

ACCOMPLICES IN SIN NO. 3055

A SERMON
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*“Neither be partaker of other men’s sins.”
1 Timothy 5:22*

WE have all abundant reason to look at home and see about our own sins. Nothing can be more absurd than for a man to take his hoe and weed everybody else’s garden—and leave all the thorns and thistles to flourish on his own plot. The old parable of the man who carried two bags, one behind and one in front, and who put other people’s faults into the one in front, and his own into the one at his back, is a very correct representation of the folly of those who have their eyes wide open to see the faults of their neighbors, but are totally blind to their own imperfections.

If, as our proverb puts it, “Charity begins at home,” so should criticism—and criticism concerning character had better stop there. There is so much dirty linen in our own house needing to be washed that none of us need to take in our neighbor’s washing. “Mind your own business,” is a command that might have been spoken by Solomon, himself, and the apostle Paul was inspired to write to the Thessalonians, “Study to be quiet, and to do your own business.” And he and Peter very sternly condemned those who were “busybodies in other men’s matters.”

So it is not my intention to bid any of you to cease to look to your own affairs, but at the same time, I want to remind you that we cannot, in this world, live altogether to ourselves. He who is most bent upon minding his own business cannot help knowing that his next door neighbor has something to do with his garden. Even if he looks diligently after his own plot, thistle seeds from the left and the right may blow over into his garden, and trouble will come to him from the very fact that he has neighbors.

Our dwelling places in this life are not all detached—many of us have to live on streets. And if our neighbor’s house is on fire, it is not at all unlikely that the flames may spread to our dwelling. Let us never be so concerned about our own interest as to be selfish, for even if we try to be wholly wrapped up in ourselves, we shall be compelled to notice the actions of others, with whom we are more or less intimately linked—whether we wish to do so or not. Hence, the message of the text is necessary, not to take us away from our own duty, but to help us to see that we are not “partakers of other men’s sins.”

The connection in which this text stands must be noticed. Timothy was exhorted by Paul to “lay hands suddenly on no man.” There were certain upstarts who wrongly thought that they could preach—and there were others who thought that they could rule in the churches. These persons probably gained a few or many partisans to support their claims. There were some of their relatives in the church who thought a great deal of their sons, or brothers, or uncles, or cousins, or there were friends who heard some man speak on a certain occasion with considerable fluency, and being unwise, they judged him to be man of master-mind, and would have put him into the front rank of the army at once if the power to do so had rested with them.

Paul tells Timothy, whom he had sent to exercise a general oversight over the officers and members of the church, not to be in a hurry to lay his hands upon these men, so as to endorse their claim, but to let them wait awhile until they were tried and tested—because if he allowed them to take office in the church, and they committed faults or follies, he would be responsible for them, and everybody would say, “We wonder that Timothy should have sent out such men as these.” So he was bidden to be cautious, lest he should become, in any way, “a partaker of other men’s sins.”

None of us are exactly in Timothy's position so we are not likely to fall into the fault against which Paul warned him—at least, not in precisely the same form. Yet the text has a message to us and we may say to one another, "Be not partakers of other men's sins."

I. I shall first try to show you HOW WE CAN BE PARTAKERS OF OTHER MEN'S SINS.

And in doing that, I am afraid that the various ways in which we can do this will seem to be very many. And that, if I am not very careful, you will think that my sermon is like Ezekiel's valley of vision, in which the bones were "very many" and "very dry." I will not be more prolix than I can help, but at the same time, I must deal with the subject somewhat in detail.

As to how we can become accomplices in other people's sins—the preacher must first say to himself *that he will be such a man if he is not true to his trust*. If he shall teach false doctrine, or if, teaching the true doctrines, he shall teach them erroneously—if he shall keep back unpalatable truths—if he shall allow sin to pass without reproof—if he shall see a great deficiency of spiritual life and service, and not point it out—if, in brief, he shall be an unfaithful servant of Christ, and his hearers shall thereby be kept in a low state of divine grace, inconsistent with their profession—and the unconverted shall be hindered from coming to Christ, he will become a partaker in other men's sins.

Indeed, I know of no man who is more likely to fall into the fault indicated in the text than a minister of the Gospel is. Oh, what grace we need, and what help from on high lest, if we fail in faithfulness to God and our hearers, the doom of souls should be laid at our door, and we should be partakers of other men's sins! Brethren, pray for us that this may not be our unhappy lot.

