

THE HEART FULL AND THE MOUTH CLOSED

NO. 1289

A SERMON
 DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall know that I am the LORD:
 That you may remember, and be confounded, and never open your mouth
 any more because of your shame, when I am pacified toward you for
 all that you have done, says the Lord GOD.”*
Ezekiel 16:62-63.

A VERY extraordinary chapter this sixteenth of Ezekiel! A minister could scarcely read it in public, he certainly would not like to explain its metaphors to a general audience, nor are we called upon to do so. To read it in private is another thing, and to have it read for you by the Holy Spirit, and to be made to see and to feel its meaning, not merely as describing the Israelites, but as very much setting forth yourself, is a very different matter. Believe me, it is a lesson which, if it be well learned, will never be forgotten. It is a part of the Holy Spirit's business to convince us of sin, and when He takes a chapter like this, and puts us through our paces verse by verse, and makes us eat the bitter herbs which each verse contains, and feel as if we were drinking the water into which the dust of our idols had been cast, when they had been broken and ground down, like the golden calf of the Israelites, when He makes us feel the grit between our teeth in every drop we drink, I say it is a lesson well worth receiving, and one that is likely to stick by us all our days.

There are two very wonderful things in this chapter. Which is the more wonderful it were hard to tell. The first is the extraordinary *sin of Israel*. God speaks of it in the strongest imaginable language, He represents Judah's sin as being greater than the sins of Sodom and Samaria, though both Sodom and Samaria had been destroyed for their abominations. He compares Judah's backslidings to the lewdness of a woman who forgets her marriage compact, and sins egregiously with many paramours, adding filthiness to filthiness, and so He makes sin to appeal exceedingly sinful, as a violation of the heart's love to God and the soul's chastity towards the Most High. A very wonderful thing is sin, as set forth in this chapter!

The other marvelous thing is *God's grace*, how, when He began with Israel, He found her like an infant cast out in her blood, unswaddled and unwashed, and He took her up in all her filthiness and said to her, “Live,” and washed and cleansed her, and clothed her, and hung her ears with jewels, and then when she grew to riper years she turned aside from Him—turned His mercies into occasions of provocation, and made His blessings to be instruments of sin. He describes Himself as pardoning her again and again, and yet she continued to invent new sins, looking down all the while upon her sisters Sodom and Samaria, and reckoning herself very superior to them, and yet behaving worse than they and going deeper and deeper into rebellion against the Lord.

Yet His mercy follows her, His love still pursues her, and He makes the chapter to culminate in mercy with such words as these—“Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish unto you an everlasting covenant. And I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall know that I am the Lord: that you may remember, and be confounded, and never open your mouth any more because of your shame, when I am pacified toward you for all that you have done, says the Lord GOD.”

Two words, if you can learn them, will teach you the deepest practical wisdom—*sin* and *grace*. No one ever measured either of them—except One, and He, when He measured them, was in a bloody sweat, and poured out His soul unto death. George Herbert quaintly sings—

*“Philosophers have measured mountains,
Fathomed the depths of seas, of states, and kings.
Walk’d with a staff to heaven, and traced fountains,
But there are two vast, spacious things,
The which to measure it does more behoove:
Yet few there are that sound them; Sin and Love.”*

Only our suffering lover, the Lord Jesus Christ, knows the two to their perfection. May we be helped to enter a little further into the double secret while we commune together.

The first exercise to which I shall invite you is this, let us think of *the condition into which the grace of God has brought all believers*. God is pacified towards them. “When I am pacified toward you for all that you have done, says the Lord GOD.” Then, secondly, let us think of *the knowledge which has been imparted thus to all believers*—they know the covenant, they know the Lord and they know themselves, and they are made to remember and to be confounded. Finally, in the third and principal place, let us dwell upon *the silence which henceforth and forever is induced in all believers*. “You shall never open your mouth any more because of your shame, when I am pacified toward you for all that you have done.”

