THE NEW PARK STREET PULPIT
SERMONS

VOLUME 1

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by Charles Spurgeon

PREFACE

The reaching of the word by the chosen servants of the living God is the ordained means for the gathering in of the elect. It is not the word *read*, so much as that which is *heard*, which has the promise attached to it, and hence the importance of a devout attendance in the ministry of the gospel. Nevertheless, without doubt, the Holy Spirit who has helped us in the delivery of these sermons, will also afford His divine assistance now that we send them forth in this volume.

Little can be said in praise of these sermons, and nothing can be said against them more bitter than has been already spoken. Happily the author has heard abuse exhaust itself. He has seen its vocabulary used up, and its utmost venom entirely spent, and yet the printed discourses have for that very reason, found a readier sale, and more have been led to peruse them with deep attention.

One thing alone places this book above contempt—and that accomplishes the deed so triumphantly that the preacher defies the opinion of man—it is the fact that to his certain knowledge, there is scarcely a sermon here which has not been stamped by the hand of the Almighty by the conversion of a soul. Some single sermons here brought into the society of their brethren, have been, under God, the means of the salvation of not less than 20 souls—at least, that number have come under the preacher's notice from one sermon only, and doubtless more shall be discovered at the last day.

This, together with the fact that hundreds of the children of God have been made to leap for joy by their message, makes their author invulnerable either to criticism or abuse!

We have most certainly departed from the usual mode of preaching, but we do not feel bound to offer even half a word of apology for so doing since we believe ourselves free to use any manner of speech which is calculated to address the truths of God upon our hearers.

The *matter,* also, will afford no small amount of food for controversialists, but concerning it, we simply say that as we have learned theology in another school than that of men, so shall we hope to always declare the whole of what the Lord shall teach us, without tarrying for human opinions. The word *Calvinism* is frequently used here as the short word which embraces that part of divine truth which teaches that salvation is by grace alone, but it is not to be imagined that we attach any authority to the opinion of John Calvin other than that which is due to every holy man who is ordained of God to proclaim His Truth. We use the word simply for shortness of expression, and because the enemies of free grace will then be quite sure of what we mean. It is our firm belief that what is commonly called Calvinism is neither more nor less than the good old gospel of the Puritans, the martyrs, the apostles, and of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Here the proud legalist, the conceited believer in the unaided strength of man, and the self-exalting moralist will discover very little suitable to their corrupt palate, and much to excite their enmity! But the humbled sinner may possibly find words of comfort and the self-loathing believer will perhaps obtain a glimpse of his Lord.

Our hope is that inferior matters in dispute will not so much be regarded as "the things which we have spoken touching the king." Jesus is the *truth*. We believe in *Him*—not merely in His words. *He,* Himself, is doctor and doctrine, revealer and Revelation, the illuminator and the light of men. He is exalted in every word of truth because He is its sum and substance! He sits above the gospel, like a prince on His own throne. Doctrine is most precious when we see it distilling from His lips, and embodied in His person! Sermons are valuable in proportion as they speak *of Him* and point *to Him;* a Christless gospel is no gospel, and a Christless discourse is the cause of merriment to devils. The Holy Spirit, who has always been our sole instructor, we trust will teach us more of Jesus until we comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. Jesus! Jesus! Jesus only have we labored to extol—may the Lord Himself succeed our endeavors!

The reader will perhaps remark considerable progress in some of the sentiments here made public, particularly in the case of the doctrine of the second coming of our Lord, but he will remember that he who is learning the truth of God, will learn it by degrees, and if he teaches as he learns, it is to be expected that his lessons will become fuller every day.

There are also many expressions which may provoke a smile—but let it be remembered that every man has his moments when his lighter feel-

ings indulge themselves and the preacher must be allowed to have the same passions as his fellowmen. And since he lives in the pulpit more than anywhere else, it is but natural that his whole man should be developed there. Besides, he is not quite sure about a smile being a sin, and at any rate, he thinks it less a crime to cause a momentary laughter than a half-hour's profound slumber.

With all its faults, the purchaser has bought this book—and, as it was not warranted to be perfect, if he thinks ill of it, he must make the best of his bargain—which can be done either by asking a blessing on its reading to himself, or entreating greater light for his friend, the preacher.

For the printer we must beg much allowance. The author sufficiently scolds him for *errata,* and the public may therefore forgive the more—especially since the sermons are hastily printed week by week for thousands of eager applicants.

Let it be understood, until further notice, that no sermons are genuine reports unless they bear the title, "THE NEW PARK STREET PULPIT" or the names of, "ALABASTER AND PASSMORE," or else the words, "AUTHORIZED BY MR. SPURGEON." Necessity compels us thus to act, since otherwise prints without our revision or sanction are advertised, and no one can tell what is ours and what another's.

Grace, mercy and peace be with all the saints,
From their servant in Jesus,
C. H. SPURGEON
JANUARY, 1856.

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

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OUR FIRST SERMON
BY C. H. SPURGEON

WE remember well the first place in which we addressed a congregation of adults, and the wood-block which illustrates this number of the magazine sets it clearly before our mind's eye. It was not our first public address by a great many, for both at New Market and Cambridge, and elsewhere, the Sunday school had afforded us ample scope for speaking the gospel. At Newmarket especially, we had a considerable admixture of grown-up folks in the audience, for many came to hear "the boy" give addresses to the school. But no regular set discourse to a congregation met for regular worship had we delivered till one eventful Sunday evening which found us in a cottage at Teversham, holding forth before a little assembly of humble villagers.

The tale is not a new one, but as the engraving has not before been seen by the public eye we must shed a little light upon it. There is a Preachers' Association in Cambridge connected with St. Andrew's Street Chapel—once the scene of the ministry of Robert Robinson and Robert Hall—and now of our beloved friend, Mr. Tarn. A number of worthy brothers preach the gospel in the various villages surrounding Cambridge, taking, each one his turn, according to plan. In our day the presiding genius was the venerable Mr. James Vinter, whom we were known to address as "Bishop Vinter." His genial soul, warm heart, and kindly manner were enough to keep a whole fraternity stocked with love, and accordingly, a goodly company of true workers belonged to the Association, and labored as true yoke fellows. Our suspicion is that he not only preached, himself, and helped his brothers, but that he was a sort of recruiting sergeant, and drew in young men to keep up the number of the host—at least we speak from personal experience as to one case.

We had one Saturday finished morning school, and the boys were all going home for the half-holiday, when in came the aforesaid "Bishop." A man was to preach there who was not much used to services, and very likely would be glad of company. That was a cunningly devised sentence, if we remember it rightly, and we think we do, for at the time, in the light of that Sunday evening's revelation, we turned it over and vastly admired its ingenuity. A request to go and preach would have met with a decided negative, but merely to act as company to a good brother who did not like to be lonely, and, perhaps might ask us to give out a hymn or to pray, was not at all a difficult matter! And the request, understood in that fashion, was cheerfully complied with. Little did the lad know what Jonathan and David were doing when he was made to run for the arrow—and

as little knew we—when we were cajoled into accompanying a young man to Teversham!

Our Sunday school work was over, and tea had been taken. We set off through Barnwell along the Newmarket road with a gentleman some few years our senior. We talked of good things, and at last we expressed our hope that he would feel the presence of God while preaching. He seemed to start and assured us that he had never preached in his life, and could not attempt such a thing—he was looking to his young friend, Mr. Spurgeon, for that! This was a new view of the situation, and I could only reply that I was no minister, and that even if I had been, I was quite unprepared. My companion only repeated that *he*, even in a more emphatic sense, was not a preacher, that he would help *me* in any other part of the service, but that there would be no sermon unless I gave them one! He told me that if I repeated one of my Sunday school addresses, it would just suit the poor people, and would probably give them more satisfaction than the studied sermon of a learned divine. I felt that I was fairly committed to do my best. I walked along quietly, lifting up my soul to God, and it seemed to me that I could surely tell a few poor cottagers of the sweetness and love of Jesus—for I felt them in my own soul. Praying for divine help, I resolved to make an attempt. My text would be, "Unto you, therefore, which believe, He is precious," and I would trust the Lord to open my mouth in honor of His dear Son. It seemed a great risk and a serious trial, but depending upon the power of the Holy Spirit, I would at least tell out the story of the cross, and not allow the people to go home without a word.

We entered the low-pitched room of the thatched cottage where a few simple-minded farm laborers and their wives were gathered together. We sang, and prayed, and read the Scriptures—and then came our first sermon. How long or how short it was, we cannot now remember; it was not half such a task as we had feared it would be, but we were glad to see our way to a fair conclusion, and to the giving out of the last hymn. To our own delight we had not broken down, nor stopped short in the middle, nor been destitute of ideas, and the desired haven was in view! We made a finish, and took up the Bible, but to our astonishment an aged voice cried out, "Bless your dear heart, how old are you?" Our very solemn reply was, "You must wait till the service is over before making any such inquiries. Let us now sing." We did sing, and the young preacher pronounced the benediction, and then began a dialog which enlarged into a warm friendly talk in which everybody appeared to take part. "How old are you?" was the leading question. "I am under sixty," was the reply. "Yes, and under sixteen," was the old lady's rejoinder. "Never mind my age, think of the Lord Jesus and His preciousness," was all that I could

say, after promising to come again if the gentlemen at Cambridge thought me fit to do so. Very great and profound was our awe of those "gentlemen at Cambridge" in those days.

Are there not other young men who might begin to speak for Jesus in some such lowly fashion—young men who up to now have been mute as fishes? Our villages and hamlets offer fine opportunities for youthful speakers; let them not wait till they are invited to a chapel, or have prepared a fine essay, or have secured an intelligent audience! If they will go and tell out from their hearts what the Lord Jesus has done for them, they will find ready listeners!

Many of our young folks want to do great things, and therefore do nothing at all! Let none of our readers become the victims of such an unreasonable ambition! He who is willing to teach infants, or to give away tracts, and so to begin at the beginning, is far more likely to be useful than the youth who is full of affectations and sleeps in a white necktie, who is studying for the ministry, and is touching up certain superior manuscripts which he hopes before long, to read from the pastor's pulpit. He who talks upon plain gospel themes in a farmer's kitchen, and is able to interest the carter's boy, and the dairymaid, has more of the minister in him than the prim little man who talks forever about being cultured—and means by that being taught to use words which nobody can understand! To make the very poorest listen with pleasure and profit is in itself an achievement—and beyond this it is the best possible promise and preparation for an influential ministry! Let our younger brothers go in for cottage preaching and plenty of it! If there is no Lay Preachers' Association, let them work by themselves! The expense is not very great for rent, candles, and a few forms—many a young man's own pocket-money would cover it all. No isolated group of houses should be left without its preaching room, no hamlet without its evening service.

This is the lesson of the thatched cottage at Teversham.

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THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD
NO. 1

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 7, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed."
Malachi 3:6.

IT has been said by someone that "the proper study of mankind is man." I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God. The proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of a child of God is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity—so deep that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with—in them we feel a kind of self-content and go our way with the thought, "Behold I am wise." But when we come to this master science, finding that our plumb line cannot sound its depth and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thoughts that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass' colt and with the solemn exclamation, "I am but of yesterday and know nothing." No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God. We shall be obliged to feel—

"Great God, how infinite are You,
What worthless worms are we!"

But while the subject *humbles* the mind it also *expands* it. He who often thinks of God will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe. He may be a naturalist, boasting of his ability to dissect a beetle, anatomize a fly, or arrange insects and animals in classes with well-nigh unutterable names. He may be a geologist, able to discourse of the megatherium and the plesiosaurus and all kinds of extinct animals. He may imagine that his science, whatever it is, ennobles and enlarges his mind. I dare say it does, but after all, the most excellent study for expanding the soul is the science of Christ and Him crucified and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity. And while humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently *consolatory*. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound! In

musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief and in the influence of the Holy Spirit there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrows? Would you drown your cares? Then go plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea—be lost in His immensity. And you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul, so calm the swelling billows of grief and sorrow—so speak peace to the winds of trial—as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead. It is to that subject that I invite you this morning. We shall present you with one view of it—that is the *immutability* of the glorious Jehovah. "I am," says my text, "Jehovah," (for so it should be translated) "I am Jehovah, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed."

There are three things this morning. First of all, an *unchanging* God. Secondly, the *persons* who derive benefit from this glorious attribute, "the sons of Jacob." And thirdly, the *benefit* they so derive, they "are not consumed." We address ourselves to these points.

I. First let us set before us the doctrine of the immutability of God. "I am God, I change not." Here I shall attempt to expound, or rather to enlarge the thought and then afterwards to bring a few arguments to prove its truth.

1. I shall offer some exposition of my text by first saying that God is Jehovah and He changes not *in His essence*. We cannot tell you what Godhead is. We do not know what substance that is which we call God. It is an existence, it is a being. But what that is we know not. However, whatever it is, we call it His essence and that essence never changes. The substance of mortal things is ever changing. The mountains with their snow-white crowns doff their old diadems in summer, in rivers trickling down their sides, while the storm cloud gives them another coronation. The ocean, with its mighty floods, loses its water when the sunbeams kiss the waves and snatch them in mists to Heaven. Even the sun himself requires fresh fuel from the hand of the infinite Almighty to replenish his ever-burning furnace. All creatures change. Man, especially as to his body, is always undergoing revolution. Very probably there is not a single particle in my body which was in it a few years ago. This frame has been worn away by activity, its atoms have been removed by friction, fresh particles of matter have in the meantime constantly accrued to my body and so it has been replenished—its substance is altered. The fabric of which this world is made is ever passing away like a stream of water—drops are running away and others are following after, keeping the river still full—but always changing in its elements. But God is perpetually the same. He is not composed of any substance or material, but is Spirit—pure, essential and ethereal Spirit—and, therefore, He is immutable. He remains everlastingly the same. There are no furrows on His eternal brow. No age has palsied Him—no years have marked Him with the me-

mentoes of their flight. He sees ages pass, but with Him it is ever *now*. He is the great I AM—the Great Unchangeable. Mark you, His essence did not undergo a change when it became united with the manhood. When Christ in past years did gird Himself with mortal clay, the essence of His divinity was not changed—flesh did not become God, nor did God become flesh by a real actual change of nature. The two were united in hypostatical union, but the Godhead was still the same. It was the same when He was a babe in the manger, as it was when He stretched the curtains of Heaven—it was the same God that hung upon the Cross and whose blood flowed down in a purple river. The self-same God that holds the world upon His everlasting shoulders and bears in His hands the keys of death and Hell. He never has been changed in His essence, not even by His incarnation—He remains everlastingly, eternally, the one unchanging God, the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither the shadow of a change.