*"Tis not a cause of small import
The pastor's care demands;
But what might fill an angel's heart
And fill'd a Savior's hands.*

*"They watch for souls for which the Lord
Did heavenly bliss forego;
For souls which must for ever live
In raptures or in woe.*

*"May they that Jesus, whom they preach,
Their own Redeemer see;
And watch THOU daily o'er their souls,
That they may watch for THEE."*

That piece is especially intended for myself and my brother ministers. The rest of my discourse will be for you as well as myself. So next, I must remind you that we can all of us be partakers of other men's sins *by willfully joining with them in any act of sin and doing as they do*—like those sinners mentioned by Solomon in the Book of Proverbs, who said, "Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse."

We must have nothing to do with such men. God forbid that we should! If we sin alone, it is bad enough, but if we sin in company, we have not only to answer for our own sins, but also for the sins of others, at least in part. If hand joins with hand in sin, there is a multiplication of its guilt, for each man who has helped to lead a fellow creature into iniquity will have his own transgression increased by the transgression of that other sinner. By their combination, the two will become capable of even greater guilt than they would have committed individually. God save us all from being accomplices in the sins of others by uniting with them in their sinful acts and deeds!

Further, we may be partakers in other men's sins *by tempting them to sin*. This is a most hateful thing and makes the man who practices it to become the devil's most devoted drudge, servant, and slave. I have known such tempters of others—old men who, from their youth up, had sinned in such a

shameful way that their very looks were full of lechery. There was a leer about their eyes that was almost enough to destroy all chastity that came beneath their glance.

And their speech was full of the *double entendre*, insinuations, and innuendoes which were almost worse than open profanity. I have known one such walking mass of putrefaction defile a whole parish—and when I have seen a boy walking with such a demon incarnate, or sitting down with him in the public-house, I knew that the boy's character would be ruined if that vile doctor in devilry could only instruct him in the vices with which he is himself so shamefully familiar.

There are such fiends in London and we could almost wish to have them all buried straight away, for they are Satan's servants spreading wickedness all around them. I do not suppose I am addressing one such dreadful creature, yet I know that some great sinners of that sort do come within these walls, and they will, of course, be very angry because of my allusion to them. Yet I never knew a thief who was fond of a policemen, and I do not expect or wish to secure the approval of scoundrels whose evil character I am exposing.

If, sir, I have described you and you will not repent of your sin, I tell you that the hottest place in hell is reserved for you, for you have led young men to the alehouse, and taught them to drink the devil's drugs, and to repeat your foul blasphemies, and to imitate your scandalous lasciviousness. Yet, ere it is too late, I beseech you to repent of your sin, that it may be blotted out by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, which cleanses from all sin.

For if not, "other men's sins" will cry out against you for judgment at the bar of the Almighty. I solemnly charge all of you, who have not committed this iniquity, never to do so—take care that you never say a word which might stain the innocence of a child's mind, and that you never let fall an expression which might, in any way, be the means of leading another person into sin—for it is an easy thing for us to become partakers of other men's sins by tempting them to commit iniquity.

If there is any evil worse than that, I think it is that of *employing others to sin*. It was one of the basest parts of David's great sin that, when he wanted to have Uriah killed, he did not slay him himself, but got Joab to expose him in a position where he was certain to be killed. It is horrible when a man is determined to be dishonest, yet gets someone else to commit the sin for him.

It is a shameful thing that there are professedly "religious" employers who try to get their young men to say across the counter what they know is not according to truth. Are there not some of these so-called "Christian" employers who want young men who are not "too particular"? Do I not hear, every now and then, of young men who have been found to be too scrupulous, and who have been told that they had better get situations somewhere else?

They objected to describe the goods as their employer wanted them to do, because they knew it would be a lie. They were told, "It is the custom in the trade and therefore must be so here." That is to say, because other persons were liars and cheats, these young men must be knaves—and their master must make money by their lying to his customers.

Now, if I meant to thief or deceive, I would do it myself—I would not employ young men and women, or old ones either, to lie and cheat for me. If any of you have done so, I pray God that He may lead you to repent of such abominable wickedness, for the sin is not one half theirs and the other half yours—it is partly theirs, but it is far more yours, if they are doing wrong at your bidding. God save us all from being "partakers of other men's sins" in that way!