I. So, then, first of all, let us review THE BLESSED CONDITION INTO WHICH EVERY BELIEVER IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HAS BEEN BROUGHT BY THE SOVEREIGN ACT OF GOD’S MERCY.

He has been brought into such a condition that God can say to him, “I am pacified toward you for all that you have done.”

The Hebrew word which here sets forth forgiveness and pardon properly signifies to *cover* a thing with that which adheres and sticks to the thing covered, not with dry dust or leaves, which could be easily removed, but with glue or pitch, so that the thing hidden cannot easily be brought to sight again. The same word is used concerning Noah’s ark. “You shall pitch it, or cover it, within and without with pitch.” All the planks were to be covered with the pitch, not with a filmy paint that might barely color them, but with a thick pitch which would cover them, a sticky substance which would adhere to the substance of the wood, and penetrate it and cover it altogether.

When God forgives our sin He covers us as completely as the wood of the ark was covered within and without with pitch, our sin is covered and hidden right away from His observation. Child of God, I beg you to think of this for a moment, God is pacified towards you because your sin is covered—all of it, yea, it is all gone. As far as God is concerned your sin has ceased to be. He laid it on Jesus Christ your substitute, and He took it and bore the penalty for it—nay the thing itself, He, as your scapegoat, carried your sin right away, and it is lost in the wilderness of forgetfulness. Into the depths of the sea has He cast your iniquities. In His own tomb has He buried your offenses. What says the Scripture? “He has finished transgression and made an end of sin.” Grand word! *Made an end* of it. And if there be an end of it, why there is an end of it, and it has gone.

This day, O believing child of God, there is fulfilled towards you that gracious word, “In those days, and in that time, says the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.” Through faith in Jesus your transgressions are all removed as far from you as the east is from the west. The depths have covered your sins, there is not one of them left. The Lord is pacified for *all* that we have done, so that no ground of quarrel remains.

O believer, God is pacified towards you, for your sin is covered, it is put away, all of it, and altogether. Since you have believed in Jesus Christ your sin has not become dimly visible, neither by searching may it be seen as a shadow in the distance, but God sees it no more forever. He has not merely taken away some of its results, some of the fiercer judgments that might have broken forth had not Christ intervened, but He has utterly removed all the penal consequences of it. The sin is covered in the most emphatic sense. God has turned away all the fierceness of His anger, and you may say, “O LORD,

I will praise you: for though you were angry with me, your anger is turned away, and you comfort me.” The many, the countless hosts of sin that you have committed since your childhood are all scattered as a cloud, and the one black sin, which cost you more regret than many scores of others, has been removed as a thick cloud. The one repeated sin which grew into a habit which seemed as though it mastered you completely, and brought you into utter bondage—it too has died into the tomb of the great substitute.

They are all gone—no enemy remains. In the sepulcher of Christ they are buried never to rise. Not one of these dead things shall live, for the efficacy of the death which slew them is eternal. They cannot rise against you from the grave, no, not one of them, while sun and moon endure, nay, while God endures, for He says it, “They shall not be mentioned against you anymore, forever.” “Who can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” It is divinely sweet to think of this! God is pacified towards His people for all that they have done, altogether pacified, for their sins have ceased to be.

And this is not occasionally true, but always true, not only so in happier moments, when we enjoy a sense of it, but *always*, whether we have a sense of it or not. The standing of a believer does not depend upon his recognition of his standing. There are times when, if he could have all the world for it, he could not read his title clear—nay, he could not spell the capital letters of that title. There are times when he sees his sin, but cannot see his pardon, yet he is pardoned for all that—pardoned while self-condemned.

The Israelites, when they were inside their houses, could not see the blood sprinkled on their doorposts. How could they? By what strange process would they be able to see the blood outside the door while they sat within at the table? No, and it was not *their* seeing the blood that saved them, for if you turn to the book of Exodus you find the Lord saying, “When *I* see the blood I will pass over you.” God always saw the blood, that was the main point in the matter, and therefore it was sprinkled where the destroying angel could see it as he flew upon his errand of wrath.