He changes not in His *attributes*. Whatever the attributes of God were of old, they are the same now. And of each of them we may sing, As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen. Was He *powerful*? Was He the mighty God when He spoke the world out of the womb of non-existence? Was He the omnipotent when He piled the mountains and scooped out the hollow places for the rolling deep? Yes, He was powerful then and His arm is unpalsied now. He is the same giant in His might. The sap of His nourishment is still wet and the strength of His soul stands the same forever. Was He wise when He constituted this mighty globe, when He laid the foundations of the universe? Had He *wisdom* when He planned the way of our salvation and when, from all eternity, He marked out His awful plans? Yes and He is wise now. He is not less skillful, He has not less knowledge. His eyes which see all things are undimmed. His ears which hear all the cries, sighs, sobs and groans of His people, are not rendered heavy by the years which He has heard their prayers. He is unchanged in His wisdom. He knows as much now as ever—neither more nor less. He has the same consummate skill and the same infinite forecasting. He is unchanged, blessed be His name, in His *justice*. Just and holy was He in the past—just and holy is He now. He is unchanged in His *truth*—He has promised and He brings it to pass. He has said it and it shall be done. He varies not in the *goodness*, generosity and benevolence of His nature. He is not become an almighty tyrant, whereas He was once an almighty Father. His strong love stands like a granite rock unmoved by the hurricanes of our iniquity. And blessed be His dear name, He is unchanged in His *love*. When He first wrote the covenant, how full His heart was with affection to His people. He knew that His Son must die to ratify the articles of that agreement. He knew right well that He must rend His best Beloved from His heart, and send Him down to earth to bleed and die. He did not hesitate to sign

that mighty covenant. Nor did He shun its fulfillment. He loves as much now as He did then. And when suns shall cease to shine and moons to show their feeble light, He still shall love on forever and forever. Take any one attribute of God and I will write *semper idem* on it (always the same). Take any one thing you can say of God, now, and it may be said not only in the dark past, but in the bright future. It shall always remain the same—"I am Jehovah, I change not"—impressed on His heart it remains.

Then again, God changes not in His *plans*. That man began to build, but was not able to finish and, therefore, he changed his plan—as every wise man would do in such a case—he built upon a smaller foundation and commenced again. But has it ever been said that God began to build but was not able to finish? No. When He has boundless stores at His command and when His own right hand would create worlds as numerous as drops of morning dew, shall He ever stay because He has not power? Or reverse, or alter, or disarrange His plan because He cannot carry it out? "But," say some, "perhaps God never had a plan." Do you think God is more foolish than yourself then, sir? Do you go to work without a plan? "No," you say, "I have always a scheme." So has God. Every man has his plan and God has a plan, too. God is a master mind—He arranged everything in His gigantic intellect long before He did it—and once having settled it, mark you, He never alters it. "This shall be done," says He and the iron hand of destiny marks it down and it is brought to pass. "This is My purpose," and it stands, nor can earth or Hell alter it. "This is My decree," says He. Promulgate it angels—rend it down from the gate of Heaven you devils. But you cannot alter the decree. It shall be done. God alters not His plans—why should He? He is almighty, and therefore can perform His pleasure. Why should He? He is the all-wise and, therefore, cannot have planned wrongly. Why should He? He is the everlasting God and, therefore, cannot die before His plan is accomplished. Why should He change? You worthless atoms of existence, ephemera of the day! You creeping insects upon this bay leaf of existence! You may change *your* plans, but He shall never, never change *His*. Then has He told me that His plan is to save me? If so, I am safe—

"My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase;
Impressed on His heart it remains,
In marks of indelible grace."

Yet again, God is unchanging in His *promises*. Ah, we love to speak about the sweet promises of God. But if we could ever suppose that one of them could be changed—we would not talk anything more about them. If I thought that the notes of the bank of England could not be cashed next week, I would decline to take them and if I thought that God's promises would never be fulfilled—if I thought that God would see it right to alter some word in His promises—farewell Scriptures! I want immutable things—and I find that I have immutable promises when I turn to the Bi-

ble—for, "by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie," He has signed, confirmed and sealed every promise of His. The Gospel is not "yes and no," it is not promising today and denying tomorrow. The Gospel is "yes, yes," to the glory of God. Believer, there was a delightful promise which you had yesterday—and this morning when you turned to the Bible the promise was not sweet. Do you know why? Do you think the promise had changed? Ah, no, *you* changed—that is where the matter lies. You had been eating some of the grapes of Sodom and your mouth was thereby put out of taste and you could not detect the sweetness. But there was the same honey there, depend upon it—the same preciousness. "Oh," says one child of God, "I had built my house firmly once upon some stable promises. There came a wind and I said, O Lord, I am cast down and I shall be lost." Oh, the promises were *not* cast down. The foundations were not removed. It was your little "wood, hay, stubble" hut that you had been building. It was *that* which fell down. *You* have been shaken *on* the rock, not the rock *under* you. But let me tell you what is the best way of living in the world. I have heard that a gentleman said to a Negro, "I can't think how it is you are always so happy in the Lord and I am often downcast." "Why massa," said he, "I throw myself flat down on the promise—there I lie. You stand on the promise—you have a little to do with it and down you go when the wind comes. And then you cry, 'Oh, I am down.' Whereas I go flat on the promise at once and that is why I fear no fall." Then let us always say, "Lord, there is the promise. It is Your business to fulfill it." Down I go on the promise flat! No standing up for me. That is where you should go—prostrate on the promise. And remember, every promise is a rock, an unchanging thing. Therefore, at His feet cast yourself and rest there forever!

But now comes one jarring note to spoil the theme. To some of you God is unchanging in His *threats*. If every promise stands fast and every oath of the covenant is fulfilled, hark you, Sinner—mark the word—hear the death knell of your carnal hopes! See the funeral of the fleshy trusting. Every threat of God, as well as every promise shall be fulfilled. Talk of decrees! I will tell you of a decree —"He that *believes not* shall be damned." That is a decree and a statute that can never change. Be as good as you please, be as moral as you can, be as honest as you will, walk as uprightly as you may—there stands the unchangeable threat—"He that believes not shall be damned."

What do you say to that, moralist? Oh, you wish you could alter it and say, "He that does not live a holy life shall be damned." That will be true. But it does not say so. It says, "He that *believes not*." Here is the stone of stumbling and the rock of offense. But you cannot alter it—you either believe or be damned, says the Bible. And mark—that threat of God is as unchangeable as God Himself. And when a thousand years of Hell's tor-

ments shall have passed away you shall look on high and see written in burning letters of fire, "He that believes not *shall* be damned."

"But, Lord, I *am* damned." Nevertheless it says "*shall* be" still. And when a million years have rolled away and you are exhausted by your pains and agonies, you shall turn up your eye and still read "SHALL BE DAMNED," unchanged, unaltered. And when you shall have thought that eternity must have spun out its last thread—that every particle of that which we call eternity must have run out, you shall still see it written up there, "SHALL BE DAMNED." O terrible thought! How dare I utter it? But I must. You must be warned, sirs, "lest you also come into this place of torment." You must be told rough things, for if God's gospel is not a rough thing, believe me, the law is a rough thing.

Mount Sinai is a rough thing. Woe unto the watchman that warns not the ungodly! God is unchanging in His threats. Beware, O sinner, for "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

We must just hint at one thought before we pass on and that is—God is unchanging in the *objects of His love*—not only in His love, but in the *objects* of it—

"If ever it should come to pass
That sheep of Christ might fall away,
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,
Would fall a thousand times a day."

If one dear saint of God had perished, so might all. If one of the covenant ones is lost, so may all be and then there is no gospel promise true. Then the Bible is a lie and there is nothing in it worth my acceptance. I will be an infidel at once, when I can believe that a saint of God can ever fall finally. If God has loved me once, then He will love me forever—

"Did Jesus once upon me shine,
Then Jesus is forever mine."

The objects of everlasting love never change. Those whom God has called, He will justify. Whom He has justified, He will sanctify. And whom He sanctifies, He will glorify.

2. Thus having taken a great deal too much time, perhaps, in simply expanding the thought of an unchanging God, I will now try to prove that HE IS UNCHANGEABLE. I am not much of an argumentative preacher, but one argument that I will mention is this—the very *existence and being of a God* seem to me to imply immutability. Let me think a moment. There is a God. This God rules and governs all things—this God fashioned the world—He upholds and maintains it. What kind of being must He be? It does strike me that you cannot think of a *changeable* God. I conceive that the thought is so repugnant to common sense that if you for one moment think of a changing God, the words seem to clash and you are obliged to say, "Then He must be a kind of man," and you have a Mormonism idea of God!

I imagine it is impossible to conceive of a changing God. It is so to me. Others may be capable of such an idea, but I could not entertain it. I could no more think of a changing God than I could of a round square, or any other absurdity. The thing seems so contrary that I am obliged, when once I say, God, to include the idea of an unchanging being.

Well, I think that one argument will be enough, but another good argument may be found in the fact of *God's perfection*. I believe God to be a perfect being. Now, if He is a perfect being, He cannot change. Do you not see this? Suppose I am perfect today. If it were possible for me to change, should I be perfect tomorrow after the alteration? If I changed, I must either change from a good state to a better—and then if I could get better, I could not be perfect *now*—or else from a better state to a worse—and if I were worse, I should not be perfect *then*. If I am perfect, I cannot be altered without being imperfect. If I am perfect today, I must be the same tomorrow if I am to be perfect then. So, if God is perfect, He must be the same—for change would imply imperfection now or imperfection then.

Again, there is the fact of *God's infinity*, which puts change out of the question. God is an infinite being. What do you mean by that? There is no man who can tell you what he means by an infinite being. But there cannot be two infinities. If one thing is infinite, there is no room for anything else—for infinite means all. It means not bounded, not finite, having no end. Well, there cannot be two infinities. If God is infinite, today, and then should change and be infinite tomorrow, there would be two infinities. But that cannot be.

Suppose He is infinite and then changes, He must become finite and could not be God—either He is finite today and finite tomorrow, or infinite today and finite tomorrow, or finite today and infinite tomorrow—all of which suppositions are equally absurd. The fact of His being an infinite being at once quashes the thought of His being a changeable being. Infinity has written on its very brow the word "immutability."

But then, dear friends, let us look at *the past*—and there we shall gather some proofs of God's immutable nature. "Has He spoken and has He not done it? Has He sworn and has it not come to pass?" Can it not be said of Jehovah, He has done all His will and He has accomplished all His purpose?" Turn you to Philistia—ask where she is. God said, "Howl Ashdod and you gates of Gaza, for you shall fall," and where are they? Where is Edom? Ask Petra and its ruined walls. Will they not echo back the truth that God has said, "Edom shall be a prey and shall be destroyed"? Where is Babel and where is Nineveh? Where is Moab and where is Ammon? Where are the nations God has said He would destroy? Has He not uprooted them and cast out the remembrance of them from the earth?

And has God cast off His people? Has He once been unmindful of His promise? Has He once broken His oath and covenant, or once departed

from His plan? Ah, no. Point to one instance in history where God has changed! You cannot, sirs—for throughout all history there stands the fact—God has been immutable in His purposes. I think I hear someone say, "I can remember one passage in Scripture where God changed!" And so did I think, once. The case I mean is that of the death of Hezekiah. Isaiah came in and said, "Hezekiah, you must die, your disease is incurable, set your house in order."

He turned his face to the wall and began to pray. And before Isaiah was in the outer court, he was told to go back and say, "You shall live fifteen years more." You may think that proves that God changes. But really, I cannot see in it the slightest proof in the world. How do you know that God did not know that? Oh, but God *did* know it—He knew that Hezekiah would live. Then He did not change, for if He knew that, how could He change? That is what I want to know. But do you know one little thing?—that Hezekiah's son Manasseh was not born at that time. And had Hezekiah died there would have been no Manasseh and no Josiah and no Christ, because Christ came from that very line!

You will find that Manasseh was 12 years old when his father died—so that he must have been born three years after this. And do you not believe that God decreed the birth of Manasseh and foreknew it? Certainly. Then He decreed that Isaiah should go and tell Hezekiah that his disease was incurable and then say also in the same breath, "But I will cure it and you shall live." He said that to stir up Hezekiah to prayer. He spoke, in the first place as a man. "According to all human probability your disease is incurable and you must die." Then He waited till Hezekiah prayed—then came a little "but" at the end of the sentence.

Isaiah had not finished the sentence. He said, "You must put your house in order for there is no human cure—but" (and then he walked out. Hezekiah prayed a little and then he came in again and said) "*But* I will heal you." Where is there any contradiction there, except in the brain of those who fight against the Lord and wish to make Him a changeable being?

II. Now let me say a word on THE PERSONS TO WHOM THIS UNCHANGEABLE GOD IS A BENEFIT. "I am God I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." Now, who are "the sons of Jacob"? Who can rejoice in an immutable God?

First, they are the *sons of God's election*. For it is written, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated, the children being not yet born, neither having done good nor evil." It was written, "The elder shall serve the younger." "The sons of Jacob—

"Are the sons of God's election,
Who through sovereign grace believe;
By eternal destination
Grace and glory they receive."

God's *elect* are here meant by "the sons of Jacob"—those whom He foreknew and foreordained to everlasting salvation!

By "the sons of Jacob" are meant, in the second place, *persons who enjoy peculiar rights and titles*. Jacob, you know, had no rights by birth, but he soon acquired them. He exchanged a mess of pottage with his brother, Esau, and thus gained the birthright. I do not justify the means. But he did also obtain the blessing and so acquired peculiar rights. By "the sons of Jacob" is meant persons who have peculiar rights and titles. Unto them who believe, He has given the right and power to become sons of God. They have an interest in the blood of Christ. They have a right to "enter in through the gates into the city"—they have a title to eternal honors. They have a promise to everlasting glory. They have a right to call themselves sons of God. Oh, there are peculiar rights and privileges belonging to the "sons of Jacob."

Next, these "sons of Jacob" *were men of peculiar manifestations*. Jacob had had peculiar manifestations from his God and thus he was highly honored. Once at night he lay down and slept. He had the hedges for his curtains, the sky for his canopy, a stone for his pillow and the earth for his bed. Oh, then he had a peculiar manifestation. There was a ladder and he saw the angels of God ascending and descending. He thus had a manifestation of Christ Jesus as the ladder which reaches from earth to Heaven—up and down which angels came to bring us mercies. Then what a manifestation there was at Mahanaim when the angels of God met him—and again at Peniel, when He wrestled with God and saw Him face to face. Those were peculiar manifestations—and this passage refers to those who, like Jacob, have had peculiar manifestations.

Now then, how many of you have had personal manifestations? "Oh," you say "that is enthusiasm—that is fanaticism." Well, it is a blessed enthusiasm, too, for the sons of Jacob have had peculiar manifestations. They have talked with God as a man talks with his friend—they have whispered in the ear of Jehovah. Christ has been with them to sup with them and they with Christ. And the Holy Spirit has shone into their souls with such a mighty radiance that they could not doubt about special manifestations. The "sons of Jacob" are the men who enjoy these manifestations.

Then again, they are *men of peculiar trials*. Ah, poor Jacob! I should not choose Jacob's lot if I had not the prospect of Jacob's blessing. For a hard lot his was. He had to run away from his father's house to Laban's—and then that surly old Laban cheated him all the years he was there—cheated him of his wife, cheated him in his wages, cheated him in his flocks and cheated him all through the story. By-and-by he had to run away from Laban who pursued him and overtook him. Next came Esau with four hundred men to cut him up root and branch. Then there was a season of prayer and afterwards he wrestled God—and had to go

all his life with his thigh out of joint. And a little further on, Rachel, his dearly beloved, died. Then his daughter Dinah is led astray and the sons murder the Shechemites. Then his dear son, Joseph, is sold into Egypt and a famine comes. Then Reuben goes up to his couch and pollutes it—Judah commits incest with his own daughter-in-law and all his sons become a plague to him. At last Benjamin is taken away and the old man, almost broken-hearted, cries, "Joseph is not and Simeon is not and you will take Benjamin away?" Never was man more tried than Jacob—all through the one sin of cheating his brother! All through his life God chastised him. But I believe there are many who can sympathize with dear old Jacob. They have had to pass through trials very much like his. Well, cross-bearers, God says, "I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." Poor tried Souls! You are not consumed because of the unchanging nature of your God. Now do not get to fretting and say, with the self-conceit of misery, "I am the man who has seen affliction." Why "the Man of Sorrows" was afflicted more than you! Jesus was indeed a mourner. You only see the skirts of the garments of affliction. You never have trials like His. You do not understand what troubles mean. You have hardly sipped the cup of trouble—you have only had a drop or two, but Jesus drunk the dregs. Fear not, says God, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob," men of peculiar trials, "are not consumed."

