would be happy, young man? Then do not kill your happiness. You would have a bright eye? Then do not put it out. You would rejoice with unspeakable joy? Then do not go into those places where sorrow is sure to follow your every act. Would you be happy? Come to Jesus! Let this band of love sweetly draw you.

Another band of love—it was the one which brought me to the Savior—*is the sense of the security of God’s people, as a desire to be as secure as they are.* I do not know what may be the peculiarity of my constitution, but I have always loved safe things. I have not, that I know of, one grain of speculation in my nature. Safe things—things that I can see to be made of rock and that will bear the test of time—I lay hold on with eagerness. I was reasoning thus in my boyish spirit—Scripture tells me that he that believes in Christ shall never perish. Then, if I believe in Jesus, I shall be safe for time and for eternity, too! There will be no fear of my ever being in Hell. I shall run no risk as to my eternal state—that will be secure forever. I shall have the certainty that when my eyes are closed in death, I shall see the face of Christ and behold Him in Glory. Whenever I heard the Doctrine of the Final Preservation of the Saints preached, my mouth used to water and I used to long to be a child of God! When I heard the old saints sing that hymn—

*“My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase!
Impressed on His heart it remains
In marks of indelible Grace.
Yes, I to the end shall endure
As sure as the earnest is given!
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in Heaven”*—

my heart was as if it would leap out of this body, and I would cry to God, “Oh, that I had a part and lot in such a salvation as that!” Now, young man, what do you think of this band of love? Do you not think there is something reasonable and something powerful in it—to secure yourself against all risk of eternal ruin and that, by the Grace of God, in a moment? “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” What do you say to this? Does not this Truth of God attract you? Does not this band draw you? Lord, draw the sinner by the sweet allurements of security, and let him say, “I will lay hold on Christ tonight.”

Certain Christians will tell you that *they were first drawn to Christ by the holiness of godly relatives*—not so much by their happiness as by their holiness. There is an Eastern fable that a man, wishing to attract all the doves from the neighboring dovecotes into his own, took a dove and smeared her wings with sweet perfume. Away she flew and all her

fellow doves observed her and, attracted by the sweet incense, flew after her and the dovecote was soon full. There are some Christians of that sort. They have had their wings smeared with the precious ointment of likeness to Jesus—and wherever they go, such is their kindness and their consistency, their gentleness and yet their honesty, their lovely spirit and yet their boldness for Jesus—that others take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus! And they say, “Where does He dwell, for I would gladly see Him and love Him, too? I am afraid I cannot attract you, Sinner, in such a charming way as that, but I would have you read the lives of godly men. Study the actions, perhaps, of your own mother. Is she dead? Then remember what she used to be. What her life of devotedness to God was. And I charge you, by the love of God, by her many prayers and tears, by the pity of her soul and the yearning of her heart towards you, let your mother’s example be one of the bands of love to draw you towards God! Lord, pull at that cord! Lord, pull at that cord! If the cord is around you and the Lord will pull at it, I shall have good hope that you will close with Christ tonight!

You see, I only show you the cord and then leave it, hoping that perhaps one or another may be taken by its power. Now for another. I believe *that not a few are brought to Christ by gratitude for mercies received*. The sailor has escaped from shipwreck, or, perhaps, even in the River Thames he has had many a narrow escape for his life. The sportsman has had his gun burst in his hand and yet he has been unharmed. The traveler has escaped from a terrific railway crash—himself picked out of the debris of the broken carriages unhurt. The parent has seen his children, one after another, laid upon a bed of sickness with fever, but yet they have all been spared. Or he, himself, has had loss upon loss in business, till at last it seemed as if a crash must come—but just then God interposed in a gracious Providence and a strong tide of prosperity set in! Some have thought over these things and said, “Is God so good to us, and shall we not love Him? Shall we live every day despising Him who thus tenderly watches over us and graciously provides for our needs?” O Sirs, I think this band of love ought to fall about some of you! How good God has been to you, dear Hearer! I will not tell your case out in public, but when you have sometimes talked with a friend, you have said, “How graciously has Providence dealt with me!” Give the Lord your heart, young man! Surely you can do no less for such favor as He has shown you! Mother, give Jesus your heart! He well deserves it, for He has spared it from being broken. Woman, consecrate—may the Lord help you to do it!—consecrate your heart’s warmest affections to Him who has thus generously dealt with you in Providence. He deserves it, does He not? Will you be guilty of ingratitude? Is there not something within you that says, “Stay no longer an enemy to so kind a Friend, but be reconciled to Him. Be reconciled to God by the death of His Son.” May that cord lay hold of some of you—and may God draw it and so attract you to Himself!