Glory be to God, when I cannot see the blood of Christ myself, my God can see it. If I have ever looked, by an act of faith to the Lord Jesus, I am saved; if I am resting in Him, I am forgiven; and when my eye of faith is dim, and my sense of rest in Christ is overloaded with a yet deeper sense of my own unworthiness, yet still my standing is not altered, my security is not affected, the pacifying of the Lord towards me is not changed one jot or tittle. At all times, in the dark as well as in the light, when I am downcastings as well as upliftings, the Lord is pacified towards His people.

I would to God that the Lord’s people grasped this more fully, and lived in the power of it more completely. May God grant we may! O my soul, sinful and unworthy though you be, there is a peace established between you and your God which never will be broken—a league which never will be violated. God has thoughts of peace towards you. Does not the word so mean? When I am *pacified*,” “when I am *peace-ified*,” “when I am made peace towards you.” God thinks of nothing but peace towards His children. “Peace, peace,” says He. He is the God of peace, the fruit of His Spirit is peace, the very name of His Son is peace.

The heaven to which He is bringing us is everlasting peace, and even now the peace of God which passes all understanding keeps our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. The believer goes forth with joy, and is led forth with peace. His heart, his mind, his conscience are filled with peace towards God. There is peace, there is nothing but peace, between my soul and God. Oh, what a joyous thought this is! Grasp it, Christian, and let your spirit exult in it.

And all this, remember, is written in our text concerning a people who had plunged into wondrous sins. I have already remarked that I could not explain all that God has said about Israel in this chapter, it would be improper. Nor do I think any man ought to try to tell another all the evil which he has seen in himself. Sometimes we tell to our fellow Christians about our own sense of unworthiness, but we are not always speaking to edification. It has happened to me sometimes that the brother to whom I have spoken of myself has not believed a word I have said. He has looked me in the face, and he has said, “You are not well, I fear. I am sorry to see you so low in spirits.” Indeed, I only spoke the truth, and did not tell him one-half of the unworthiness I felt, but he did not know the wormwood and the gall, nor ought I to have wished to make him drink of my cup. That same brother, perhaps, has come to me with his story of

his own failures and transgressions and sins, and then it has been my turn to wonder. I have looked at him and I have said—“Bless you! I wish I were half as good as you are, and half as faithful in my Master’s service.” Every man must bear his own burden, my friend does not know my humiliation before God, neither do I see any unworthiness in my friend compared with to what he sees and feels.

We need not tell our neighbors all that we feel about ourselves, anymore than this chapter can ever be explained to every carnal ear. But oh, brethren, no man living has ever exaggerated his own sin or thought too lowly of himself. There does not live beneath the copes of heaven any man whose sense of sin is as deep as the sin really is. I find, when I am talking with inquirers, and they are overburdened with a sense of sin, that the only thing to say to them is, “It is all true, every bit you are saying.” “Oh, but,” they say, “you do not know.” “No,” I say, “nor yet do you. You are ten times worse than you think you are.” “Oh sir, but I feel myself to be utterly lost.” “Yes, and so you are, you are only feeling the truth.” “But I feel as if I were driven to despair.” “And so you ought to be, for if you are looking to yourself, there is nothing but despair for you.”