Then one more thought about who are the "sons of Jacob," for I should like you to find out whether you are "sons of Jacob," yourselves. They are *men of peculiar character*. For though there were some things about Jacob's character which we cannot commend, there are one or two things which God commends. There was Jacob's faith, by which Jacob had his name written among the mighty worthies who obtained not the promises on earth but shall obtain them in Heaven. Are you men of faith, beloved? Do you know what it is to walk by faith, to live by faith, to get your temporary food by faith, to live on spiritual manna—all by faith? Is faith the rule of your life? If so, you are the "sons of Jacob."

Then Jacob was a man of prayer—a man who wrestled and groaned and prayed. There is a man up yonder who never prayed this morning, before coming up to the House of God. Ah, you poor Heathen, don't you pray? "No!" he says, "I never thought of such a thing—for years I have not prayed." Well, I hope you may before you die. Live and die without prayer and you will pray long enough when you get to Hell. There is a woman—she did not pray this morning. She was so busy sending her children to the Sunday school she had no time to pray. No time to pray? Had you time to dress? There is a time for every purpose under Heaven and if you had purposed to pray, you would have prayed. Sons of God cannot live without prayer. They are wrestling Jacobs. They are men in whom the Holy Spirit so works that they can no more live without prayer

than I can live without breathing. They must pray. sirs, mark you, if you are living without prayer, you are living without Christ. And dying like that, your portion will be in the lake which burns with fire. God redeem you, God rescue you from such a lot! But you who are "the sons of Jacob," take comfort, for God is immutable.

III. I can say only a word about the other point—THE BENEFIT WHICH THESE "SONS OF JACOB" RECEIVE FROM AN UNCHANGING GOD. "Therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." "Consumed?" How? How can man be consumed? Why, there are two ways. We might have been consumed in Hell. If God had been a changing God, the "sons of Jacob" here this morning, might have been consumed in Hell. But for God's unchanging love I should have been a stick in the fire. But there is a way of being consumed in this *world*. There is such a thing as being *condemned* before you die—"condemned already." There is such a thing as being alive and yet being absolutely dead. We might have been left to our own devices—and then where would we be now? Reveling with the drunkard, blaspheming Almighty God? Oh, had He left you, dearly beloved, had He been a changing God—you had been among the filthiest of the filthy and the vilest of the vile! Cannot you remember in your life seasons similar to those I have felt? I have gone right to the edge of sin—some strong temptation has taken hold of both my arms so that I could not wrestle with it. I have been pushed along, dragged as by an awful Satanic power to the very edge of some horrid precipice. I have looked down, down, down and seen my portion. I quivered on the brink of ruin. I have been horrified, as, with my hair upright, I have thought of the sin I was about to commit—the horrible pit into which I was about to fall! A strong arm has saved me. I have started back and cried, O God, could I have gone so near sin and yet come back again? Could I have walked right up to the furnace and not fallen down, like Nebuchadnezzar's strong men, devoured by the very heat? Oh, is it possible I should be here this morning, when I think of the sins I have committed and the crimes which have crossed my wicked imagination? Yes, I am here, unconsumed, because the Lord changes not. Oh, if He had changed, we should have been consumed in a dozen ways. If the Lord had changed, you and I should have been consumed by ourselves—for after all, Mr. Self is the worst enemy a Christian has. We would have proved suicides to our own souls. We would have mixed the cup of poison for our own spirits, if the Lord had not been an unchanging God and dashed the cup out of our hands when we were about to drink it. Then we would have been consumed by God, Himself, if He had not been a changeless God. We call God a Father—but there is not a father in this world who would not have killed all his children long ago, so provoked would he have been with them—if he had been half as much troubled as God has been with His family. He has the most troublesome family in the whole world—

unbelieving, ungrateful, disobedient, forgetful, rebellious, wandering, murmuring and stiff-necked. Well, it is that He is long-suffering, or else He would have taken not only the rod, but the sword to some of us long ago! But there was nothing in us to love at first, so there cannot be less now. John Newton used to tell a whimsical story and laugh at it, too, of a good woman who said, in order to prove the doctrine of Election—"Ah, sir, the Lord must have loved me before I was born, or else He would not have seen anything in me to love afterwards." I am sure it is true in my case and true in respect to most of God's people. For there is little to love in them after they are born. If He had not loved them before, He would have seen no reason to choose them after—but since He loved them without works, He still loves them without works. Since their good works did not *win* His affection, bad works cannot *sever* that affection—since their righteousness did not bind His love to them, so their wickedness cannot snap the golden links. He loved them out of pure sovereign grace and He will love them still. But we should have been consumed by the devil and by our enemies—consumed by the world, consumed by our sins, by our trials and in a hundred other ways if God had ever changed!

Well, now, time fails us and I can say but little. I have only just cursorily touched on the text. I now hand it to you. May the Lord help you "sons of Jacob" to take home this portion of meat. Digest it well and feed upon it. May the Holy Spirit sweetly apply the glorious things that are written! And may you have "a feast of fat things, of wines on the lees well refined!" Remember God is the same, whatever is removed. Your friends may be disaffected, your ministers may be taken away, everything may change—but God does not. Your brethren may change and cast out your name as vile—but God will still love you! Let your station in life change and your property be gone. Let your whole life be shaken and you become weak and sickly. Let everything flee away—there is one place where change cannot put his finger. There is one name on which mutability can never be written. There is one heart which never can alter. That heart is God's—that name Love—

"Trust Him, He will never deceive you.
Though you harshly of Him deem;
He will never, never leave you,
Nor will let you quite leave Him."

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THE REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST
NO. 2

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, JANUARY 7, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"This do in remembrance of Me."
1 Corinthians 11:24.

IT seems, then, that Christians may forget Christ. The text implies the possibility of forgetfulness concerning Him whom gratitude and affection should compel them to remember. There could be no need for this loving exhortation if there were not a fearful supposition that our memories might prove treacherous and our remembrance superficial in its character, or changing in its nature. Nor is this a bare supposition—it is, alas, too well confirmed in our experience, not as a possibility, but as a lamentable fact. It seems at first sight too gross a crime to lay at the door of converted men. It appears almost impossible that those who have been redeemed by the blood of the dying Lamb should ever forget their Ransomer—that those who have been loved with an everlasting love by the eternal Son of God, should ever forget that Son. But if startling to the ear, it is, alas, too apparent to the eye to allow us to deny the fact. Forget Him who never forgot us? Forget Him who poured His blood forth for our sins? Forget Him who loved us even to the death? Can it be possible? Yes, it is not only possible, but conscience confesses that it is too sadly a fault of all of us—that we can remember anything except Christ. The object which we should make the monarch of our hearts is the very thing we are most inclined to forget. Where one would think that memory would linger and unmindfulness would be an unknown intruder—*that* is the very spot which is desecrated by the feet of forgetfulness—the place where memory too seldom looks. I appeal to the conscience of every Christian here—can you deny the truth of what I utter? Do you not find yourselves forgetful of Jesus? Some creature steals away your heart and you are unmindful of Him upon whom your affection ought to be set. Some earthly business engrosses your attention when you should have your eye steadily fixed upon the cross. It is the incessant round of world, world, world—the constant din of earth, earth, earth, that takes away the soul from Christ. Oh, my friends, is it not too sadly true that we can recollect anything but Christ and forget nothing so easy as Him whom we ought to remember? While memory will preserve a poisoned weed, it suffers the Rose of Sharon to wither.

The cause of this is very apparent—it lies in one or two facts. We forget Christ because regenerate persons as we are—still corruption and death remain even in us. We forget Him because we carry about with us the old Adam of sin and death. If we were purely new-born creatures, we would never forget the name of Him whom we love. If we were entirely regenerated beings, we would sit down and meditate on what our Savior did and suffered. As He is. All He has gloriously promised to perform. And never would our roving affections stray, but stay centered, nailed, fixed eternally to one object—we should continually contemplate the death and sufferings of our Lord. But alas, we have a worm in the heart, an abode of pests, a morgue within. Lusts, vile imaginations and strong evil passions like wells of poisonous water send out streams of impurity. I have a heart, which God knows I wish I could wring from my body and hurl to an infinite distance. I have a soul which is a cave of unclean birds, a den of loathsome creatures where dragons haunt and owls congregate, where every evil beast dwells—a heart too vile to have a parallel—"deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." This is the reason why I am forgetful of Christ. Nor is this the sole cause. I suspect it lies somewhere else, too. We forget Christ because there are so many other things around us to attract our attention. "But," you say, "they ought not to do so, because though they are around us, they are nothing in comparison with Jesus Christ—though they are in dread proximity to our hearts, what are they compared with Christ?" But do you know, dear friends, that the nearness of an object has a very great effect upon its power? The sun is many, many times larger than the moon, but the moon has a greater influence upon the tides of the ocean than the sun, simply because it is nearer and has a greater power of attraction. So I find that a little crawling worm of the earth has more effect upon my soul than the glorious Christ in Heaven. A handful of golden earth, a puff of fame, a shout of applause, a thriving business, my house, my home will affect me more than all the glories of the upper world. Yes, than the beatific vision itself—simply because earth is near and Heaven is far away. Happy day, when I shall be borne aloft on angels' wings to dwell forever near my Lord—to bask in the sunshine of His smile and to be lost in the ineffable radiance of His lovely countenance. We see, then, the cause of forgetfulness. Let us blush over it. Let us be sad that we neglect our Lord so much. And now let us attend to His Word, "This do in remembrance of Me," hoping that its solemn sounds may charm away the demon of base ingratitude.

We shall speak, first of all, *concerning the blessed object of memory*. Secondly, *upon the advantages to be derived from remembering this person*. Thirdly *the gracious help, to our memory*—"This do in *remembrance* of *Me*." And fourthly, *the gentle command*, "*This do* in remembrance of

Me." May the Holy Spirit open my lips and your hearts, that we may receive blessings.

I. First of all, we shall speak of THE GLORIOUS AND PRECIOUS OBJECT OF MEMORY—"This do in remembrance of *Me*." Christians have many treasures to lock up in the cabinet of memory. They ought to remember their *election*—"Chosen of God before time began." They ought to be mindful of their *extraction*, that they were taken out of the miry clay, hewn out of the horrible pit. They ought to recollect their *effectual calling*, for they were called of God and rescued by the power of the Holy Spirit. They ought to remember their *special deliverances*—all that has been done for them and all the mercies bestowed on them. But there is one whom they should embalm in their souls with the most costly spices—one who, above all other gifts of God, deserves to be had in perpetual remembrance. *one*, I said, for I mean not an act, I mean not a deed. But it is a *person* whose portrait I would frame in gold and hang up in the stateroom of the soul. I would have you earnest students of all the *deeds* of the conquering Messiah. I would have you conversant with the *life* of our beloved. But O forget not His *person*. For the text says, "This do in remembrance of ME." It is Christ's glorious person which ought to be the object of our remembrance. It is His image which should be enshrined in every temple of the Holy Spirit.

But some will say, "How can we remember Christ's person when we never saw it? We cannot tell what was the peculiar form of His visage. We believe His countenance to be fairer than that of any other man—although through grief and suffering more marred—but since we did not see it, we cannot remember it. We never saw His feet as they trod the journeys of His mercy. We never beheld His hands as He stretched them out full of loving kindness. We cannot remember the wondrous intonation of His language, when in more than seraphic eloquence He awed the multitude and chained their ears to Him. We cannot picture the sweet smile that always hung on His lips, nor that awful frown with which He dealt out anathemas against the Pharisees. We cannot remember Him in His sufferings and agonies for we never saw Him." Well, beloved, I suppose it is true that you cannot remember the *visible* appearance, for you were not then born. But do you not know that even the Apostle said though He had known Christ after the flesh, yet, thenceforth after the flesh He would know Christ no more. The natural appearance, the race, the descent, the poverty, the humble garb—they are nothing in the Apostle's estimation of His glorified Lord. And thus, though you do not know Him after the flesh, you may know Him after the Spirit! In this manner you can remember Jesus as much now as Peter, or Paul, or John, or James, or any of those favored ones who once trod in His footsteps, walked side by side with Him, or laid their heads upon His bosom.

Memory annihilates distance and leaps over time and can behold the Lord, though He is exalted in glory!

Ah, let us spend five minutes in remembering Jesus. Let us remember Him in His *baptism,* when descending into the waters of Jordan, a voice was heard, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Behold Him coming up dripping from the stream. Surely the conscious water must have blushed that it contained its God. He slept within its waves a moment—to consecrate the tomb of baptism—in which those who are dead with Christ are buried with Him. Let us remember Him in the *wilderness*, where He went straight from His immersion. Oh, I have often thought of that scene in the desert, when Christ, weary and worn, sat down, perhaps upon the gnarled roots of some old tree! Forty days had He fasted. He was hungry. Then in the extremity of His weakness there came the evil spirit. Perhaps he had veiled his demon royalty in the form of some aged pilgrim and taking up a stone, said, "Way worn pilgrim, if you are the Son of God, command this stone to be made bread." I think I see him, with his cunning smile and his malicious leer, as he held the stone and said, "If"—blasphemous if—"If you are the Son of God, command that this stone shall become a meal for me and You, for both of us are hungry and it will be an act of mercy. You can do it easily, speak the word and it shall be like the bread of Heaven. We will feed upon it and You and I will be friends forever." But Jesus said—and O how sweetly did He say it—"Man shall not live by bread alone." Oh, how wonderfully did Christ fight the Tempter! Never was there such a battle as that. It was a duel foot to foot—a single-handed combat—when the champion lion of the Pit and the mighty Lion of the tribe of Judah fought together. Splendid sight! Angels stood around to gaze upon the spectacle, just as men of old did sit to see the tournament of noted warriors. There Satan gathered up his strength. Here Apollyon concentrated all his Satanic power that in this giant wrestle he might overthrow the Seed of the woman! But Jesus was more than a match for him. In the wrestling He gave him a deadly fall and came out more than a conqueror. Lamb of God! I will remember Your desert strivings when next I combat with Satan. When next I have a conflict with roaring Diabolus, I will look to Him who conquered once and for all and broke the dragon's head with His mighty blows!