Persons whose characteristic is thinking rather than loving are often caught by another cord. I do not know what may be your mode of thinking of things, but it strikes me that if I had not laid hold of Christ, if anybody should meet me and say, “*The religion of Christ is the most reasonable religion in the world*,” I should lend him my ear for a little time and ask him to prove it to me. I have frequently caught the ears of travelers and held them fast bound when I have tried to show the entire reasonableness of the plan of salvation. God is just, that is taken for granted. If God is just, sin must be punished—that is clear. Then, how can God be just and yet not punish the sinner? That is the question and the Gospel answers that question! It declares that Christ, the Son of God, became a Man. That He stood in the place of such men as were chosen of God to be saved. These men may be known by their believing in Christ. Christ stood, then, in the place and of those whom I will now call Believers. He suffered at God’s hand everything that was due to God from them. No, He did more. Inasmuch as they were bound to keep God’s Law, but could not do it, Christ kept it for them and now, what Christ did becomes theirs by an act of faith. They trust Christ to save them. Christ’s sufferings are put in the place of their being sent to Hell and they are justly delivered from their sins. Christ’s righteousness is put in the place of their keeping the Law of God, and they are justly rewarded with a place in Paradise, as if they had themselves been perfectly holy!

Now, it strikes me that this looks reasonable enough. In everyday life we see the same thing done. A man is drawn for the militia—he pays for a substitute and he goes free. A man owes a debt. Some friend comes in and discharges the bill for him—and he is clear. The ends of justice are answered through *substitution*. There seems to me to be something so unique about the whole affair of God taking the place of man, and God’s suffering in man’s form for man, that Justice may by no means be marred, that my reason falls down at the feet of this great mystery, and cries, “I would have an interest in it! Lord, let me be one of those for whom Jesus died! Let me have the peace which springs from a complete Atonement worked out by Jesus Christ!” My Brothers and Sisters, I wish I could draw you with this cord, but I cannot. I

can only show you this cord and tell you how well it would draw you. If you reject it, your blood shall be upon your own head. I know too well you *will* reject it unless the mighty hand of God shall begin to tug at that band of love and draw you to Jesus!

Far larger numbers, however, are doubtless *attracted to Jesus by a sense of His exceeding great love*. It is not so much the reasonableness of the Atonement, as the love of God which shines in it which seems to attract many souls. There once lived, in the city of London, a rich merchant, a man of generous spirit, a Lollard, one of those who were subjected to fines, imprisonment and even death for the Truth's sake. Near him there lived a miserable cobbler—a poor, mean, despicable creature. The merchant, for some reason unknown, had taken a very great liking to the poor cobbler and was in the habit of giving him all his work to do and recommending him to many friends. And as this man would not always work as he should, when the merchant saw his family in any need, he would send them meat from his own table and frequently he clothed his children. Well, notwithstanding that he had acted thus—had often advanced him sums of money and had acted with great kindness—a reward was offered to anyone who would betray a Lollard, or would point out such person or persons as read the Bible, to the magistrates. The cobbler, to obtain this reward, went to the magistrates and betrayed the merchant. As God would have it, however, through some skillful advocate, the merchant escaped. He forgave—freely forgave the cobbler and never said a word to him about it. But in the streets the cobbler would always turn his head the other way and try to get out of the way of the man whom he felt he had so grievously ill-treated. Still, the merchant never altered his treatment of him, but sent him meat as usual and attended to his wife and children if they were sick, the same as before, but he never could get the cobbler to give him a good word. If he did speak, it was to abuse him.