Do not interrupt the young convert when he begins to say that he is distressed by a sense of sin, and if he describes sin in dreadful terms, let him go on to do so, for the more he abhors sin the better. The trembling penitent is near the truth, for his sin is indeed great and terrible. If you make him out to be a little sinner, you will next offer him a little Savior, a little Christ, and a little Gospel. No, let him go on with that sense of sin, I would even pray God to make him feel it more and more, meanwhile it is your privilege to present to him an infinite atonement and a God willing and able to forgive. Tell him that God sent not His Son into the world to save the righteous, or to call those to repentance who have no sin to be repented of—that the whole scheme of redemption is so magnificent because it deals with an infinite evil, and it is made to a grand scale, because the mischief it has to deal with is hideous beyond all conception. If a man feels sin to be unutterably horrible, so much the better. Do not try to get low thoughts of sin, but be humbled in the dust, for then Christ is glorified. The greatness of the sin reveals the greatness of the redeeming sacrifice, and the direful nature of the disease declares the infinity of that Physician’s skill who is able to put it all away.

Child of God, return with grateful restfulness to the memory of your complete deliverance from the wrath of God due to sin. God is pacified towards you concerning all your sin, thus described in all its heinousness, hideousness, and horror. Whatever conception of it you have now obtained, and it may be a very, very alarming one, yet in all its terribleness God is pacified towards you concerning your sin. Although your conception may fall far short of the truth, yet, as far as that whole truth about sin is concerned, God is pacified towards you in the person of His dear Son.

I wonder what God’s thought of sin is. He has thrown some little light upon it in this chapter, but when He hung up His dear *Son* upon the tree then He declared sin to be a monster indeed. When God Himself bore the pangs of death that He might save His creatures from sin, when all the waves and billows of sin’s stormy deep rolled over the incarnate God, and when He said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” what must His thoughts have been concerning sin! But God never thought worse of sin than it is. He only thought the truth, and it is as sin is in its truth, and as Jesus felt it in its truth when He bore it on the tree—it is as in that true idea of sin that He has put it all away, and He is pacified towards us today.

Come, dear children, come into your Father’s bosom, He is pacified towards you. Come back, you wanderers, come home, you troubled ones, the great and glorious God, who is exceedingly angry at sin, whose whole nature boils like a cauldron against everything that is evil—is nevertheless pacified, completely pacified, even towards the ungodly and the guilty, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and when you come believing in Him who died for the ungodly, and resting in Him who was a sacrifice for sinners, you shall feel that He is pacified towards you, and all is well. There is our blessed standing, God help us to rejoice in it.

II. We pass on, secondly, to notice WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED IN THE PROCESS OF REACHING THIS PEACEFUL STANDING.

We have learned three things. I do not say that all Christians have clearly discovered them, I wish they had, but I do know some Christians who have learned these very points thoroughly.

First we have learned *salvation by a covenant*. “I will establish my covenant with you.” He who knows how to pronounce the word “covenant” is on the road towards being a thorough theologian. Salvation by covenant! The thought is charming, for we were lost by a covenant. Father Adam stood for us, and represented us in the old covenant of works. If Adam will keep that covenant, he and all his children shall be blest. Alas, our foundation was too frail, our first parent was not able to bear the responsibility of the covenant, and therefore he fell, and we all fell in him to our fatal cost. Some have inquired, “Was this just?” Do not raise that question, because that is the loophole of your hope. The devils, when they fell, fell each one for himself, and so they could never rise again, but we fell by another in a covenant made with another.

Here, then, was the way to restore us again. As we sinned representatively it was possible for us to satisfy the law by a representative. Here was the opening for the way of salvation. By a second covenant head man may be redeemed, and therefore Jesus Christ comes, the second Adam, and God makes a covenant with Him, which covenant runs thus—“If he will bear the penalty of sin—if he will keep the law, then all that are in him shall be delivered from every sin, and the righteousness of the second Adam shall be imputed to them, and they shall be loved and blessed as if they were righteous.” Oh, matchless mystery of love! Have you ever learned this?