Further, I beseech you remember Him in all *His daily temptations* and hourly trials, in that life-long struggle of His through which He passed. Oh, what a mighty tragedy was the death of Christ! And His life, too! Ushered in with a song, it closed with a shriek, "It is finished!" It began in a manger and ended on a cross—but oh, the sad interval between! Oh, the black pictures of persecution when His friends abhorred Him. When His foes frowned at Him as He passed the streets. When He heard the

hiss of calumny and was bitten by the foul tooth of envy. When slander said He had a devil and was mad—that He was a drunken man and a wine-bibber—and when His righteous soul was vexed with the ways of the wicked. Oh, Son of God, I must remember You. I cannot help remembering You, when I think of those years of toil and trouble which You did live for *my* sake! But do you know my chosen theme—the place where I can always best remember Christ? It is a shady garden full of olives. O that spot! I would that I had eloquence, that I might take you there. Oh, if the Spirit would but take us and set us down hard by the mountains of Jerusalem, I would say, See, there runs the brook of Kidron, which the King, Himself, did pass. And there you see the olive trees. Possibly, at the foot of that olive tree lay the three disciples when they slept. And there, ah, there, I see drops of blood! Stand here, my soul, a moment. Those drops of blood—do you behold them? Mark them. They are not the blood of wounds—they are the blood of a Man whose body was then unwounded. O my soul, picture Him when He knelt down in agony and sweat—sweat because He wrestled with God—sweat because He agonized with His Father. "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." O Gethsemane! Your shades are deeply solemn to my soul. But ah, those drops of blood! Surely it is the climax of the height of misery. It is the last of the mighty acts of this wondrous Sacrifice. Can love go deeper than that? Can it stoop to greater deeds of mercy? Oh, had I eloquence I would bestow a tongue on every drop of blood that is there—that your hearts might rise in mutiny against your languor and coldness and speak out with earnest burning remembrance of Jesus. And now, farewell, Gethsemane.

But I will take you somewhere else where you shall still behold the "Man of Sorrows." I will lead you to Pilate's hall and let you see Him endure the mockeries of cruel soldiers—the smiting of mailed gloves, the blows of clenched fists. The shame, the spitting, the plucking of the hair—the cruel buffetings. Oh, can you not picture the King of Martyrs stripped of His garments—exposed to the gaze of fiend-like men? See you not the crown about His temples, each thorn acting as a lancet to pierce His head? Stare you not at His lacerated shoulders and the white bones starting out from the bleeding flesh? Oh, Son of Man! I see You scourged and flagellated with rods and whips! How can I cease to remember You? My memory would be more treacherous than Pilate, did it not ever cry, *Ecce Homo*— "Behold the Man."

Now, finish the scene of woe by a view of Calvary. Think of the pierced hands and the bleeding side. Think of the scorching sun and then the entire darkness. Remember the broiling fever and the dread thirst. Think of the death shriek, "It is finished!" and of the groans which were its prelude. This is the object of memory. Let us never forget Christ. I be-

seech you, for the love of Jesus, let Him have the chief place in your memories. Let not the Pearl of Great Price be dropped from your careless hand into the dark ocean of oblivion.

I cannot, however, help saying one thing before I leave this head—and that is, there are some of you who can very well carry away what I have said because you have read it often and heard it before. But still you cannot spiritually remember anything about Christ because you never had Him manifested to you—and what we have never *known*—we cannot remember. Thanks be unto God, I speak not of you all, for in this place there is a goodly remnant according to the election of Grace and to them I turn. Perhaps I could tell you of some old barn, hedge-row, or cottage. Or if you have lived in London, about some attic, or some dark lane or street, where first you met with Christ. Or some chapel into which you strayed and you might say, "Thank God, I can remember the seat where first He met with me and spoke the whispers of love to my soul and told me He had purchased me"—

"Do mind the place, the spot of ground,
Where Jesus did you meet!"

Yes, and I would love to build a temple on the spot and to raise some monument there—where Jehovah-Jesus first spoke to my soul and manifested Himself to me. But He has revealed Himself to you more than once—has He not? And you can remember scores of places where the Lord has appeared of old unto you, saying, "Behold I have loved you with an everlasting love." If you cannot all remember such things, there are some of you that can. And I am sure they will understand me when I say, come and do this in remembrance of Christ—in remembrance of all His loving visitations—of His sweet wooing words—of His winning smiles upon you—of all He has said and communicated to your souls. Remember all these things, tonight, if it is possible for memory to gather up the mighty aggregate of Grace. "Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all His benefits."

II. Having spoken upon the blessed object of our memory, we say, secondly, a little upon THE BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED FROM A LOVING REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST.

Love never says, "*Cui bono*?" Love never asks what benefit it will derive from love. Love from its very nature is a unselfish thing. It loves for the creature's sake it loves and for nothing else. The Christian needs no argument to make Him love Christ—just as a mother needs no argument to make her love her child. She does it because it is her nature to do so. The new-born creature must love Christ—it cannot help it. Oh, who can resist the matchless charms of Jesus Christ?—the fairest of ten thousand fairs, the loveliest of ten thousand loves! Who can refuse to adore the Prince of Perfection, the Mirror of Beauty, the Majestic Son of God?

But yet it may be useful to us to observe the advantages of remembering Christ, for they are neither few nor small.

And first, remembrance of Jesus will tend to give you *hope when you are under the burden of your sins*. Let us notice a few characters here tonight. There comes in a poor creature. Look at him! He has neglected himself this last month. He looks as if he had hardly eaten his daily bread. What is the matter with you? "Oh," he says, "I have been under a sense of guilt. I have been again and again lamenting, because I fear I can never be forgiven—once I thought I was good, but I have been reading the Bible and I find that my heart is 'deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.' I have tried to reform, but the more I try, the deeper I sink in the mire. There is certainly no hope for me. I feel that I deserve no mercy—it seems to me that God must destroy me, for He has declared, 'The soul that sins it shall die.' And die I must, be damned I must, for I know I have broken God's Law." How will you comfort such a man? What soft words will you utter to give him peace? *I* know! I will tell him to *remember Christ*. I will tell him there is one who paid the mighty debt of misery. Yes, I will tell you drunks, swearers—whatever you have been—I will tell you that there is one who for you has made a complete Atonement! If you only *believe* on Him you are safe forever. Remember Him, you poor dying, hopeless creature and you shall be made to sing for joy and gladness. Look, the man believes and in ecstasy exclaims, "Oh, come all you that fear God and I will tell you what He has done for my soul"—

"Tell it unto sinners, tell,
I am, I am out of Hell."

Hallelujah! God has blotted out my sins like a thick cloud! That is one benefit to be derived from remembering Christ. It gives us hope under a sense of sin and tells us there is mercy yet.

Now, I must have another character. And what does he say? "I cannot stand it any longer—I have been persecuted and ill-treated because I love Christ. I am mocked and laughed at and despised—I try to bear it, but I really cannot. A man will be a man—tread upon a worm and he will turn upon you. My patience altogether fails me. I am in such a peculiar position that it is of no use to advise me to have patience, for patience I cannot have. My enemies are slandering me and I do not know what to do." What shall we say to that poor man? How shall we give him patience? What shall we preach to him? You have heard what he has to say about himself. How shall we comfort him under this great trial? If we suffered the same, what should we wish some friend to say to us? Shall we tell him that other persons have borne as much? He will say, "Miserable comforters are you all!" No, I will tell him, "Brother, you are persecuted, but remember the words of Jesus Christ, how He spoke unto us and

said, 'Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for great is your reward in Heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.'" My brother! Think of *Him*, who when He died, prayed for His murderers and said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." All you have to bear is as nothing compared with His mighty sufferings. Take courage—face it again like a man—never say die. Let not your patience be gone. Take up your cross daily and follow Christ. Let Him be your motto—set Him before your eyes. And, now, receiving this, hear what the man will say. He tells you at once—"Hail, persecution! Welcome shame! Disgrace for Jesus shall be my honor and scorn shall be my highest glory—

'Now, for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss,
I pour contempt on all my shame,
And nail my glory to His cross.'"

There is another effect, you see, of remembering Christ. It tends to give us *patience under* persecution. It is a belt to brace up the loins so that our faith may endure to the end.

Dear friends, I would occupy your time too much if I went into the several benefits. So I will only just run over one or two blessings to be received. It will give us strength in *temptation.* I believe that there are hours with every man when he has a season of terrific temptation. There was never a vessel that lived upon the mighty deep but sometimes it has to do battle with a storm. There she is, the poor ship, rocked up and down on the mad waves. See how they throw her from wave to wave, all toss her to mid-heaven. The winds laugh her to scorn. Old ocean takes the ship in his dripping fingers and shakes it to and fro. How the mariners cry out for fear! Do you know how you can put oil upon the waters and all shall be still? Yes, one potent word shall do it. Let *Jesus* come. Let the poor heart *remember Jesus* and steadily, then, the ship shall sail, for Christ has the helm. The winds shall blow no more, for Christ shall bid them shut their mighty mouths and never again disturb His child. There is nothing which can give you strength in temptation and help you to weather the storm like the name of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God! Then again, what *comfort* it will give you on a sick bed—the name of Christ! It will help you to be patient to those who wait upon you and to endure the sufferings which you have to bear. Yes, it shall be so with you, that you shall have more hope in sickness than in health and shall find a blessed sweetness in the bitterness of gall. Instead of feeling vinegar in your mouth through your trouble, you shall find honey for sweetness in the midst of all the trial and trouble that God will put upon you—"For He gives songs in the night."

But just to close up the advantages of remembering Christ—do you know where you will have the benefit most of all? Do you know the place where chiefly you will rejoice that you ever thought of Him? I will take you to it. Hush! Silence! You are going upstairs into a lonely room. The curtains hang down. Someone stands there weeping. Children are around the bed and friends are there. See that man lying there? That is yourself—look at how his eyes are your eyes—his hands are your hands. That is *yourself*—you will be there soon, Man! That is *yourself*—do you see it? It is a picture of *yourself*—those are your eyes that soon will be closed in death—your hands that will lie stiff and motionless—your lips that will be dry and parched, between which they will put drops of water. Those are your words that freeze in air and drop so slowly from your dying lips. I wonder whether you will be able to remember Christ there? If you do not, I will picture you. Behold that man, straight up in the bed—see his eyes starting from their sockets? His friends are all around, they ask him what he sees. He represses the emotion. He tells them he sees nothing. They know that there is something before his eyes. He starts again. Good God! What is that I see—I seem to see? That is it? Ah, one sigh! The soul is gone. The body is there. What did he see? He saw a flaming throne of judgments. He saw God upon it with His scepter. He saw books opened. He beheld the throne of God and saw a messenger with a sword brandished in the air to smite him low. Man! That is *yourself*. There you will be soon. That picture is your own portrait. I have photographed you to the life. Look at it. That is where you shall be within a few years—yes, within a few days. But if you can *remember Christ*, shall I tell you what you will do? Oh, you will smile in the midst of trouble. Let me picture such a man. They put pillows behind him. He sits up in bed and takes the hand of his loved one and says, "Farewell! Weep not for me! The kind God shall wipe away all tears from every eye." Those round about are addressed, "Prepare to meet your God and follow me to the land of bliss." Now he has set his house in order. It is done. Behold him, like good old Jacob, leaning on his staff, about to die. See how his eyes sparkle! He claps his hands—they gather round to hear what he has to say. He whispers, "Victory!" And summoning a little more strength, he cries, "Victory!" And at last, with his final gasp, "Victory, through Him that loved us!" And he dies. This is one of the great benefits to be derived from remembering Christ—to be enabled to meet death with blessed composure.

III. We are now arrived at the third portion of our meditations which is A SWEET AID TO MEMORY.

At schools we use certain books, called "Aids to Memory." I am sure they rather perplexed than assisted me. Their utility was equivalent to that of a bundle of canes under a traveler's arm—true, he might use

them one by one to walk with, but in the meantime he carried a host of others which he would never need. But our Savior was wiser than all our teachers and His remembrances are true and real aids to memory. His love tokens have an unmistakable language and they sweetly win our attention.

Behold the whole mystery of the sacred Eucharist. It is bread and wine which are lively emblems of the body and blood of Jesus. The power to excite remembrance consists in the appeal thus made to the senses. Here the eye, the hand, the mouth find joyful work. The bread is tasted and entering within, works upon the sense of taste, which is one of the most powerful remembrances. The wine is sipped—the act is palpable. We know that we are drinking and thus the senses which are usually clogs to the soul become wines to lift the mind in contemplation. Again—much of the influence of this ordinance is found in its simplicity. How beautifully simple the ceremony is—bread broken and wine poured out. There is no calling *that* thing a chalice, *that* thing a paten and *that* a host. Here is nothing to burden the memory—here is the simple bread and wine. He must have no memory at all who cannot remember that he has eaten bread and that he has been drinking wine. Note again, the *mighty pregnancy* of these signs—how full they are of meaning. Bread broken—so was your Savior broken. Bread to be eaten—so His flesh is food, indeed. Wine poured out, the pressed juice of the grape—so was your Savior crushed under the foot of divine justice. His blood is your sweetest wine. Wine to cheer your heart—so does the blood of Jesus. Wine to strengthen and invigorate you—so does the blood of the Mighty Sacrifice. Oh, make that bread and wine to your souls tonight a sweet and blessed help of remembrance of that dear Man who once on Calvary died. Like the little ewe lamb, you are now to eat your Master's bread and drink from His cup. Remember the hand which feeds you.

But before you can remember Christ well here, you must ask the assistance of the Holy Spirit. I believe there ought to be a preparation before the Lord's Supper. I do not believe in Mrs. Toogood's preparation, who spent a week in preparing and then finding it was not the Ordinance Sunday, she said she had lost all the week. I do not believe in that kind of preparation. But I do believe in a holy preparation for the Lord's Supper—when we can on a Saturday, if possible, spend an hour in quiet meditation on Christ and His Passion. When, especially on the Sabbath afternoon, we can devoutly sit down and behold Him—then these scenes become realities and not mockeries, as they are to some. I fear greatly that there are some of you who will eat the bread tonight and will not think about Christ—some of you who will drink the wine and not think of His blood—and vile hypocrites you will be while you do it! Take heed to yourselves, "He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks—

what?—"damnation to himself." This is plain English. Mind what you are doing! Do not do it carelessly. For of all the sacred things on earth, it is the most solemn. We have heard of some men banded together by draining blood from their arms and drinking it all round. That was most horrid, but at the same time most solemn. Here you are to drink blood from the veins of Christ and sip the trickling stream which gushed from His own loving heart. Is not that a solemn thing? Ought anybody to trifle with it? To go to church and take it for sixpence? To come and join us for the sake of getting charities? Away with it! It is an awful blasphemy against Almighty God and among the damned in Hell! Those shall be among the most accursed who dared thus to mock the holy ordinance of God. This is the remembrance of Christ. "This do in remembrance of Me." If you cannot do it in remembrance of Christ, I beseech you, as you love your souls, do not do it at all! Oh, regenerate man or woman, enter not into the court of the priests, lest Israel's God resent the intrusion.

IV. And now to close up. Here is A SWEET COMMAND—"This do in remembrance of Me." To whom does this command apply? "This do YOU." It is important to answer this question—"This do YOU." Who are intended? You who put your trust in Me. "This do you in remembrance of Me." Well, now, you should suppose Christ speaking to you tonight. And He says, "This do you in remembrance of Me." Christ watches you at the door. Some of you go home and Christ says, "I thought I said, 'This do you in remembrance of Me.'" Some of you keep your seats as spectators. Christ sits with you and He says, "I thought I said, 'This do you in remembrance of Me.'" "Lord, I know You did." "Do you love Me, then?" "Yes, I love You. I love You, Lord, You know I do." "But, I say, go down there—eat that bread, drink that wine." "I do not like to, Lord. I should have to be baptized if I joined that Church and I am afraid I shall catch cold, or be looked at. I am afraid to go before the Church, for I think they would ask some questions I could not answer." "What?" asks Christ, "Is this all you love Me? Is this all your affection to your Lord? Oh, how cold to Me, your Savior! If I had loved you no more than this, you would have been in Hell—if that were the full extent of My affection, I would not have died for you. Great love bore great agonies—and is this all your gratitude to Me?" Are not some of you ashamed, after this? Do you not say in your hearts, "It is really wrong"? Christ says, "Do this in remembrance of Me," and are you not ashamed to stay away? I give a free invitation to every lover of Jesus to come to this table. I beseech you, deny not yourselves the privilege by refusing to unite with the Church. If you still live in sinful neglect of this ordinance, let me remind you that Christ has said, "Whoever shall be ashamed of Me in this generation, of him will I be ashamed, when I come in the Glory of My Father." Oh, soldier of the cross, act not the coward's part!