One day, in a very narrow lane in the city—for the streets were narrow and still narrower were the lanes—the merchant saw the cobbler coming. And he thought, “Now is my time. He cannot pass me, now, without facing me.” Of course, the cobbler grew very red in the face and made up his mind that if the merchant should begin to upbraid him, he would answer him in as saucy a manner as possible. But when the merchant came close to him, he said, “I am very sorry that you shun me. I have no ill-will towards you. I would do anything for you or for your family, and nothing would give me greater pleasure than to be friends with you.” The cobbler stopped and presently a moisture suffused his eyes and, soon a flood of tears poured down his cheeks, and he said, “I have been such a base wretch to you that I hated you, for I thought that you would never forgive me. I have always shunned you, but when you talk to me like this, I cannot be your enemy any longer. Pray, Sir, assure me of your forgiveness.” Forthwith, he began to fall upon his knees.

That was the way to draw him with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love! And, in a nobler sense, this is just what Jesus Christ has done for sinners. He has offered you mercy. He has proclaimed to you eternal life and you reject it. Every day He gives you of His bounties, makes you to feed at the table of His Providence and clothes you with the livery of His generosity. And yet, after all this, some of you curse Him! You break His Sabbaths. You despise His name. You are His enemies. Yet, what does He say to you? He loves you still—He follows you, not to rebuke you, but to woo you and to entreat you to come to Him and have Him for your Friend. Can you hold out against my Master's wounds? Can you stand out against His bloody sweat? Can you resist His passion? Oh, by the name of Him who bowed His head upon the tree, who cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” can you hold out against Him? If He had not died for me, I think I must love Him for dying for other people. But He has died for you—you may know this if so you trust Him, now, with your soul, just as you are. This is the evidence that He died for you! Oh, may God enable you to trust Jesus now, drawing you with this band of love, this cord of a man!

II. There are many more cords, but my strength fails me and, therefore, I will mention but one more. *The privileges which a Christian enjoys ought to draw some of you to Christ*. Do you know what will take place in these aisles tonight if the Holy Spirit should lead a sinner to Christ? I will tell you. There he stands, he is as vile a sinner as walks this earth. He knows it. He is wretched. He has a burden on his back. If that man is led to look to Christ tonight, his sins will roll off from him at once! They will roll into the sepulcher of Jesus and be buried and never have a resurrection. In a moment, he will be clothed from head to foot with white raiment! The kiss of a Father's love shall be upon his cheek and the seal of the Spirit's witness shall be fixed upon his brow. He shall be made, tonight, a child of God, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. His feet shall be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace. He shall be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus. He shall go to his house, not wretched, but as though he could dance for joy the whole way home! And when he gets home, it

may be never so poor a cottage, but it will look brighter than it ever did before. His children he will look upon as jewels entrusted to his care, instead of being burdens, as he once said they were. His very trials he will come to thank God for, while his ordinary mercies will be sweetened and made very dear to him. The man, instead of leading a life like a Hell upon earth, will live a life like Heaven begun below—and all this shall take place in an instant!

No, that is not all! The effect of this night's work shall tell throughout his entire life. He shall be a new creature in Christ Jesus so that, when the time shall come that his hair is gray and he lies stretched upon his bed and breathes out his life, he shall, in his last moments, look back upon a path that has been lit with the Grace of God—and look forward across the black river to an eternity in which the Glory of God shall shine forth with as great a fullness as a creature can endure! This is enough, surely, to tempt a sinner to come to Jesus! This must be a strong cord to draw him! O Man, Jesus will accept you! He will accept you now, just as you are! He has received millions like you already! Let Heaven's music witness to the fact. Millions more like you He is still willing to receive—some of us can bear our testimony to them. Come and welcome, then, come and welcome! Never mind your rags, prodigal, a Father's hand will take them off! Never mind your filth! Never mind having fed the swine. Come as you are! Just come now!