Some commit this great crime *by driving other men into sin* by the fears which they have inspired, or by oppressing them in their wages, or by setting them to do what must involve them in sin. I remember the case of a man who was employed where it was well known that some of the parcels which he collected on his way, and carried to their destination, would never be booked by him, but the price paid for the carriage would be secretly dropped into his own pocket.

The man's wages were so small that nobody, unless an idiot, ever believed that he lived on them, so, tacitly, the understanding was that the man would be sure to pilfer on his own account, so his wages were cut down below the point at which he could earn an honest living. I fear that there are many men

who are dishonest for this reason—I will not excuse them, but I hope that if they are ever sent to prison for stealing, their masters will be sent with them, for they are equally guilty.

Yet again, we may become partakers of the sins of others *by a misuse of our position over them*. This is especially the case with parents. When a father is a man of loose habits, if his son follows his evil example, who is to blame? If a drunken father sees his child become a drunkard, whose fault is it? If he is a swearer, and his son uses profane language, who taught the boy those oaths? Is not the guilt of that swearing largely the father's?

“Oh!” some of you say, “we would not teach our children either drunkenness or profanity.” Yet you are not yourselves Christians—you may be moral and truthful, and so on, but you are not Christians. And if your children are not converted, will they not say, “Our father was never converted, so why should we be?” “But we always take them to a place of worship.” I know you do, and your children say, “Father goes to a place of worship, but he does not believe in Christ and he never prays.”

So if they grow up in the same way, who is to blame? You say that you trust they will not do so—then ask the Lord to make you a Christian, for then it will be more likely that your children will also be Christians. When you blame your children for wrongdoing, you ought to blame yourselves even more, for after all, what are they doing but what you yourself are doing?

Plato, the philosopher, one day saw a boy in the street behaving in a very shameful manner, so he walked straight into the house where the boy's father lived and began to beat him. When he said to Plato, “Why do you beat me?” the philosopher replied, “I found your boy doing wrong. I did not beat him, but I beat you, for he must have learnt it from you, or else it was your fault because you did not exercise proper discipline upon him at home.”

Have you never felt, when you have seen the faults of your own children, that you ought to lay the rod on your own back because, in some way or other, you were an accomplice in your children's sins? How much of the ruin of many children's souls lies at their parents' door! How sad it is that, in many cases, the influence of the mother and father is damning to their children! Men and women, who have boys and girls at home who are very dear to you—can you bear the thought that you may, one day, have to say, “Our unchristian example has ruined our own children”?

“Oh, but we are members of the church,” say some. Yes, I know you are, yet I speak to you as well as to others, for there are some of you who are bringing up your children in an improper manner. I do not see how they can be expected to love religion when they see your own household ordered so badly or not ordered at all.

The professor of religion, who does not live consistently with his profession, does more injury to the cause of Christ than a non-professor does. There are some who hang out the sign of, “The Angel,” but the devil keeps the inn. Someone has truly said that many a man's house is like Noah's ark in that it is pitched within and without with pitch. There is pitch in the dining-room—gluttony and drunkenness. And pitch in the bed-chamber—lasciviousness and wantonness. Pitch in the drawing-room—talk which is not even fit for the stables. And pitch in the shop, for much that is “dirty” goes on there.

How can anyone expect good children to come out of such a house as that? May none of us, like Eli, be accomplices in our children's sins through neglecting to rebuke them, or like David, through our evil example leading them into sin! On the contrary, let us pray for them, as Abraham cried to the Lord, “O that Ishmael might live before thee!” I like to present to God the petitions and pleas which are so well worded in that hymn in “*Our Own Hymn Book*” which is attributed to Rowland Hill,—

*“Thou, who a tender Parent art,
Regard a parent's plea:
Our offspring, with an anxious heart,
We now commend to Thee.*

*“Our children are our greatest care,
A charge which Thou hast given:*

*In all Thy graces let them share,
And all the joys of heaven.*

*“If a centurion could succeed,
Who for his servant cried;
Will Thou refuse to hear us plead
For those so near allied?”*

*“On us Thou have bestow’d Thy grace,
Be to our children kind;
Among Thy saints give them a place,
And leave not one behind.”*

The injunction of the text of course applies, in a measure, to the teacher of a class as well as to the parent of a family. If the teacher is inconsistent and his scholars imitate him, the guilt of their wrongdoing will, at least in part, rest upon the teacher. The same principle applies to all persons who are in positions of influence in the land.