And not to lead you into any mistakes, I must just add one thing and then I have done. When I speak of your taking the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, do not imagine that I wish you for one moment to suppose that there is anything *saving* in it. Some say that the ordinance of baptism is non-essential. So is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper—it is non-essential, if we look upon it in the light of *salvation*. Be saved by eating a piece of bread? Nonsense, confounded nonsense! Be saved by drinking a drop of wine? Why, it is too absurd for common sense to admit any discussion upon! You know it is the blood of Jesus Christ. It is the merit of His agonies. It is the purchase of His sufferings—it is what *He did*—that alone can save us. Venture on Him—venture wholly—and then you are saved. Do you know, poor convicted Sinner, the way of salvation? If I ever meet you in the next world, you might, perhaps, say to me, "I spent one evening, sir, in hearing you and you never told me the way to Heaven." Well, you shall hear it—Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, trust in His name, find refuge in His cross, rely upon the power of His Spirit, trust in His righteousness and you are saved beyond the vengeance of the Law, or the power of Hell. But trust in your own works and you are lost as sure as you are alive!

Now, O ever glorious Son of God, we approach Your table to feast on the viands of Grace. Permit each of us, in reliance upon Your Spirit, to exclaim in the words of one of Your own poets—

"Remember You and all Your pains
And all Your love to me?—Yes,
While a pulse or breath remains,
I will remember Thee.
And when these failing lips grow dark
And thought and memory flee
When You shall in Your kingdom come,
Jesus, remember me!"

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THE SIN OF UNBELIEF
NO. 3

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 14, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"And that officer answered the man of God and said, Now, behold, if the Lord should make windows in Heaven might such a thing be?
And he said, Behold, you shall see it with your eyes but shall not eat thereof."
2 Kings 7:19.

ONE wise man may deliver a whole city. One good man may be the means of safety to a thousand others. The holy ones are "the salt of the earth," the means of the preservation of the wicked. Without the godly as a buffer, the race would be utterly destroyed. In the city of Samaria there was one righteous man—Elisha, the servant of the Lord. Piety was altogether extinct in the court. The king was a sinner of the blackest dye, his iniquity was glaring and infamous. Jehoram walked in the ways of his father, Ahab, and made unto himself false gods. The people of Samaria were fallen like their monarch—they had gone astray from Jehovah. They had forsaken the God of Israel—they remembered not the watchword of Jacob, "The Lord your God is one God." And in wicked idolatry they bowed before the idols of the Heathens. Therefore the Lord of Hosts suffered their enemies to oppress them until the curse of Ebal was fulfilled in the streets of Samaria, for "the tender and delicate woman who would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness," had an evil eye to her own children and devoured her offspring by reason of fierce hunger (Deut 28:56-58). In this awful extremity the one holy man was the medium of salvation. The one grain of salt preserved the entire city—the one warrior for God was the means of the deliverance of the whole beleaguered multitude. For Elisha's sake, the Lord sent the promise that the next day food which could not be obtained at any price, should be had at the cheapest possible rate—at the very gates of Samaria. We may picture the joy of the multitude when first the Seer uttered this prediction. They knew him to be a prophet of the Lord. He had divine credentials. All his past prophecies had been fulfilled. They knew that he was a man sent of God and uttering Jehovah's message. Surely the monarch's eyes would glisten with delight and the emaciated multitude would leap for joy at the prospects of so speedy a release from famine. "Tomorrow," would they shout, "tomorrow our hunger shall be over and we shall feast to the full."

However, the officer on whom the king leaned expressed his disbelief. We hear not that any of the common people, the plebeians, ever did so.

But an aristocrat did it. Strange it is that God has seldom chosen the great men of this world. High places and faith in Christ do seldom agree. This great man said, "Impossible!" And, with an insult to the prophet, he added, "If the Lord should make windows in Heaven, might such a thing be"? His sin lay in the fact that after repeated proofs of Elisha's ministry, he yet disbelieved the assurances uttered by the prophet on God's behalf. He had, doubtless seen the marvelous defeat of Moab—he had been startled at tidings of the resurrection of the Shunamite's son. He knew that Elisha had revealed Benhadad's secrets and smitten his marauding hosts with blindness. He had seen the bands of Syria decoyed into the heart of Samaria. And he probably knew the story of the widow, whose oil filled all the vessels and redeemed her son. Of all events, the cure of Naaman was common conversation at court. And yet, in the face of all this accumulated evidence, in the teeth of all these credentials of the prophet's mission, he yet doubted and insultingly told him that Heaven must become an open casement before the promise could be performed. Whereupon God pronounced his doom by the mouth of the man who had just now proclaimed the promise—"you shall see it with your eyes but shall not eat thereof." And Providence—which always fulfils prophecy—just as the paper takes the stamp of the type—destroyed the man. Trod down in the streets of Samaria, he perished at its gates beholding the plenty, but tasting not of it! Perhaps his carriage was haughty and insulting to the people. Or he tried to restrain their eager rush. Or, perhaps, as we would say, it might have been by mere "accident" that he was crushed to death. But he saw the prophecy fulfilled and never lived to enjoy it. In his case, seeing was believing, but it was not enjoying.

I shall this morning invite your attention to two things—the man's sin and his punishment. Perhaps I shall say but little of this man, since I have detailed the circumstances, but I shall discourse upon the sin of unbelief and the punishment thereof.

I. And first, the SIN. His sin was *unbelief*. He doubted the promise of God. In this particular case, unbelief took the form of a doubt of the divine veracity, or a mistrust of God's power. Either he doubted whether God really meant what He said, or whether it was within the range of possibility that God should fulfill His promise. Unbelief has more phases than the moon and more colors than the chameleon. Common people say of the devil that he is seen sometimes in one shape and sometimes in another. I am sure this is true of Satan's first-born child—unbelief, for its forms are legion. At one time I see unbelief dressed out as an angel of light. It calls itself humility and it says, "I would not be presumptuous. I dare not think that God would pardon me. I am too great a sinner." We call that humility and thank God that our friend is in so good a condition. I do not thank God for any such delusion! It is the devil dressed as an angel of light—it is unbelief after all! At other times we detect unbelief

in the shape of a doubt of God's immutability. "The Lord has loved me, but perhaps He will cast me off tomorrow. He helped me yesterday and under the shadows of His wings I trust. But perhaps I shall receive no help in the next affliction. He may have cast me off. He may be unmindful of His Covenant and forget to be gracious." Sometimes this infidelity is embodied in a doubt of God's power. We see every day new straits we are involved in—a net of difficulties—and we think, "surely the Lord cannot deliver us." We strive to get rid of our burden and finding that we cannot do it, we think God's arm is as short as ours and His power as little as human might. A fearful form of unbelief is that doubt which keeps men from coming to Christ, which leads the sinner to distrust the ability of Christ to save him, to doubt the willingness of Jesus to accept so great a transgressor. But the most hideous of all is the traitor, in its true colors, blaspheming God and madly denying His existence. Infidelity, deism and atheism are the ripe fruits of this pernicious tree. They are the most terrific eruptions of the volcano of unbelief. Unbelief has become of full stature, when quitting the mask and laying aside disguise, it profanely stalks the earth, uttering the rebellious cry, "No God," striving in vain to shake the throne of the divinity, by lifting up its arm against Jehovah and in its arrogance would—

"Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod,
Rejudge His justice—be the god of God."

Then, truly, unbelief has come to its full perfection. And then you see what it really is—for the *least* unbelief is of the same nature as the *greatest*.

I am astonished and I am sure you will be, when I tell you that there are some strange people in the world who do not believe that unbelief is a sin! Strange people I must call them, because they are sound in their faith in every other respect. Only to make the articles of their creed consistent, as they imagine, they deny that unbelief is sinful. I remember a young man going into a circle of friends and ministers who were disputing whether it was a sin in men that they did not believe the gospel. While they were discussing it, he said, "Gentlemen am I in the presence of Christians? Are you believers in the Bible, or are you not?" They said, "We are Christians, of course." "Then," he said, "does not the Scripture say, of sin, 'because they believed not on Me?' And is it not the dawning sin of sinners, that they do not believe on Christ?" I could not have thought that persons should be so foolhardy as to venture to assert that, "it is no sin for a sinner not to believe on Christ." I thought that however far they might wish to push their sentiments, they would not tell a lie to uphold the Truth and, in my opinion, this is what such men are really doing! Truth is a strong tower and never requires to be buttressed with error. God's Word will stand against all man's devices. I would never invent a sophism to prove that it is no sin on the part of the ungodly not to

believe, for I am sure it is. I am taught in the Scriptures that, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men love darkness rather than light." And when I read, "He that believes not is condemned already, because he believes not on the Son of God," I affirm and the Word declares it, *unbelief is a sin*. Surely with rational and unprejudiced persons, it cannot require any reasoning to prove it. Is it not a sin for a creature to doubt the word of its Maker? Is it not a crime and an insult to the divinity, for me, an atom, a particle of dust, to dare to deny His words? Is it not the very summit of arrogance and extremity of pride for a son of Adam to say, even in his heart, "God I doubt Your Grace. God I doubt Your love. God I doubt Your power"? Oh, sirs believe me, could you roll all sins into one mass—could you take murder, blasphemy, lust, adultery and fornication and everything that is vile and unite them all into one vast globe of black corruption, they would not equal, even then—the sin of unbelief! This is the monarch sin, the quintessence of guilt, the mixture of the venom of all crimes. The dregs of the wine of Gomorrah. It is the A-1 sin, the masterpiece of Satan, the chief work of the devil!

I shall attempt this morning, for a little while, to show the extremely evil nature of the sin of unbelief.

1. And first the sin of unbelief will appear to be extremely heinous when we remember that it is the *parent of every other iniquity*. There is no crime which unbelief will not beget. I think that the Fall of man is very much owing to it. It was in this point that the devil tempted Eve. He said to her, "Yes, *has* God said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" He whispered and insinuated a doubt, "Yes, *has* God said so?" As much as to say, "Are you quite sure He said so?" It was by means of unbelief—that thin part of the wedge—that curiosity, the other sin entered, and the rest followed. She touched the fruit and destruction came into this world. Since that time, unbelief has been the prolific parent of all guilt. An unbeliever is capable of the vilest crime that ever was committed. Unbelief, sirs! Why it hardened the heart of Pharaoh—it gave license to the tongue of blaspheming Rabshakeh—yes, it became a deicide and murdered Jesus. Unbelief! It has sharpened the knife of the suicide! It has mixed many a cup of poison. Thousands it has brought to the halter and many to a shameful grave who have murdered themselves and rushed with bloody hands before their Creator's tribunal because of unbelief! Give me an unbeliever—let me know that he doubts God's Word—let me know that he distrusts His promises and His threats. And with that for a premise, I will conclude that the man shall, by-and-by, unless there is amazing restraining power exerted upon him, be guilty of the foulest and blackest crimes. Ah, this is a Beelzebub sin! Like Beelzebub, it is the leader of all evil spirits. It is said of Jeroboam that he sinned and made Israel to sin. And it may be said of unbelief that it not only sins, itself, but makes others sin. It is the egg of all crime, the seed of every offense.

In fact everything that is evil and vile lies couched in that one word—unbelief!

And let me say here that unbelief in the Christian is of the same nature as unbelief in the sinner. It is not the same in its final issue, for it will be pardoned in the Christian. Yes, it is pardoned—it was laid upon the scapegoat's head of old—it was blotted out and atoned for. But it is of the same sinful nature! In fact, if there can be one sin more heinous than the unbelief of a sinner, it is the unbelief of a saint. For a saint to doubt God's Word—for a saint to distrust God after innumerable instances of His love, after ten thousand proofs of His mercy—exceeds everything. In a saint, moreover, unbelief is the root of other sins. When I am perfect in faith I shall be perfect in everything else—I should always fulfill the precept if I always believe the promise. But it is because my faith is weak that I sin. Put me in trouble and if I can fold my arms and say, "Jehovah-Jireh the Lord will provide," you will not find me using wrong means to escape from it. But let me be in temporal distress and difficulty, if I distrust God, what then? Perhaps I shall steal, or do a dishonest act to get out of the hands of my creditors. Or if kept from such a transgression, I may plunge into excess to drown my anxieties. Once take away faith, the reins are broken. And who can ride an unbroken steed without rein or bridle? Like the chariot of the sun with Phaeton for its driver, such would we be without faith. Unbelief is the mother of vice. It is the parent of sin—and, therefore, I say it is a pestilent evil—a master sin!

2. But secondly—*unbelief not only begets, but fosters sin*. How is it that men can keep their sin under the thunders of the Sinai preacher? How is it that, when Boanerges stands in the pulpit and, by the Grace of God, cries aloud, "Cursed is every man that keeps not all the commands of the Law"—how is it that when the sinner hears the tremendous threats of God's justice, still he is hardened and walks on in his evil ways? I will tell you. It is because *unbelief* of that threat prevents it from having any effect upon him. When our sappers and miners go to work around Sebastopol, they could not work in front of the walls if they had not something to keep off the shots. So they raise earthworks, behind which they can do what they please. So with the ungodly man. The devil gives him unbelief. He thus puts up an earthwork and finds refuge behind it. Ah, Sinners, when once the Holy Spirit knocks down your unbelief—when once He brings home the Truth in demonstration and in power—how the Law will work upon your soul! If man did but believe that the Law is holy, that the commandments are holy, just and good, how he would be shaken over Hell's mouth. There would be no sitting and sleeping in God's House. No careless hearers. No going away and straightway forgetting what manner of men you are! Oh, once get rid of unbelief, how would every ball from the batteries of the Law fall upon the sinner and the slain of the Lord would be many. Again, how is it that men can hear

the wooing of the cross of Calvary and yet come not to Christ? How is it that when we preach about the sufferings of Jesus and close up by saying, "yet there is room"—how is it that when we dwell upon His cross and Passion, men are not broken in their hearts? It is said—

"Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone
But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Will dissolve a heart of stone."

I think the tale of Calvary is enough to break a rock. Rocks did rend when they saw Jesus die. I think the tragedy of Golgotha is enough to make a flint gush with tears and to make the most hardened wretch weep out his eyes in drops of penitential love. But yet we tell you and repeat it often, but who weeps over it? Who cares about it? Sirs, you sit as unconcerned as if it did not have any meaning to you! Oh, I bellow and see all you that pass by. Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die? You seem to say, "It is nothing." What is the reason? Because there is unbelief between you and the cross! If there were not that thick veil between you and the Savior's eyes, His looks of love would melt you. But unbelief is the sin which keeps the power of the gospel from working in the sinner—and it is not till the Holy Spirit strikes that unbelief out—it is not till the Holy Spirit rends away that infidelity and takes it altogether down, that we can find the sinner coming to put His trust in Jesus.