I hear somebody saying, "Well, I am inclined to come, but I do not know what it means to come to Christ." To come to Christ is to trust Him. You have been trying to save yourself—do not try any more. You have been going to church, or going to chapel, and you have been trying to keep the Commandments, but you cannot keep them. No man ever did keep them and no man ever will keep them! You have been, in fact, like a prisoner who has been sentenced to hard labor—you have been walking upon the treadmill in order to get to the stars and you are not an inch higher! After all you have done, you are just where you were. Now, leave this off—have done with it. Christ kept the Law! Let His keeping it stand in the place of your keeping it. Christ suffered the anger of God—let His sufferings stand to you in the place of your sufferings. Take Him now, just as you are, and believe that He can save you—no, that He WILL save you and trust Him to do it! This is all the Gospel I have to preach. Very seldom do I finish a sermon without going over this simple matter of trusting Christ. There are some, perhaps, who enquire for something new. I cannot give it to you—I have not got anything new, but only the same old story over and over again! Trust Christ, and you are saved!

We have heard, in our church meetings, that on several occasions when, at the close of the sermon, I have merely said as much as that, it has been enough to lead sinners into life and peace and, therefore, I will keep on at it. My heart yearns to bring some of you to Christ tonight, but I know not what arguments to use with you. You surely do not wish to be damned. Surely you cannot make the calculation that the short pleasures of this world are worth an eternity of torment! But damned you must be unless you lay hold on Christ. Does not this cord draw you? Surely you want to be in Heaven. You have some desire toward that better land in the realms of the hereafter, but you cannot be there except you lay hold on Christ! Will not this cord of love draw you? Surely it would be a good thing to get rid of fear, suspense, doubt and anxiety. It would be a good thing to be able to lay your head on your pillow and say, "I do not care whether I wake or not." To go to sea and reckon it a matter of perfect indifference whenever you reach land or not. No, sometimes the wish with us to depart preponderates over that of remaining here! Do you not wish for that? But you can never have it except by laying hold on Christ. Will not this draw you?

My dear Hearers, you whose face I look upon every Sabbath, and into whose ears this poor, dry voice has spoken so many hundreds of times, we do not wish to be parted. I know that to some of you, this is the very happiest, as well as the holiest spot you ever occupied. You love to be here. I am glad you do and I am glad to see you. I do not like to be separated from you. When any of you move to other towns, it gives me pain to miss your faces. I hope we shall not be separated in the world to come. My beloved Friends around me, who have been in Christ these many years, you also love them. We do not wish to be divided. I would like that all this ship's company should meet on the other side of the sea. I do not know one among you that I could spare. I would not like to miss any of you who sit yonder, nor any of you who sit near—neither the youngest nor the oldest of you. Well, but we cannot meet in Heaven unless we meet in Jesus Christ! We cannot meet father, mother, pastor and friends unless we have a good hope through Jesus Christ our Lord! Will not that band of love draw you? Mother, from the railings of Heaven, a little angel-child is looking down tonight, beckoning with his finger. He is looking out for you and he is saying, "Mother, follow your baby to Heaven." Father, your daughter charged you, as she died, to give your heart to Christ—and from her seat in Heaven her charge comes down to you with as great force as it came from her sick-bed, I trust, "Follow me, follow me to Heaven!" Friends who have gone

before—godly ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus—in one chorus, say to you, “Come up here! Come up here for we, without you, cannot be made perfect.” Will not this band of love draw you? Oh, will not this cord of a man lay hold upon you and bring you to the Savior’s feet? The Lord grant that it may, but, as I have said, I can only show you the cords. It is God’s work to pull them—and they will be pulled if the saints will join in earnest prayer, invoking a blessing upon sinners. The Lord grant it, for His love’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HOSEA 11; 14.**