Some of you young people who have lately been converted, have you ever learned the doctrine of the covenant? Have you seen what it is to be in Christ, and accepted in Christ, because the Lord has made Him to be a covenant for the people—a leader and commander to the people? And have you nestled down beneath our Lord’s perfect atonement, and His perfect righteousness, and said, “These are mine, for He is my Adam, and I am in Him, and God saves me now, not because of what I did or am, but because of what my covenant surety was and is. I am saved through Him, my standing is in Him”? He who understands this covenant has learned something very full of consolation, for he knows that it is a covenant which he cannot break, for it was not made with him personally, but made for him in his great substitute and surety, Christ Jesus. Christ has not broken the covenant, and only He could do so. He kept it, and therefore the promise is sure to all the seed, and it is a covenant “ordered in all things, and sure”—a covenant from which God will never turn aside. “My covenant I will not break,” says He, “nor alter the word that has gone out of my lips.” He has sworn by Himself, because He could swear by no greater—by two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie, that He might give strong consolation to the heirs of the promise.

Certain brethren tremble when they hear us thus discourse upon the believer’s privilege and security, but we cannot help that. Isaac lives at home and rejoices in his birthright, and if Ishmael and his mother love slavery better, they must have it. Nevertheless, what says the Scripture? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.” As for those who are the children of the promise, and inherit through the promise, their name is Laughter, as the name of Isaac was, and they shall rejoice, for they are the true heirs, neither shall they ever be driven out, for in Isaac was the seed to be called forever. So says the Lord, and so shall it stand. It is a blessed thing to learn the covenant of grace!

The next thing we have learned while reaching our happy condition of peace with God is the lesson that *JEHOVAH is indeed God*. Read those solemn words, “You shall know that I am the Lord.” To be saved in a way that makes us know that God is God is to be taught aright. I believe that this is one of the lessons least known throughout the church, and in the world it is not known at all. That God is God is easy to say but hard to know. I learned it when the Lord brought me to Himself, and I have been learning it more and more in many ways as He has taught me and brought me low before Him. I have learned His *justice*, and if ever I hear men talking about the injustice of everlasting punishment for sin, I have found no echo in my conscience to that observation, because, if I could be lifted up into God’s place, I feel that the very first thing I should have to do would be to eternally condemn such a guilty

thing as I myself have been and am. As I have judged my own soul, I have had to pronounce over it that very sentence which God pronounces over all the ungodly—"Depart from me, you workers of iniquity." I have had to say "Amen" in my soul to all the divine denunciations of evil. I have thus in my conscience learned that He is a just God, and thus has one of the great attributes of Deity been known to me.

I have also been made to learn *His sovereignty*. I remember the time when I thought that if God saved everybody in the world but me I could not blame Him. I have to come to His feet and feel, "I have no rights, and make no claims." Shaking my hands free of anything like an appeal to what I am as His creature, or as His servant, I have felt that I have forfeited all the rights of creatureship by my sin, and I have put myself absolutely at His disposal, beseeching Him to reveal His undeserved favor to me. My ear has even been tutored to find music in that awful declaration, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." But, oh, this doctrine does not seem to be known by a large number of people. They will not come to it, they cannot bite the dust nor bow so low as that. "Man is a noble creature, and his rights must be considered." "God must deal alike by all." Many are these proud and arrogant boastings, which to my soul read like blasphemy, and yet men calling themselves Christian ministers give utterance to them. This I know, that He is God, and does as He pleases with His grace. He taught me this ere He stretched out the silver scepter and said, "I am pacified towards you."

And oh, how we have to learn *His power*. The power of God is seen by the natural eye in some measure in storms and tempests, but believe me, it is never seen with the inner eye by any man so well as when the Lord overcomes his sin. He has seen his sin, and he has felt no more able to grapple with it than the sear leaf with the hurricane, and yet the Lord has suddenly stopped the fury of that sin, and delivered the man, so that he has said, "Now I know that you are God, for who but God could have done this for me? Who but yourself could have chained my imperious passions and broken the iron yoke from off my neck?" Then has the man felt the omnipotence of JEHOVAH.