3. But there is a third point. *Unbelief disables a man for the performance of any good work*— "Whatever is not of faith is sin," is a great Truth of God in more senses than one. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." You shall never hear me say a word against morality. You shall never hear me say that honesty is not a good thing, or that sobriety is not a good thing. On the contrary, I would say they are commendable things. But I will tell you what I will say afterwards—I will tell you that they are just like the Dowries of India. They may pass current among the Indians, but they will not do in England. These virtues may be current here below, but not above. If you have not something better than your own goodness, you will never get to Heaven! Some of the Indian tribes use little strips of meat instead of money and I would not find fault with them if I lived there. But when I come to England, strips of meat will not suffice. So honesty, sobriety and such things, may be very good among men—and the more you have of them, the better. I exhort you, whatever things are lovely and pure and of good report, have them—but they will not do up there. All these things put together, without *faith,* do not please God! Virtues without faith are whitewashed sins. Obedience without faith, if it is possible, is a gilded disobedience. Not to believe nullifies everything. It is the fly in the ointment. It is the poison in the pot. Without faith all the virtues of purity, all the benevolence of philanthropy, all the kindness of disinterested sympathy, all the talents of genius, all the

bravery of patriotism and all the decision of principle—"without faith it is impossible to please God." Do you not see, then, how bad unbelief is? It prevents men from performing good works. Yes, even in Christians, themselves, unbelief disables them. Let me just tell you a tale—a story of Christ's life. A certain man had an afflicted son, possessed with an evil spirit. Jesus was up in Mount Tabor, transfigured. So the father brought his son to the disciples. What did the disciples do? They said, "Oh, we will cast him out." They put their hands upon him and they tried to do it. But they whispered among themselves and said, "We are afraid we shall not be able." By-and-by the diseased man began to froth at the mouth, he foamed and scratched the earth, clasping it in his madness. The demoniac spirit within him was alive. The devil was still there. In vain their repeated exorcisms—the evil spirit remained like a lion in his den—nor could their efforts dislodge him. "Go!" they said. But he went not, "Away to the pit of Hell!" they cried. But he remained immoveable. The lips of unbelief cannot affright the Evil One, who might well have said, "Faith I know, Jesus I know, but who are you? You have no faith." If they had had faith, as a grain of mustard seed, they might have cast the devil out! But their faith was gone and therefore they could do nothing. Look at poor Peter's case, too. While he had faith, Peter walked on the waves of the sea. That was a splendid walk. I almost envy him treading upon the billows. Why, if Peter's faith had continued, he might have walked across the Atlantic to America. But presently there came a billow behind him and he said, "That will sweep me away." And then another and he cried out, "That will overwhelm me." And he thought—how could I be so presumptuous as to be walking on the top of these waves? Down goes Peter! Faith was Peter's life buoy. Faith was Peter's charm—it kept him up. But unbelief sent him down. Do you know that you and I, all our lifetime, will have to walk on the water? A Christian's life is always walking on water—mine is—and every wave would swallow and devour him but faith makes him stand. The moment you cease to believe, that moment distress comes in—down you go! Oh, why do you doubt, then? Faith fosters every virtue—unbelief murders every one! Thousands of prayers have been strangled in their infancy by unbelief. Unbelief has been guilty of infanticide. It has murdered many an infant petition, many a song of praise that would have swelled the chorus of the skies, has been stifled by an unbelieving murmur! Many a noble enterprise conceived in the heart has been blighted by unbelief before it could come forth. Many a man would have been a missionary, would have stood and preached his Master's gospel boldly—but he had unbelief. Once make a giant unbelieving and he becomes a dwarf—Faith is the Samsonian lock of the Christian—cut it off and you may put out his eyes—and he can do nothing.

4. Our next remark is—*unbelief has been severely punished.* Turn to the Scriptures! I see a world all fair and beautiful—its mountains laugh-

ing in the sun and the fields rejoicing in the golden light. I see maidens dancing and young men singing. How fair the vision! But lo, a grave and reverend sire lifts up his hand and cries, "A flood is coming to deluge the earth—the fountains of the great deep will be broken up and all things will be covered. See yonder ark! One hundred and twenty years have I toiled with these my hands to build it—flee there and you are safe." "Aha, old man—away with your empty predictions! Aha, let us be happy while we may! When the flood comes, then *we* will build an ark—but there is no flood coming—tell that to fools. We believe no such things." See the unbelievers pursue their merry dance. Listen, Unbeliever! Do you not hear that rumbling noise? Earth's bowels have begun to move, her rocky ribs are strained by dire convulsions from within. Lo, they break with the enormous strain and from between them, torrents rush, unknown since God concealed them in the bosom of our world! Heaven is split in sunder! It rains. Not drops, but clouds descend. A cataract, like that of old Niagara, rolls from Heaven with mighty noise! Both firmaments, both deeps—the deep below and the deep above—do clasp their hands. Now Unbelievers, where are you now? There is your last remnant. A man—his wife clasping him round the waist—stands on the last summit that is above the water. See him there? The water is up to his loins even now. Hear his last shriek! He is floating—he is drowned. And as Noah looks from the ark he sees nothing. Nothing! It is a profound void. "Sea monsters whelp and stable in the palaces of kings." All is overthrown, covered, drowned. What has done it? What brought the Flood upon the earth? Unbelief. By faith Noah escaped from the flood. By unbelief the rest were drowned!

And, oh, do you not know that unbelief kept Moses and Aaron out of Canaan? They honored not God—they struck the rock when they ought to have spoken to it. They disbelieved—and therefore the punishment came upon them—that they should not inherit that good land, for which they had toiled and labored.

Let me take you where Moses and Aaron dwelt—to the vast and howling wilderness. We will walk about it for a time. Sons of the weary foot, we will become like the wandering Bedouins, we will tread the desert for a while. There lies a carcass whitened in the sun—there another and there another! What means these bleached bones? What are these bodies—there a man and there a woman? What are all these? How came these corpses here? Surely some grand encampment must have been here cut off in a single night by a blast, or by bloodshed. Ah, no, no. Those bones are the bones of Israel. Those skeletons are the old tribes of Jacob! They could not enter because of unbelief. They trusted not in God. Spies said they could not conquer the land. Unbelief was the cause of their death. It was not the Anakims that destroyed Israel. It was not the howling wilderness which devoured them. It was not the Jordan which proved a barrier to Canaan—neither Hivite or Jebusite slew them. It was

unbelief, alone, which kept them out of Canaan. What a doom to be pronounced on Israel, after forty years of journeying—they could not enter because of unbelief!

Not to multiply instances, recollect Zechariah. He doubted and the angel struck him dumb. His mouth was closed because of unbelief. But oh, if you would have the worst picture of the effects of unbelief—if you would see how God has punished it—I must take you to the siege of Jerusalem. The worst massacre which time has ever seen, when the Romans raised the walls to the ground and put the whole of the inhabitants to the sword, or sold them as slaves in the marketplace. Have you never read of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus? Did you never turn to the tragedy of Masada, when the Jews stabbed each other rather than fall into the hands of the Romans? Do you not know, that to this day the Jew walks through the earth a wanderer, without a home and without a land? He is cut off, as a branch is cut from a vine—and why? Because of unbelief. Each time you see a Jew with a sad and somber countenance—each time you mark him like a denizen of another land, treading as an exile in this, our country—each time you see him, pause and say, "Ah, it was unbelief which caused you to murder Christ and now it has driven you to be a wanderer. And faith alone—faith in the crucified Nazarene—can fetch you back to your country and restore it to its ancient grandeur." Unbelief, you see, has the mark of Cain upon its forehead. God hates it—God has dealt hard blows upon it—and God will ultimately crush it. Unbelief dishonors God. Every other crime touches God's territory. But unbelief aims a blow at His divinity, impeaches His veracity, denies His goodness, blasphemes His attributes, maligns His Character. Therefore, God of all things, hates first and chiefly, unbelief, wherever it is.

5. And now to close this point—for I have already been too long—let me remark that you will observe the heinous nature of unbelief in this—that it is the damned sin. There is one sin for which Christ never died. It is the sin against the Holy Spirit. There is one other sin for which Christ never made Atonement. Mention every crime in the calendar of evil and I will show you persons who have found forgiveness for it. But ask me whether the man who died in unbelief can be saved and I reply there is no atonement for that man. There is an Atonement made for the unbelief of a Christian, because it is temporary, but the *final* unbelief—the unbelief with which men die—never was atoned for! You may turn over this whole book and you will find that there is no Atonement for the man who died in unbelief. There is no mercy for him. Had he been guilty of every other sin but had believed, he would have been pardoned. But this is the damning exception—he had no faith. Devils seize him! O fiends of the pit of Hell, drag him downward to his doom! He is faithless and unbelieving and such are the tenants for whom Hell was built. It is *their* portion, *their*

prison—they are the chief prisoners, the fetters are marked with their names. Forever shall they know that, "He that believes not shall be damned."

II. This brings us now to conclude with the PUNISHMENT. "You shall see it with your eyes, but shall not eat thereof." Listen, Unbelievers! You have heard this morning your sin, now listen to your doom—"you shall see it with your eyes, but shall not eat thereof." It is so often with God's own saints. When they are unbelieving, they see the mercy with their eyes, but do not eat it. Now, there is corn in this land of Egypt. But there are some of God's saints who come here on the Sabbath and say, "I do not know whether the Lord will be with me or not." Some of them say, "Well, the gospel is preached, but I do not know whether it will be successful." They are always doubting and fearing. Listen to them when they get out of the Chapel. "Well, did you get a good meal this morning?" "Nothing for me." Of course not. You could see it with your eyes, but did not eat it because you had no faith! If you had come up with faith, you would have had a morsel. I have found Christians who have grown so very critical that if the whole portion of the meat they are to have, in due season, is not cut up exactly into square pieces and put upon some choice dish of porcelain they cannot eat it. Then they ought to go without. And they will have to go without, until they are brought to their appetites. They will have some affliction which will act like quinine upon them—they will be made to eat by means of bitters in their mouths. They will be put in prison for a day or two until their appetite returns. Then they will be glad to eat the most ordinary food, off the most common platter, or no platter at all. But the real reason why God's people do not feed under a gospel ministry is because they have not faith. If you believed, if you did but hear one promise that would be enough! If you only heard one good thing from the pulpit, here would be food for your soul. It is not the quantity we *hear*, but the *quality* we *believe* that does us good—it is that which we receive into our hearts with true and lively faith—that is our profit.

But let me apply this chiefly to the unconverted. They often see great works of God done with their eyes, but they do not eat thereof. A crowd of people have come here this morning to see with their eyes, but I doubt whether all of them eat. Men cannot eat with their eyes, for if they could, most would be well fed. And, spiritually, persons cannot feed simply with their ears, nor simply with looking at the preacher. And so we find the majority of our congregations come just to see. "Ah, let us hear what this babbler would say, this reed shaken in the wind." But they have no faith. They come and they see. And see. And see and never eat. There is someone in the front there, who gets converted. And someone down below who is called by Sovereign Grace—some poor sinner is weeping under a sense of his blood-guiltiness. Another is crying for mercy to God—and another

is saying, "Have mercy upon me, a sinner." A great work is going on in this Chapel, but some of you do not know anything about it. You have no work going on in your hearts—and why? Because you think it is impossible. You think God is not at work. He has not promised to work for you who do not honor Him. Unbelief makes you sit here in times of revival and of the outpouring of God's Grace, unmoved, uncalled, unsaved! But, sirs, the worst fulfillment of this doom is to come! Good Whitefield used sometimes to lift up both his hands and shout, as I wish I could shout, but my voice fails me—"The wrath to come! The wrath to come!" It is not the wrath now you have to fear, but the *wrath to come*—and there shall be a doom to come, when "you shall see it with your eyes, but shall not eat thereof." I think I see the Last Great Day. The last hour of time has struck. I hear the bell toll its death knell—time was, eternity is ushered in—the sea is boiling. The waves are lit up with supernatural splendor. I see a rainbow—a flying cloud and on it there is a throne—and on that throne sits one like unto the Son of Man. I know Him. In His hand He holds a pair of balances—just before Him the books—the book of Life, the book of death, the book of remembrance. I see His splendor and I rejoice at it. I behold His pompous appearance and I smile with gladness that He is come to be "admired of all His saints." But there stands a throng of miserable wretches, crouching in horror to conceal themselves and yet looking—for their eyes must look on Him whom they have pierced. But when they look, they cry, "Hide me from the face." What face? "Rocks, hide me from the face." What face? "The face of Jesus, the Man who died, but now is come to judgment." But you cannot hide from His face. You must see it with your eyes—but you will not sit on the right hand, dressed in robes of grandeur—and when the triumphal procession of Jesus in the clouds shall come, you shall not march in it. You shall see it, but you shall not be there! Oh, I think I see it now, the mighty Savior in His chariot, riding on the rainbow to Heaven! See how His mighty coursers make the sky rattle while He drives them up Heaven's hill. A train girded in white follow behind Him and at His chariot wheels He drags the devil, death and Hell. Hark! How they clap their hands. Hark, how they shout, "You have ascended up on high—You have led captivity captive." Hark! How they chant the solemn lay, "Hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns." See the splendor of their appearance. Mark the crown upon their brows—see their snow-white garments—mark the rapture of their countenances! Hear how their song swells up to Heaven while the eternal joins therein, saying, "I will rejoice over them with joy, I will rejoice over them with singing, for I have betrothed you unto Me in everlasting loving kindness." But where are *you* all the while? You can see them up there but where are you? Looking at it with your eyes, but you cannot eat thereof. The marriage banquet is spread. The good old wines of eternity are broached. They sit down to the feast of the King. But there you are,

miserable and famishing. And you cannot eat thereof. Oh, how you wring your hands. Might you but have one morsel from the table—might you but be dogs beneath the table? You shall be a dog in Hell, but not a dog in Heaven!

But to conclude. I think I see you in some place in Hell, tied to a rock, the vulture of remorse gnawing your heart. And up there is Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. You lift up your eyes and you see who it is. "That is the poor man who lay on my dunghill and the dogs licked his sores. There he is in Heaven, while I am cast down. Lazarus—yes, it is Lazarus! And I who was rich in the world of time am here in Hell. Father Abraham, send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue." But no! It cannot be. It cannot be. And while you lie there, if there is one thing in Hell worse than another, it will be seeing the saints in Heaven! Oh, to think of seeing my mother in Heaven while I am cast out! Oh, Sinner, only think—to see your brother in Heaven—he who was rocked in the same cradle and played beneath the same roof—yet you are cast out! And, husband, there is your wife in Heaven and you are among the damned! And see you, father! Your child is before the throne. And you, accursed of God and accursed of man, are in Hell. Oh, the Hell of hells will be to see our friends in Heaven and yourselves lost! I beseech you, my hearers, by the death of Christ—by His agony and bloody sweat—by His cross and Passion—by all that is holy—by all that is sacred in Heaven and earth—by all that is solemn in time or eternity—by all that is horrible in Hell, or glorious in Heaven—by that awful thought, "forever"—I beseech you lay these things to heart and remember that if you are damned, it will be *unbelief* that damns you. If you are lost, it will be because you believed not on Christ! And if you perish, this shall be the bitterest drop of gall—that you did not trust in the Savior!

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THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
NO. 4

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 21, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever: even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him: but you know Him for He dwells with you and shall be in you."
John 14:16, 17.