Hosea 11:1. *When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt.* God’s love was very early love. He began with the nation of Israel when it was a mere handful of men in Egypt. There He multiplied them and, in due time, He called them out from among the heathen. God’s love to some of us manifested itself at a very early period of our lives when we were yet children. It is among our most joyous memories that we have known the Lord from our youth up. Happy man, happy woman, of whom God can say, as He said concerning His ancient people, “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt.”

2. *As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.* The nation of Israel did not fulfill the promise of its youth. It was not faithful to God. The people heard from the lips of Moses the command, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord,” yet they continually turned aside to the idols of the nations. Have not some of us, also, although we have been loved by God, been faithless to Him? Can we not look back, with great regret and sorrow, upon our many stumbling and backslidings? If it is so, let us repent of our sin and never repeat it.

3. *I taught Ephraim also to go.* Just as nurses teach children to walk—“I taught Ephraim also to go.”

3. *Taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them.* God has done great things for many of us who, possibly, have never noticed His hand at work on our behalf. Lives which were in great peril have been saved, yet the goodness of God has never been acknowledged by those whom He has delivered. Men have been raised up from beds of sickness, yet the great and good Healer has never been thanked for what He has done for them. Oh, how sad it is that God should do so much for us, and yet that we should not even thank Him for doing it!

4. *I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.* As men do with the bulls that have been plowing, lifting the yoke from them, and giving them rest and food before they have to begin plowing again. So did God to Israel, and so has He done to us. He lifted from us the heavy burden of our sin and He gave us rest and heavenly food. But oh, what a poor return we have made for all the thoughtful kindness of our God! If any man here imagines that he can boast of his conduct towards his God, he does not feel as I do. Rather dear Friends, I think that we all ought to humble ourselves in the Lord’s Presence when we remember what ill returns we have made for all that He has done for us.

5, 6. *He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return. All the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels.* If men will sin, they shall suffer. And God’s people will be the first to suffer for their sins against the Lord, as He said by the mouth of the Prophet Amos, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” If a man lets other men’s children go unchastened, he will chastise his own children, if he is worthy of the name of a father. And God will do the same. He will not destroy us, but He will chasten us if we backslide from Him.

7, 8. *And My people are bent to backsliding from Me: though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt Him. How shall I give you up, Ephraim, how shall I deliver you, Israel?* There seems to be a contest in the heart of God. At least that is how He describes it Himself, as though Mercy pleaded with Justice, and Love contended with Wrath—“How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel?”

8. *How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim?* “I cannot destroy you, as I destroyed the guilty cities of the plain in the days of old.”

8. *My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together.* O Backsliders, if God's repentings are kindled, will not yours also be kindled? If you have left Him and yet He will not give you up, will you give Him up? Will you not return to Him? Listen to His own words.

9. *I will not execute the fierceness of My anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.* What a mercy this is for us! If the Lord had been man, He would have cast us off long ago. But, as He is God, He is infinitely patient and He loves to forgive. "I am God, and not man."

9, 10. *The Holy One in the midst of you: and I will not enter into the city. They shall walk after the LORD.* See what His almighty Grace will do to make these wanderers come back to Him.

10. *He shall roar like a lion: when He shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.* Even His roaring like a lion will only make them tremblingly come back to Him.

11, 12. *They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, says the LORD. Ephraim compasses Me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet rules with God, and is faithful with the saints.*

Hosea 14:1. *O Israel, return unto the LORD your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity.* Let anyone here who has turned aside from the Lord, hear these tender pleading words and then yield to Him who utters them! God speaks, not to condemn, but to comfort. He would gladly allure you back to Him with His gracious words of love! "O Israel, return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity."