Above all we learn that precious word, "*God is love*," but there is no understanding it until you are actually broken down under a sense of sin, and are led to see that your sin deserves the hottest hell. Then when you hear the Lord say, "But, nevertheless, for my own sake have I forgiven you, and through Jesus Christ my Son have I put all this sin of yours away: it shall never be mentioned against you any more forever"—then the eye looks up and says, "Love! I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you!" Such love! Such matchless love! Such amazing love! One cannot talk about it without longing to get away to some secret place to pour out your soul before God with tears instead of words, to think that He should forgive, so freely, so richly, and so completely forgive.

If you would know the Godhead, you must behold it in the person of Jesus Christ while you look up to Him and see Him through your tears. In Him you see yourself crucified as a rebel and a traitor, deserving nothing but wrath, and then in Him you see God over all exalted, dispensing mercy, not because of man's deservings, or even because of man's prayers or tears, or anything like goodness in man, but simply because He wills to do it, to display the majesty of His stupendous grace in passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin.

The third lesson which is connected with our deliverance is this, "That you may remember and be confounded." We have learned *ourselves*. To remember and to be confounded—that is not comfortable. Who likes to remember and be confounded? Some of you good people can remember your whole lives, but you do not feel at all confounded. Why should you? With so much of your own excellence to glory in, why should you be confounded? But, remember, if the Lord is ever pacified towards you, you will remember and you will be confounded, so that no good can come from the self-contentment which you are so loath to lose. You will be confounded if ever you are pardoned. You will be confounded at being unable to discover any excuse for your sin. Once you could have found twenty excuses, and had your choice out of them, but now that the Lord has forgiven you, you cannot find one, and as you turn them all up—those old excuses of yours—those fig leaves of yours, with which you once hoped to cover your

nakedness, you despise them, and think you never saw such flimsy things. You are doubly confounded to think that ever you invented such excuses—confounded to think that you could have been such a fool as to dream that there was any reason in your excuses, that what made sin worse should have seemed to you at any time to make it better. You are confounded now to think how it was that you lived all those years in sin and unbelief.

I was utterly amazed to think that I had not believed in Jesus Christ long before. Was that all—to trust in Christ? Why, I had been going all round the world to do something, and feel something, and be something, and there it was, I was to be nothing, Christ was to be everything, and I was to be thus saved. I was just to take salvation freely as a gift to me. I was confounded. I could not invent an excuse for having remained in unbelief, though until the Lord was pacified with me I stubbornly said, “You know I cannot believe.” I had hosts of excuses, while I was unforgiven, but they were all gone when mercy forgave me.

Have you ever tried to put two things straight before your eyes—your own life and God’s character, you before God and God before you? Have you not felt that you could not look at them both, for you were confounded and could not comprehend them? You used to say, “Oh, that sin was the result of my bringing up, that was the product of bad example.” Or you passed it off by saying, “Ah, I made a mistake that time.” Now that you are saved your conduct seems to you to have been all mistakes, all blunders, all mischiefs, all bad, all horrible. You are confounded, do not know what to say, you cannot defend yourself. Oh, what a blessed thing it is when a man is so confounded that he cannot speak for himself any more, but leaves Jesus Christ to speak for him—when he is so confounded that all he can do is to sit still and admire, and wonder, and adore, and love, and bless, and praise, and magnify God for such unexpected mercy!—

*“Why was I made to hear Thy voice,
And enter where there’s room,
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”*

Why, did You love *me*? Why did You bear with *me* so long? Why was I gently led to yield myself to Your sway? Why were my eyes opened? Why was I not left to willful blindness as others were? I thought once I could have explained it, but now I cannot, for it is past finding out. “O God, I am confounded. Your very love confounds me as much as my sin does. I am in a maze, I am perplexed, I am astounded.” Thus is the word fulfilled. “You shall remember and be confounded.”

My brethren and sisters, I hope the Lord, when He brought you to know Himself, taught you these three things—your standing in the covenant, His own glory as the God of that covenant, and your own less-than-nothingness as He utterly confounds and astounds you, both with *your* guilt and with *His* mercy.