If I were preaching to the House of Commons and the House of Lords, I should probably have to say some things which they would not wish to hear again. Certain “honorable gentlemen” and “noble lords” talk very glibly about the necessity for the nation to be religious, yet their lives are not remarkably religious, so their talk is all hypocritical and great sin lies at their door. God will certainly punish princes and so-called “nobles” if their example is not such as the common people can safely follow.

But even though we may not be of royal or exalted rank, all of us will become “partakers of other men’s sins” *if we set them bad examples*. If they can quote us as having done certain wrong things which they have imitated, we must share in the guilt of their sin. Yet it is always a bad thing to follow a bad example. If I see anyone’s example to be bad, it ought not to be a temptation to me—and I am a partaker of that man’s sins if, knowing that he has done amiss—I also do amiss simply because he has done so first. If I know that his course is wrong, I ought to shun the rock on which his bark has been wrecked.

We can also be “partakers of other men’s sins” *by countenancing them*, and there are many ways in which that may be done—for instance, by associating with ungodly men as though we did not think there was much harm in them. And worst of all, by laughing at and with them when their mirth is not pure fun. I fear that many a wicked man has been hardened in his sin because a professing Christian has laughed at his filthy jests.

We may also be “partakers of other men’s sins” *by joining a church that holds unscriptural doctrines or that does not act according to apostolic precedent*. Some people say, “We belong to such and such a church, but we don’t approve of its teaching or its practice.” What! You belong to it and yet you do not approve of its principles? Out of your own mouth you are condemned.

If I unite with a church whose creed and catechism I do not believe, and whose ordinances I do not practice, I am guilty of my own share in all the error that is there. It is no use for me to say, “I am trying to undo the mischief”—I have no business to be there. If I join a pirate’s crew, I shall be responsible for all that is done by the whole crew. I have no business to be on that vessel at all and I must get off it at the first opportunity, or even fling myself into the sea, rather than have a share in the pirates’ wrongdoing.

But supposing you have joined a church whose doctrines are Scriptural, you may be “partakers of other men’s sins” if the discipline of the church is not carried out as it should be. If we know that members are living in gross sin and do not deal with them either by way of censure or excommunication, in accordance with the teaching of Christ and His apostles, we become accomplices in their sin.

I often tremble about this matter, for it is no easy task where we count our members by the thousands. But may we never wink at sin, either in ourselves or in others. May you all, beloved, exercise

a jealous oversight over one another and so help to keep one another right! And let each one pray Charles Wesley's prayer which we have often sung,—

*“Quick as the apple of an eye,
O God, my conscience make!
Awake, my soul, when sin is nigh,
And keep it still awake.”*

Further, we may be “partakers of other men's sins” by *not rebuking them for sinning*, if it be our duty to do so, or by *not doing all we can towards their conversion*. For instance, by living in a certain neighborhood and never trying to bring the Gospel to the people in that neighborhood, or by not maintaining our consistent Christian walk as the separated people of God.

In brief, let each one sing, from the heart, the rest of that hymn from which I began to quote just now,—

*“I need a principle within
Of jealous godly fear;
A sensibility of sin,
A pain to feel it near.*

*“I want the first approach to feel
Of pride, or fond desire;
To catch the wandering of my will,
And quench the kindling fire.*

*“That I from Thee no more may part,
No more Thy goodness grieve,
The filial awe, the fleshy heart,
The tender conscience give.*

*“If to the right or left I stray,
That moment, Lord, reprove;
And let me weep my life away,
For having grieved Thy love.*

*“Oh may the least omission pain
My well-instructed soul;
And drive me to the blood again,
Which makes the wounded whole!”*

II. I must not say more upon this part of the subject, lest I should weary you. So I pass on to ask, in the second place, **WHY SHOULD WE SEEK TO AVOID BEING PARTAKERS OF OTHER MEN'S SINS?**