2. *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord.* But the poor penitent cries, "Alas, Lord, I do not know what to say. So God puts in the sinner's mouth the very words he is to utter.

2. *Say unto Him. Take away all iniquity.* That is where the mischief lies, in your inequity, your turning aside from the path of truth and equity. Say to the Lord, "I do not want to keep any of my iniquity. I desire to be delivered from it altogether." "Take away all iniquity."

2. *And receive us graciously.* "Lord, take us back again! According to the greatness of Your Grace, restore us to Your heart of love and let us dwell where Your children dwell. 'Receive us graciously.'"

2. *So will we render the calves of our lips.* That is to say, "We will give You the sacrifice of our praises. We will speak well of Your name. If we have the calves of the stall, we will give them to You, but, in any case, we will give you the calves of our lips."

3. *Asshur shall not save us.* They had been accustomed to rely either upon Assyria or upon Egypt. And one of the first signs of their real repentance was that they had given up their false dependences. So, Sinner, you must give up your self-righteousness, your ceremonialism—anything and everything in which you have trusted in place of trusting in the Lord! "Asshur shall not save us."

3. *We will not ride upon horses.* In the day of battle, they had trusted in their cavalry. But now, in the time of their repentance, they cry, "We will not ride upon horses."

3. *Neither will we say anymore to the work of our hands, you are our gods: for in You the fatherless finds mercy.* What a beautiful ending there is to this verse! If any of you are full of sin and full of needs, and have become like orphans who have lost everything and are utterly destitute—if you have none to provide for you, and none to care for you—come to the God of the fatherless and put your trust in Him! "For in You the fatherless finds mercy." Then follows this gracious promise.

4. *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.* Listen to the heavenly music! "I will." "I will." When God says, "I will," you may depend upon it that He will do what He says He will. If you or I say, "I will," it must be with the proviso, "If it is God's will, I will do so-and-so." But God is the almighty King whose least word is a sovereign mandate—"I will heal their backsliding: I will love them freely."

4. *For My anger is turned away from him.* If you have come back to the Lord with true penance of heart, He is no longer angry with you, but He is ready to welcome you again.

5. *I will be as the dew unto Israel.* "Not as fire, not as tempest, but in gentle, yet effectual Grace, I will visit them. I will be as the dew unto Israel."

5. *He shall grow as the lily.* "He shall be as beautiful and fair as the lily, though just now he was black as night."

5. *And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* “He shall be as stable as he is beautiful. Like old Lebanon, the mighty mountain which none can shake, so shall this poor sinner be when I have visited him with My love.”

6. *His branches shall spread.* “I will endow him with usefulness and influence.

6. *And his beauty shall be as the olive tree.* “I will load him with fruit. He shall have the beauty that belongs to that fat and oily tree, the olive.”

6. *And his smell as Lebanon.* God can make the foul, polluted sinner to become fragrant to Him. “His smell shall be as Lebanon”

7. *They that dwell under his shadow shall return.* His family, his workers, his neighbors who wandered from the Lord because he wandered, shall get good from his holy influence. His restoration shall be a benediction to them! “They that dwell under his shadow shall return.”

7. *They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.* All good things come to a man when God comes to him and he comes to God. Get right with God and you shall get right with all things around you—and you shall be the means of helping to put other people right.

8. *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?* “He will spontaneously purge himself from the evil things which he once loved. I shall not need to send the hammer to break his idols, but he shall say, out of the fullness of his own heart, ‘What have I to do any more with idols?’”

8, 9. *I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From Me is your fruit found. Who is wise, and he should understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the LORD are right and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressor shall fall therein.* Yes, they shall fall even when they are in the right ways—and I know of no falling that is worse than for men to be in the ways of religion and yet to stumble and fall even there! For, if they fall there, where will they *not* fall?

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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