III. The last thing is this—THE SILENCE WHICH IS FOREVER INDUCED.

“You shall never open your mouth any more because of your shame.” It takes a great deal to fill a man’s mouth, and almost as much to shut it. Some men’s mouths never will be filled till the sexton gives them a spade full of mold, for their greed is insatiable, and half the world would not be enough for them. Some men’s mouths never will be stopped, except by the coffin lid. Their motto is, “While I live I’ll crow,” and so they will, for boasting is bred in their bone, and will come out of them. Though they have nothing to boast of, yet as long as they breathe they will brag.

But when God saves a man He takes means to end his self-exaltation most effectually, so that he will never open his mouth any more in his own praise. He stops him from all boasting about what he is and what he has been, and what he thinks he shall be. If you find any man talking about how excellently he has lived, and what a commendable person he has been, you may be sure that God has never been pacified towards him. When a man cries, “But is not our morality something? Is there not a great deal to be said in favor of those who are sober and righteous?”—you may know that God has never been

pacified towards that man, for if it were so he would never open his mouth any more about his morality, he would be as ashamed of his morality as other men are of their outward sins, for he would see it to be a poor imperfect thing at best.

Our morality is a very pretty thing, when people look at it who are in the blindness of nature, but when we bring our morality under the microscope, and look at it as God looks at it, what a horribly immoral thing this so-called morality is. You begin to look below the surface, and you discover that a certain man refrained from outward sin, not because he would not have delighted to do wrong, but because he was a little too shrewd, and did not want to injure his own interests. He was not such a fool as to fall into vulgar sin, that is to say, his selfishness saved him. Sometimes the man who did actually transgress, had more generous impulses than the other who did not sin, because his sneaking selfishness kept him within the lines of outward consistency.

When you come to look at very much of morality, it will not bear inspection. It is a very pretty thing, like the moss and the fungus growing out of putridity, a very pretty thing until you understand where it came from. If any man who believes himself to have been moral and sinless will only begin to look at the reasons why he has been so innocent, and search himself, he will often discover that inside all that purity of his there has been a mass of pride, self-conceit, self-seeking, indifference to God, and every detestable thing. When the Lord shows the man all this, and casts him down into the ditch till he abhors himself, and then cleanses him in the precious blood till He is pacified towards him, he will never open his mouth about that matter any more.

Neither will a man who has been cleansed in this way open his mouth any more against divine sovereignty. It seems to some minds to be a very fine thing to talk about the rights of moral agents, and rail at all idea of the Lord exercising the prerogatives of kingship. They love to go to the verge of blasphemy to show that they are not so foolish as to be Calvinistic. When the spiritual dandy hears the Biblical doctrine that he has sinned against God, and that if he is to be saved it must be all of grace, he is too fine a fellow to believe the truth, he does not want to enter heaven like a criminal, or to receive pardon like a convict, he inclines to a more genteel Gospel.

Now, if the Lord is pacified towards that man, you will never hear another word of that sort from him. "Oh, no," he will say, "let the Lord live forever, and let Him be king." He is the man above all others who loves to hear of God as absolute. He knows how gracious, how strong, how truly good He is. He has heard the language of Paul ringing in his heart as well as in his ears—"Nay, but O, man, who are you that replies against God?" And he has answered, "I dare not reply, for I am less than nothing, and I would not reply if I could, for I love God and I bless His name." One of the sweetest notes that ever falls upon that man's ears is—"The Lord reigns." He loves to think that JEHOVAH does reign, and if it were in his power to restrict His reign and abridge His absolute authority, he would not do so. He wishes Him to be King forever, and sit as Lord upon the floods world without end. In that matter, then, the man's mouth is shut forever.