This will be a sufficient answer—*Because we have more than enough sins of our own and cannot also carry other people's.* And also *because if we are partakers in their sins, we shall also partake in their plagues.* And also *because we do other men an injury by being accomplices with them—we steel and harden them in their sins.*

The weightiest reason of all is this—we should not be “partakers of other men's sins” *because, by so doing, we should grieve our holy and gracious God*—and no true lover of Christ ought ever to do that. Remember what Paul wrote to the saints at Ephesus, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

III. My next question is—**HOW CAN WE AVOID BEING PARTAKERS IN OTHER MEN'S SINS?**

And I reply—Only by the help of God’s Spirit. First, *be very jealous about other men’s sins*. I wish all parents acted as wisely as Job did concerning his children. They went to one another’s houses, and feasted, so Job “rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” O parents, do likewise, for that is the way to keep yourselves from participation in your children’s sins.

Next to being thus jealous with a holy jealousy, *be always on the watch lest you should be “partakers in other men’s sins.”* The man who wants to avoid certain diseases will take care not to go to an infected house. So, go not where sinners go, lest you should catch the infection of their sin. Remember how careful Abraham was not to take anything from the king of Sodom, “from a thread even to a shoelatchet,” even though it was his lawful share of the spoils of war. Be you equally careful concerning even the least sin.

The next way to keep from being an accomplice in sin is *by prayer*. Augustine used to offer a short prayer which I commend to you all, “O Lord, save me from mine other men’s sins!” Put this down among your other confessions, “O Lord, I confess unto you mine other men’s sins! I mourn over mine other men’s sins, I repent of mine other men’s sins, I grieve on account of my participation in other men’s sins.” This will be a good way of keeping from committing them.

I think I had better close by saying that I do not think we have any of us escaped from the meshes of this sermon. If we have done so, it is either my fault or the fault of our own consciences. I have tried to fire red-hot shot in all directions, not omitting myself—and most of us have felt that there was a shot specially meant for us. What had we better do then? I will call to your minds a verse which we often sing and which we will again sing almost immediately,—

*“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”*

We are all stained with at least splashes from other men’s sins as well as our own, so let us all go to the fountain, and wash, let us renew our faith in the precious blood of Jesus. For if we never had any faith in it before, may God graciously grant it to us now! If we had rebelled against the Queen and had been at last subdued by force—and if there had been an Act of Oblivion passed for all who wished to claim an interest in it—perhaps some would say to themselves, “We do not know that we took any great part in the rebellion, yet it may be that we did—and the safest thing for us all to do is, to put down our names and so secure the benefit of the Act of Oblivion.”

So I, as one of the guilty ones, confessing that it is so, desire to say to the great King, “My Lord, I am guilty of sins of my own, and sins of my children, and sins of my servants, and sins of my neighbors, and sins of my church, and sins of my congregation—but You have said, ‘I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.’ You have promised to blot out all sin from those who believe in Jesus Christ, Your Son. Lord, I believe in Him, so I claim the benefit of that Act of Oblivion.”

Dear hearer, will not you say the same? Will you not now obey that divine command, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth”? Though you have gone to the ends of the earth, yet God says to you, “Look unto me, and be ye saved.” Look! *Look!* LOOK! It is little that you have to do. Indeed, it is nothing that *you* have to do, for God gives you grace to do all that He requires of you.

So trust in Him, rest in Him—the Lord help you so to do, and then, whatever your sins may have been, though they may have been “as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” Though they may have been “red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” God bless you and save you, for His name’s sake! Amen.

Now let us all sing the verse that I quoted just now,—

“There is a fountain filled with blood,

*Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains;”—*

and let all who can sing it from the heart join in the well-known chorus,—

*“I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me;
That, on the cross, He shed His blood
From sin to set me free.”*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 73

You may have noticed that the 73rd Psalm and the 37th Psalm [Mr. Spurgeon's expositions of the 37th Psalm are in sermons #2723 and 3002] are on the same subject. It will help you to recall this fact if you remember that the figures are the same, only reversed.

Verse 1. *Truly God is good to Israel,*

Settle that matter in your hearts, whatever doubts may distress or disturb your mind, fix this point as certain—“Truly God is good to Israel,”

1-2. *Even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.*

He was a good man, one of the leaders in Israel, yet he had to make this confession, “My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.”