You will be surprised to hear me announce that I do not intend this morning to say anything about the Holy Spirit as the Comforter. I propose to reserve that for a special sermon this evening. [See sermon #5, Vol. 1—THE COMFORTER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at www.spurgeongems.org] In this discourse I shall endeavor to explain and enforce certain other doctrines which I believe are plainly taught in this text and which I hope God the Holy Spirit may make profitable to our souls. Old John Newton once said that there were some books which he could not read, they were good and sound enough, but, he said, "they are books of halfpence—you have to take so much in quantity before you have any value. There are other books of silver and others of gold, but I have one book that is a book of bank notes. And every leaf is a bank note of immense value." So I found with this text—that I had a bank note of so large a sum, that I could not preach on all of it this morning. I should have to keep you several hours before I could unfold to you the whole value of this precious promise—one of the last which Christ gave to His people.

I invite your attention to this passage because we shall find in it some instruction on four points, first, concerning *the true and proper personality of the Holy Spirit*. Secondly, concerning *the united agency of the glorious three Persons in the work of our salvation*. Thirdly, we shall find *something to establish the Doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the souls of all believer*s. And fourthly, we shall find out *the reason why the carnal mind rejects the Holy Spirit*.

I. First of all, we shall have some little instruction concerning the proper PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. We are so much accustomed to talk about the influence of the Holy Spirit and His sacred operations and Graces that we are apt to forget that the Holy Spirit is truly and actually a person—that He is a subsistence—an existence. Or as we Trinitarians usually say, one person in the essence of the Godhead. I am afraid that though we do not know it, we have acquired the habit of re-

garding the Holy Spirit as an emanation flowing from the Father and the Son, but not as being actually a person, Himself. I know it is not easy to carry about in our mind the idea of the Holy Spirit as a person. I can think of the Father as a person, because His acts are such as I can understand. I see Him hang the world in ether. I behold Him swaddling a newborn sea in bands of darkness. I know it is He who formed the drops of hail, who leads forth the stars by their hosts and calls them by their name, I can conceive of Him as a person because I behold His operations. I can realize Jesus, the Son of Man, as a real person because He is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. It takes no great stretch of my imagination to picture the Baby in Bethlehem, or to behold the, "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." I can easily realize the King of Martyrs, as He was persecuted in Pilate's hall, or nailed to the accursed tree for our sins. Nor do I find it difficult at times to realize the person of my Jesus sitting on His throne in Heaven. Or girt with clouds and wearing the diadem of all creation, calling the earth to judgment and summoning us to hear our final sentence. But when I come to deal with the Holy Spirit—His operations are so mysterious, His doings are so secret, His acts are so removed from everything that is of sense and of the body—that I cannot so easily get the idea of His being a person. But a person He is. God the Holy Spirit is not an influence, an emanation, a stream of something flowing from the Father. He is as much an actual person as either God the Son, or God the Father. I shall attempt, this morning, a little, to establish the Doctrine and to show you the truth of it—that God the Holy Spirit is actually a person.

The first proof we shall gather from the pool of holy baptism. Let me take you down, as I have taken others, into the pool. It is now concealed, but I wish it were always open to your view. Let me take you to the baptismal font, where believers put on the name of the Lord Jesus and you shall hear me pronounce the solemn words, "I baptize you in the name,"—mark—"in the *name*," not names—"of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Everyone who is baptized according to the true form laid down in Scripture must be a Trinitarian—otherwise his baptism is a farce and a lie and he, himself, is found a deceiver and a hypocrite before God! As the Father is mentioned and as the Son is mentioned, so is the Holy Spirit and the whole is summed up as being a Trinity in unity, by its being said, not the *names*, but the "name"—the glorious *name*—the Jehovah name, "of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Let me remind you that the same thing occurs each time you are dismissed from this House of Prayer. In pronouncing the solemn closing benediction, we invoke on your behalf the love of Jesus Christ, the grace of the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. And thus, according to the Apostolic manner, we make a manifest distinction be-

tween the persons showing that we believe the Father to be a person, the Son to be a person and the Holy Spirit to be a person. Were there no other proofs in Scripture, I think these would be sufficient for every sensible man. He would see that if the Holy Spirit were a mere influence, He would not be mentioned in conjunction with two whom we all confess to be actual and proper persons.

A second argument arises from the fact that the Holy Spirit has actually made different appearances on earth. The Great Spirit has manifested Himself to man. He has put on a form so that while He has not been beheld by mortal men, He has been so veiled in appearance that He was seen, so far as that appearance was concerned, by the eyes of all beholders. Do you see Jesus Christ our Savior? There is the river Jordan, with its shelving banks and its willows weeping at its side. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, descends into the stream and the holy Baptist, John, plunges Him into the waves. The doors of Heaven are opened. A miraculous Appearance presents itself—a bright light shining from the sky, brighter than the sun in all its grandeur—and down in a flood of glory descends something which you recognize to be a dove. It rests on Jesus—it sits upon His sacred head and as the old painters put a halo round the brow of Jesus, so did the Holy Spirit shed a resplendence around the face of Him who came to fulfill all Righteousness and therefore commenced with the ordinances of baptism! The Holy Spirit was seen as a dove—to mark His purity and His gentleness—and He came down like a dove *from Heaven* to show that it is from Heaven alone that He descends. Nor is this the only time when the Holy Spirit has been manifest in a visible shape. You notice that company of disciples gathered together in an upper room—they are waiting for some promised blessing—by-and-by it shall come. Hark, there is a sound as of a rushing mighty wind! It fills all the house where they are sitting. Astonished, they look around them, wondering what will come next. Soon a bright light appears, shining upon the heads of each—cloven tongues of fire sat upon them! What were these marvelous appearances of wind and flame but a display of the Holy Spirit in His proper person? I say the fact of an appearance manifests that He must be a person. An influence could not appear—an attribute could not appear—we cannot see *attributes*—we cannot behold *influences*. The Holy Spirit must, then, be a person—since He was beheld by mortal eyes and came under the cognizance of mortal sense.

Another proof is from the fact that personal qualities are, in Scripture, ascribed to the Holy Spirit. First, let me read to you a text in which the Holy Spirit is spoken of as having understanding. In the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter 2, you will read, “But as it is written, eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has re-

vealed them unto us by His Spirit—for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God."

Here you see an understanding—a power of knowledge is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. Now, if there are any persons here whose minds are of so preposterous a complexion that they would ascribe one attribute to another and would speak of a mere influence having understanding—then I give up! But I believe every rational man will admit that when anything is spoken of as having an understanding it must be an existence—it must, in fact, be a person. In the 12th Chapter, 11th verse of the same Epistle, you will find a will ascribed to the Holy Spirit. "But all these work that one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He wills." So it is plain the Spirit has a will. He does not come from God simply at God's will, but He has a will of His own, which is always in keeping with the will of the infinite Jehovah, but is, nevertheless, distinct and separate. Therefore I say He is a person. In another text power is ascribed to the Holy Spirit and power is a thing which can only be ascribed to an existence. In Romans 15:13, it is written, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit." I need not insist upon it, because it is self-evident, that wherever you find understanding, will and power—you must also find an existence. It cannot be a mere attribute. It cannot be a metaphor. It cannot be a personified influence. It must be a person!

But I have a proof which, perhaps, will be more telling upon you than any other. Acts and deeds are ascribed to the Holy Spirit—therefore He must be a person. You read in the first Chapter of the Book of Genesis, that the Spirit brooded over the surface of the earth, when it was as yet all disorder and confusion. This world was once a mass of chaotic matter. There was no order. It was like the valley of darkness and of the shadow of death. God the Holy Spirit spread His wings over it. He sowed the seeds of life in it—the germs from which all beings sprang were implanted by Him. He impregnated the earth so that it became capable of life. Now it must have been a person who brought order out of confusion! It must have been an existence who hovered over this world and made it what it now is. But do we not read in Scripture something more of the Holy Spirit? Yes, we are told that "holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." When Moses penned the Pentateuch, the Holy Spirit moved his hand. When David wrote the Psalms and discoursed sweet music on his harp, it was the Holy Spirit that gave his fingers their Seraphic motion. When Solomon dropped from his lips the words of the Proverbs of wisdom, or when he hymned the Canticles of love it was the HOLY SPIRIT who gave him words of knowledge and hymns of rapture!

Ah, and what fire was that which touched the lips of the eloquent Isaiah? What hand was that which came upon Daniel? What might was that which made Jeremiah so plaintive in his grief? Or what was that which winged Ezekiel and made him, like an eagle, soar into mysteries aloft and see the mighty unknown beyond our reach? Who was it that made Amos, the herdsman, a prophet? Who taught the rough Haggai to pronounce his thundering sentences? Who showed Habakkuk the horses of Jehovah marching through the waters? Or who kindled the burning eloquence of Nahum? Who caused Malachi to close up the book with the muttering of the word "curse"? Who was in each of these, save the Holy Spirit? And must it not have been a person who spoke in and through these ancient witnesses? We must believe it. We cannot avoid believing it, when we recall that, "holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

And when has the Holy Spirit ceased to have an influence upon men? We find that still He deals with His ministers and with all His saints. Turn to the Acts and you will find that the Holy Spirit *said*, "Separate me Paul and Barnabas for the work." I never heard of an *attribute* saying such a thing! The Holy Spirit said to Peter, "Go to the centurion and what I have cleansed, that call not you common." The Holy Spirit caught away Philip after he had baptized yon eunuch and carried him to another place. And the Holy Spirit said to Paul, "you shall not go into that city, but shall turn into another." And we know that the Holy Spirit was lied unto by Ananias and Sapphira, when it was said, "you have not lied unto man, but unto God." Again, that power which we feel every day who are called to preach—that wondrous spell which makes our lips so potent—that power which gives us thoughts which are like birds from a far-off region, not the natives of our soul. That influence which I sometimes strangely feel, which, if it does not give me poetry and eloquence, gives me a might I never felt before and lifts me above my fellow man. That majesty with which He clothes His ministers, till in the midst of the battle they cry, aha! like the war-horse of Job and move themselves like leviathans in the water. That power which gives us might over men and causes them to sit and listen as if their ears were chained, as if they were entranced by the power of some magician's wand—that power must come from a person—it must come from the Holy Spirit!

But is it not said in Scripture and do we not feel it, dear brethren, that it is the Holy Spirit who regenerates the soul? It is the Holy Spirit who quickens us! "You has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." It is the Holy Spirit who imparts the first germ of life, convicting us of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come. And is it not the Holy Spirit who after that flame is kindled, still fans it with the breath of His mouth and keeps it alive? Its Author is its Preserver! Oh, can it be said that it is the Holy Spirit who strives in men's souls, that it is the Holy

Spirit who brings them to the foot of Sinai and then guides them into the sweet place that is called Calvary—can it be said that He does all these things and yet is not a person? It may be said, but it must be said by fools! For he never can be a wise man who can consider that these things can be done by any other than a glorious person—a divine person.

Allow me to give you one more proof and I shall have done. Certain feelings are ascribed to the Holy Spirit which can only be understood upon the supposition that He is actually a person. In the 4th Chapter of Ephesians, verse 30, it is said that the Holy Spirit can be grieved—"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption." In Isaiah 63:10 it is said that the Holy Spirit can be vexed—"But they rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit, therefore He was turned to be their enemy and He fought against them." In Acts 7:51 you read that the Holy Spirit can be resisted—"you stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you." And in the 5th Chapter, 9th verse of the same book, you will find that the Holy Spirit may be tempted. We are there informed that Peter said to Ananias and Sapphira, "How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" Now, these things could not be *emotions* which might be ascribed to a quality or an emanation—they must be understood to relate to a person. An *influence* could not be grieved. It must be a person who can be grieved, vexed, or resisted.

And now, dear brethren, I think I have fully established the point of the personality of the Holy Spirit. Allow me now, most earnestly, to impress upon you the absolute necessity of being sound unto the Doctrine of the Trinity. I knew a man, a good minister of Jesus Christ he was—I believe he was before he turned aside unto heresy—he began to doubt the glorious divinity of our blessed Lord and for years he preached the heterodox Doctrine. Then one day he happened to hear a very eccentric old minister preaching from the text, "But there the *glorious Lord* shall be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. Your tackle is loosed—they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail." "Now," said the old minister, "you give up the Trinity and your tackle is loosed, you cannot strengthen your masts. Once give up the Doctrine of three persons and your tackle is all gone. Your mast, which ought to be a support to your vessel, is a rickety one and shakes." A gospel without a Trinity? It is a pyramid built upon its apex! A gospel without the Trinity? It is a rope of sand that cannot hold together! A gospel without the Trinity? Then, indeed, Satan can overturn it. But, give me a gospel with the Trinity and the might of Hell cannot prevail against it. No man can any more overthrow it than a bubble could split a rock, or a feather break in halves a mountain! "Get the thought of the three per-

sons and you have the marrow of all divinity. Only know the Father and know the Son and know the Holy Spirit to be one and all things will appear clear. This is the golden key to the secrets of nature. This is the silken clue of the labyrinths of mystery and he who understands this, will soon understand as much as mortals ever can know."

II. Now for the second point—the UNITED AGENCY of the three persons in the work of our salvation. Look at the text and you will find all the three persons mentioned. "I,"—that is the Son—"will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter." There are the three persons mentioned—all of them doing something for our salvation. "I will pray," says the Son. "I will send," says the Father. "I will comfort," says the Holy Spirit. Now, let us, for a few moments, discourse upon this wondrous theme—the unity of the three persons with regard to the great purpose of the salvation of the elect. When God first made man, He said, "Let *Us* make man," not let *Me*, but "Let *Us* make man in *Our* own image." The Covenant Elohim said to each other, "Let Us unitedly become the Creator of man." So, when in ages far gone by in eternity, they said, "Let Us *save* man," it was not the Father who said, "Let *Me* save man," but the three persons conjointly said with one consent, "Let Us save man." It is to me a source of sweet comfort to think that it is not one person of the Trinity that is engaged for my salvation. It is not simply one person of the Godhead who vows that He will redeem me, but it is a glorious Trio of Godlike ones and the three declare, unitedly, "*We* will save man."

Now, observe here that each person is spoken of as performing a separate office. "I will pray," says the Son—that is *intercession*. "I will send," says the Father—that is *donation*. "I will comfort," says the Holy Spirit—that is *supernatural* influence. Oh, if it were possible for us to see the three persons of the Godhead, we should behold one of them standing before the throne with outstretched hands crying day and night, "O Lord, how long?" We should see one girt with Urim and Thummim, precious stones, on which are written the twelve names of the tribes of Israel. We should behold Him crying unto His Father, "Forget not Your promises, forget not Your Covenant." We should hear Him make mention of our sorrows and tell forth our griefs on our behalf, for He is our Intercessor. And could we behold the Father, we should not see Him a listless and idle spectator of the intercession of the Son. We would see Him with attentive ears listening to every word of Jesus and granting every petition. Where is the Holy Spirit all the while? Is He lying idle? Oh no, He is floating over the earth and when He sees a weary soul, He says, "Come to Jesus, He will give you rest." When He beholds an eye filled with tears, He wipes away the tears and bids the mourner look for comfort on the cross. When He sees the tempest-tossed believer, He takes the helm of his soul and speaks the word of consolation. He helps the broken in heart and

binds up their wounds! And always on His mission of mercy, He flies around the world, being everywhere present. Behold how the three persons work together. Do not say, then, "I am grateful to the Son"—you ought to be, but God the Son no more saves you than God the Father. Do not imagine that God the Father is a great tyrant and that God the Son had to die to make Him merciful. It was not to make the Father's love flow towards His people! Oh, no. One loves as much as the other. The three are conjoined in the great purpose of rescuing the elect from damnation!