So, also, dear friends, this way of salvation shuts a man's mouth as to all murmuring and complaining against God upon any score whatever, for says he, "If the Lord has pardoned me, let Him do what He wills with me." Our proud flesh exalts itself against the will of the Lord and says, "It is hard that you should always be poor when you would have done so much good with money. It is hard that you should be so often ill while you are so useful. It is hard that you should have so little talent, when God knows that if you had great abilities you would have been so zealous, and led the van in the church of Christ, for you love Him so much."

Ah, dear friends, but when grace forgives us we never talk so. We say, "No, my Lord, I am so unworthy that if You favor me to be a doorkeeper in Your house I will be grateful for it. If I am permitted at the last to get inside the gates of heaven to sit amongst Your children as the meanest of them, I shall be forever grateful to Your mighty love, and bless Your gracious name. I have no quarrels to pick with You. I have no demands to make of You. 'Not as I will, but as you will.' If I can glorify You on a bed of sickness, I will lie there, and cough to Your glory. If I can glorify You in a mud cottage,

I will dwell there, and starve on a few pence a week to Your glory. If I can honor You in rags, or in the poorhouse, so let it be. Yea, if in death it will honor You for me to have a pauper's funeral or none at all, so let it be. I belong to You from this day forth. I am such a sinner, so forgiven, and so indebted to almighty grace that I can never open my mouth any more to find fault, for You have dealt so kindly and so lovingly with me." May that spirit rest upon you, beloved friends.

Now, I wish that I could hope that all of you had tasted of the grace and love of God as some of us have done, but I dare not flatter you, I fear that many of you are utter strangers to this matter. It ought to encourage everyone here who has not found peace with God to hear us tell of what *we* feel of our own sinfulness, because, sinner, where one sinner gets through there is room for another. If there is a prison door, and that door is broken down, and one gets out, another man who is in the same prison may safely say, "Why should not I escape too?"

Supposing we were all beasts in Noah's ark, and we could not get down from the ark to the ground except by going down that slanting stage which most of the painters have sketched when they have tried to depict the scene. Well, we must go down that stage. Are you afraid? Are you, sheep and hares, afraid that the staging will not bear you up? Listen, then. I am an elephant, and I have come down out of the ark over that bridge, and therefore it is clear that all of you who are smaller than I am can come over too. There is strength enough to bear up the hare and the coney, the ox and the sheep, for it carried the elephant. The way down has been trodden by that heavy, lumping creature, it will do for you, whoever you may be.

Ever since the Lord Jesus Christ saved me, I made up my mind to one thing, namely, that I should never meet another person who was harder to save than I. Somebody said to me once when I was a child, when it was very dark, and I was afraid to go out, "What are you afraid of? You won't meet anything uglier than yourself." Surely as to my spiritual condition that is true, I never did meet anything uglier than myself, and I never shall. And if there is a great, big, black, ugly sinner here, I say, sinner, you are not uglier than I was by nature, and yet the Lord Jesus Christ loved me! Why should He not love you too? I tell you that though Jesus Christ is omniscient, and it is saying a great thing to say what He could not see, yet I do venture to say that Jesus Christ could not see anything in me to love. What if He cannot see anything good in you? Then we are on a par, and yet I know He loves me, why not you?

That He loves me I know. Bless His name, I know He loves me now and I love Him too. If He loved me when there was nothing in me to love, why should He not love you when there is nothing in you to love? Oh, turn that ugly face towards the lovely Savior, and trust Him.

I put it in a pleasant way, and you smile, but I want to get it into your hearts, I want some poor, trembling sinner to say, "I shall recollect that. I do think myself an ugly sinner, but I will come to Christ, and trust Him." If you do, you will never regret it, but you will bless God forever and ever, and so shall I, and when we get to heaven we will talk about it, and we will say, "Here we are, a pair of huge, horrible sinners, we came to Jesus Christ, and He took us in, and blessed be His name, we will praise Him as long as ever we live." That we will, I warrant you. Do you not feel sure of it? God bless you, for Christ's sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 51

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—51, 546

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