3-4. *For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm.*

Many of them have so stifled conscience that it does not trouble them even in that last dread hour—and they pass into eternity with blinded eyes, self-deluded to the last.

5. *They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.*

They are not the children of God—and that is why they escape the rod of God. The rod is not for strangers, but for the children of the family. Yet the psalmist began to envy these people because, said he, “they are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.”

6. *Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain;*

They wear it gladly and think it to be an ornament.

6-9. *Violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens,*

As though they would blow them down, as the wind blows the clouds that are full of rain.

9. *And their tongue walketh through the earth.*

Like the ravaging lion of the pit, seeking characters that they may destroy or devour. There is no end to the mischief that such people can do. If they are not in trouble themselves, they make much trouble for other people. And while they set themselves on so high a pinnacle, they are mean enough to slander the characters of the good.

10. *Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.*

They have to drink of the bitter cup again and again—it seems to them to be always full. And the wicked have their full cup—filled, as it seems, with the juice from the very finest fruit.

11. *And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?*

They admit that there is a God, but they ask, “What does He know, and how does He know?”

12-14. *Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.*

It was one of his greatest sorrows that the more holy he was, the more troubled he seemed to be—and the more closely he endeavored to follow his God, the more it seemed as if God only frowned upon him. Yet the psalmist's was no exceptional case, of which there is only one in all history—there have been many such and there are many such to this day.

15. *If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children.*

You know that some people have made up a kind of proverb like this, “If you think it, you may as well speak it.” But it is not so. Bad thoughts should never be spoken. If a man has a bottle of whisky in his house, or in his pocket, that is bad enough, but if the cork is never taken out, it will do no very great hurt to anybody. So, if a man has evil thoughts, but does not utter them, the mischief will not be so great as if he were to make them known to others.

16. *When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me;*

He could not bear the thought of offending God's children, but at the same time, the problem itself, concerning the righteous and the wicked, until he could solve it, was too painful for him.

17. *Until I went into the sanctuary of God;*

When he went into God's holy place—when he began to understand God's purposes and plans, and looked beyond the present life into the dreadful future of the ungodly, he could say:

17. *Then understood I their end.*

And understanding their end, his difficulty ceased, his puzzling problem was solved.

18. *Surely thou didst set them in slippery places:*

As if they stood upon a ridge of ice, from which they must slip down—who wishes to be lifted up upon an Alp of prosperity, from which he may be dashed down at any moment? If you knew that there was a man standing on the top of the cross of St. Paul's at this moment, I do not suppose that any of you would envy him—certainly I should not. Let him have a patent for standing there and let nobody else ever attempt it. And an ungodly man, in the elevated places of prosperity, is in such a perilous position that we need not envy him.

18. *Thou castedst them down into destruction.*

Down they go! If not in this life, yet in the next, and who will envy them then?

19-20. *How they are brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.*

When a man wakes up, the image that was before his mind, in his dream, is gone. And when God wakes up to judgment, these wicked men, who were but as images in a night dream, shall pass away.

21. *Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.*

In the tenderest and most vital parts of his being, he felt an inward and terrible pain.

22. *So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.*

Judging as the beast judges that can only see the little grass around itself, and fattens itself, knowing nothing of the shambles and of the butcher's knife that is being sharpened to kill it there. “So,” says the psalmist, “I was like that, I forgot about the future, I did not judge as an immortal being should judge concerning the infinite and the eternal, but I judged things as a beast might judge by the narrow compass of its little grazing ground.

23. *Nevertheless—*

This phrase is most delightful, coming in connection with his previous confession, “I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless”—

23. *I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.*

That is your portion also, Christian. However few your pounds, however short your supplies, you are continually with God, and He holds you by your right hand. Will you envy the ungodly after that?

24. *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.*

There is where your chief possession lies, locked up in that which is marked, “Afterward.” Not today, possibly not tomorrow, but “afterward” is your inheritance. “Afterward thou wilt receive me to glory.”

25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.*

Here is the Christian’s heavenly and earthly portion and treasure. He has his God, both here and hereafter—and this is better than all that can fall to the lot of the worldling.

26-27. *My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.*

That is, setting their hearts on unlovely things and forgetting to love God.

28. *But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.*

The Psalm ends jubilantly, as it began, though part of it had been in a minor key.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.