But you must notice another thing in my text which will show the blessed unity of the three—the one person promises to the Other. The Son says, "I will pray the Father." "Very well," the disciples may have said, "We can trust You for that." "And He will send you." You see, here is the Son signing a bond on behalf of the Father. "He will send you another Comforter." There is a bond on behalf of the Holy Spirit, too. "And He will abide with you forever." One person speaks for the other and how could they if there were any disagreement between them? If one wished to save and the other not, they could not promise on one Another's behalf. But whatever the Son says, the Father listens to. Whatever the Father promises, the Holy Spirit works. And whatever the Holy Spirit injects into the soul—God the Father fulfills. So the three together mutually promise on one Another's behalf. There is a bond with three names appended—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. By three immutable things, as well as by two, the Christian is secured beyond the reach of death and Hell. A Trinity of Securities, because there is a Trinity of God!

III. Our third point is the INDWELLING of the Holy Spirit in believers. Now beloved, these first two things have been matters of pure Doctrine—this is the subject of *experience*. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a subject so profound and so having to do with the inner man, that no soul will be able truly and really to comprehend what I say, unless it has been taught of God. I have heard of an old minister, who told a Fellow of one of the Cambridge Colleges that he understood a language that he never learnt in all his life. "I have not," he said, "even a smattering of Greek and I know no Latin, but thank God I can talk the language of Canaan—and that is more than you can!" So, beloved, I shall now have to talk a little of the language of Canaan. If you cannot comprehend me, I am much afraid it is because you are not of Israelite extraction—you are not a child of God nor an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven.

We are told in the text, that Jesus would send the Comforter, who would abide in the saints forever—who would dwell with them and be *in them*. Old Ignatius, the martyr, used to call himself Theophorus, or the God-bearer, "because," said he, "I bear about with me the Holy Spirit." And truly every Christian is a God-bearer. Know you not that you are

temples of the Holy Spirit? For He dwells in you! That man is no Christian who is not the subject of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He may talk well, he may understand theology and be a sound Calvinist. He will be the child of nature finely dressed, but not the living child. He may be a man of so profound an intellect, so gigantic a soul, so comprehensive a mind and so lofty an imagination that he may dive into all the secrets of Nature. He may know the path which the eagle's eye has not seen and go into depths where mortals reach not. But he shall not be a Christian with all his knowledge. He shall not be a son of God with all his researches, unless he understands what it is to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in him and abiding in him—yes, and that *forever*.

Some people call this fanaticism and they say, "you are a Quaker, why not follow George Fox?" Well we would not mind that much—we would follow anyone who followed the Holy Spirit. Even he, with all his eccentricities, I doubt not, was, in many cases, actually inspired by the Holy Spirit. And whenever I find a man in whom there rests the Spirit of God, the Spirit within me leaps to hear the Spirit within him and he feels that we are one. The Spirit of God in one Christian soul recognizes the Spirit in another. I recollect talking with a good man, as I believe he was, who was insisting that it was impossible for us to know whether we had the Holy Spirit within us or not. I would like him to be here this morning, because I would read this verse to him—"But you know Him, for He dwells with you and shall be in you." Ah, you think you cannot tell whether you have the Holy Spirit or not? Can I tell whether I am alive or not? If I were touched by electricity, could I tell whether I was or not? I suppose I should. The shock would be strong enough to make me know where I stood. So, if I have God within me—if I have Deity tabernacling in my breast—if I have God the Holy Spirit resting in my heart and making a temple of my body—do you think I shall not know it? Call it fanaticism if you will. But I trust that there are some of us who know what it is to be always, or generally, under the influence of the Holy Spirit—*always* in one sense—*generally* in another! When we have difficulties, we ask the direction of the Holy Spirit. When we do not understand a portion of Holy Scripture, we ask God the Holy Spirit to shine upon us. When we are depressed, the Holy Spirit comforts us. You cannot tell what the wondrous power of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is—how it pulls back the hand of the saint when he would touch the forbidden thing. How it prompts him to make a covenant with his eyes. How it binds his feet, lest they should fall in a slippery way, how it restrains his heart and keeps him from temptation. O you who know nothing of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, despise it not! O despise not the Holy Spirit, for it is the unpardonable sin! "He that speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but he that speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall never be

forgiven him, either in this life, or that which is to come." So says the Word of God. Therefore, tremble, lest in anything you despise the influences of the Holy Spirit!

But before closing this point, there is one little word which pleases me very much. That is, "forever." You knew I would not miss that! You were certain I could not let it go without observation. "Abide with you forever." I wish I could get an Arminian here to finish my sermon. I fancy I see him taking that word, "forever." He would say, "for—forever." He would have to stammer and stutter! For he never could get it out all at once. He might stand and pull it about and at last he would have to say, "the translation is wrong." And then I suppose the poor man would have to prove that the original was wrong, too. Ah, but blessed be God, we can read it—"He shall abide with you *forever*." Once give me the Holy Spirit and I shall never lose Him till "forever" has run out—till eternity has spun its everlasting rounds!

IV. Now we have to close up with a brief remark on the reason why the world rejects the Holy Spirit. It is said, "Whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him." You know what is sometimes meant by "the world"—those whom God, in His wondrous Sovereignty, passed over when He chose His people—the preterite ones. Those passed over in God's wondrous preterition—not the reprobates who were condemned to damnation by some awful decree, but those passed over by God, when He chose out His elect. These cannot receive the Spirit. Again, it means all in a carnal state are not able to procure themselves this divine influence. And thus it is true, "Whom the world cannot receive."

The unregenerate world of sinners despises the Holy Spirit, "because it sees Him not." Yes, I believe this is the great secret why many laugh at the idea of the existence of the Holy Spirit—because they see Him not. You tell the worldling, "I have the Holy Spirit within me." He says, "I cannot see it." He wants it to be something tangible—a thing he can recognize with his senses. Have you ever heard the argument used by a good old Christian against an infidel doctor? The doctor said there was no soul and he asked, "Did you ever see a soul?" "No," said the Christian. "Did you ever hear a soul?" "No." "Did you ever smell a soul?" "No." "Did you ever taste a soul?" "No." "Did you ever feel a soul?" "Yes," said the man—"I feel I have one within me." "Well," said the doctor, "there are four senses against one—you have only one on your side." "Very well," said the Christian, "Did you ever see a pain?" "No." "Did you ever hear a pain?" "No." "Did you ever smell a pain?" "No." "Did you ever taste a pain?" "No." "Did you ever feel a pain?" "Yes," "And that is quite enough, I suppose, to prove there is a pain?" "Yes." So the worldling says there is no Holy Spirit because he cannot see Him. Well, but we feel Him. You say that is fanati-

cism and that we never felt Him. Suppose you tell me that honey is bitter, I reply "No, I am sure you cannot have tasted it. Taste it and try." So with the Holy Spirit. If you did but feel His influence, you would no longer say there is no Holy Spirit because you cannot see it. Are there not many things, even in nature, which we cannot see? Did you ever see the wind? No. But you know there is wind when you behold the hurricane tossing the waves about and rending down the habitations of men. Or when in the soft evening zephyr it kisses the flowers and makes dewdrops hang in pearly coronets around the rose. Did you ever see electricity? No, but you know there is such a thing, for it travels along the wires for thousands of miles and carries our messages. Though you cannot see the thing, itself, you know there is such a thing. So you must believe there is a Holy Spirit working in us, both to will and to do, even though it is beyond our senses.

But the last reason why worldly men laugh at the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit is because they do not *know* it. If they knew it by heart-felt experience and if they recognized its agency in the soul—if they had ever been touched by it. If they had been made to tremble under a sense of sin—if they had had their hearts melted—they would never have doubted the existence of the Holy Spirit!

And now, beloved, it says, "He dwells with you and shall be in you." We will close up with that sweet recollection—the Holy Spirit dwells in all believers and shall be with them!

One word of comment and advice to the saints of God and to sinners and I have done. Saints of the Lord! You have, this morning, heard that God the Holy Spirit is a person. You have had it proved to your souls. What follows from this? Why, it follows how earnest you should be—in prayer to the Holy Spirit, as well as *for* the Holy Spirit. Let me say that this is an inference that you should lift up your prayers to the Holy Spirit, that you should cry earnestly unto Him, for He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all you can ask or think. See this mass of people? What is to convert it? See this crowd—who is to make my influence permeate through the mass? You know this place has now a mighty influence—and God blessing us, it will continue to have an influence—not only upon this city but upon England at large. We now enjoy the press as well as the pulpit and certainly, I should say before the close of the year, more than two hundred thousand of my productions will be scattered through the land—words uttered by my lips, or written by my pen. But how can this influence be rendered for good? How shall God's glory be promoted by it? Only by incessant prayer for the Holy Spirit—by constantly calling down the influence of the Holy Spirit upon us! We want Him to rest upon every page that is printed and upon every word that is uttered. Let us then be doubly earnest in pleading with the Holy Spirit,

that He would come and acknowledge our labors, that the whole Church at large may be revived thereby and not ourselves only, but the whole world share in the benefit!

Then to the ungodly I have this one closing word to say. Always be careful how you speak of the Holy Spirit. I do not know what the unpardonable sin is and I do not think any man understands it. But it is something like this—"He that speaks a word against the Holy Spirit, it shall never be forgiven him." I do not know what that means—but tread carefully! There is danger. There is a pit which our ignorance has covered by sand—tread carefully—you may be in it before the next hour. If there is any strife in your heart today, perhaps you will go to the ale-house and forget it. Perhaps there is some voice speaking in your soul and you will put it away. I do not tell you you will be resisting the Holy Spirit and committing the unpardonable sin. But it is somewhere there. Be very careful. Oh, there is no crime on earth so black as the crime against the Holy Spirit. You may blaspheme the Father and you shall be damned for it unless you repent. You may blaspheme the Son—and Hell shall be your portion, unless you are forgiven. But blaspheme the Holy Spirit and thus says the Lord, "There is no forgiveness, neither in this world, nor in the world which is to come." I cannot tell you what it is. I do not profess to understand it. But there it is. It is the danger signal. Stop, Man, stop! If you have despised the Holy Spirit, if you have laughed at His revelations and scorned what Christians call His influence, I beseech you, stop! This morning seriously deliberate—perhaps some of you have actually committed the unpardonable sin. Stop! Let fear stop you. Sit down. Do not drive on so rashly as you have done. You who are such a profligate in sin, you who have uttered such hard words against the Trinity, stop!

Ah, it makes us all stop. It makes us all draw up and say, "Have I not perhaps done so?" Let us think of this and let us not at any time trifle either with the words, or the acts of God the Holy Spirit.

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THE COMFORTER
NO. 5

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, JANUARY 21, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you."
John 14:26.

GOOD old Simeon called Jesus the Consolation of Israel. And so He was. Before His actual appearance His name was the Day-Star, cheering the darkness and Prophet of the rising sun. To Him they looked with the same hope which cheers the nightly watcher, when from the lonely castle top he sees the fairest of the stars and hails her as the usher of the morn. When He was on earth, He must have been the consolation of all those who were privileged to be His companions. We can imagine how readily the disciples would run to Christ to tell Him of their griefs and how sweetly with that matchless intonation of His voice, He would speak to them and bid their fears be gone. Like children, they would consider Him as their Father—and to Him every need, every groan, every sorrow, every agony, would at once be carried and He, like a wise physician, had a balm for every wound—He had mingled a cordial for their every care! And readily did He dispense some mighty remedy to allay all the fever of their troubles. Oh, it must have been sweet to have lived with Christ! Surely sorrows, then, were but joys in masks because they gave an opportunity to go to Jesus to have them removed! Oh, would to God some of us may say that we could have lain our weary heads upon the bosom of Jesus! And that our birth had been in that happy era when we might have heard His kind voice and seen His kind look—when He said, "Let the weary ones come unto Me."

But now He was about to die. Great prophecies were to be fulfilled and great purposes were to be answered. And therefore Jesus must go. It behooved Him to suffer, that He might be made a Propitiation for our sins. It behooved Him to slumber in the dust awhile, that He might perfume the chamber of the grave to make it—

"No more a morgue to fence
The relics of lost innocence."

It behooved Him to have a Resurrection, that we who shall one day be the dead in Christ, might rise first and in glorious bodies stand upon earth. And it behooved Him that He should ascend up on high, that He

might lead captivity captive—that He might chain the fiends of Hell—that He might lash them to His chariot wheels and drag them up high Heaven's hill, to make them feel a second overthrow from His right arm when He should dash them from the pinnacles of Heaven down to deeper depths beneath. "It is right I should go away from you," said Jesus, "for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come." Jesus must go. Weep, you disciples. Jesus must be gone! Mourn, you poor ones who are to be left without a Comforter. But hear how kindly Jesus speaks—"I will not leave you comfortless, I will pray the Father and He shall send you another Comforter, who shall be with you and shall dwell in you forever." He would not leave those few poor sheep alone in the wilderness. He would not desert His children and leave them fatherless. Albeit that He had a mighty mission which did fill His heart and hand. Albeit that He had so much to perform that we might have thought that even His gigantic intellect would be overburdened. Albeit He had so much to suffer that we might suppose His whole soul to be concentrated upon the thought of the sufferings to be endured. Yet it was not so—before He left, He gave soothing words of comfort. Like the Good Samaritan, He poured in oil and wine. And we see what He promised—"I will send you another Comforter—One who shall be just what I have been, yes even more. He shall console you in your sorrows, remove your doubts. He will comfort you in your afflictions and stand as My vicar on earth, to do that which I would have done, had I tarried with you."

Before I discourse of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, I must make one or two remarks on the different translations of the word rendered, "Comforter." The Flemish translation, which you are aware is adopted by Roman Catholics, has left the word untranslated and gives it, "Paraclete." "But the Paraclete which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things." This is the original Greek word and it has some other meanings besides "Comforter." Sometimes it means the monitor or instructor—"I will send you another Monitor, another Teacher." Frequently it means "Advocate." But the most common meaning of the word is that which we have here—"I will send you another *Comforter*." However, we cannot pass over those other two interpretations without saying something upon them.

"I will send you another *Teacher*." Jesus Christ had been the official Teacher of His saints while on earth. They called no man Rabbi except Christ. They sat at no men's feet to learn their doctrines. But they had them direct from the lips of Him who "spoke as never man spoke." "And now," He says, "when I am gone, where shall you find the great infallible Teacher? Shall I set you up a Pope at Rome, to whom you shall go and who shall be your infallible oracle? Shall I give you the councils of the

church to be held to decide all knotty points?" Christ said no such thing. "I am the Infallible Paraclete or Teacher, and when I am gone, I will send you another Teacher and He shall be the Person who is to explain Scripture. He shall be the authoritative Oracle of God who shall make all dark things light, who shall unravel mysteries, who shall untwist all knots of Revelation and shall make you understand what you could not discover, had it not been for His influence." And Beloved, no man ever learns anything aright, unless he is taught of the Spirit. You may learn election and you may know it so that you shall be damned by it, if you are not taught of the Holy Spirit. For I have known some who have learned election to their soul's destruction. They have learned it, so that they said they were of the elect, whereas they had no marks, no evidences and no work of the Holy Spirit in their souls. There is a way of learning the Truth of God in Satan's college and holding it in licentiousness. But if so, it shall be to your souls as poison to your veins and prove your everlasting ruin. No man can know Jesus Christ unless he is taught of God. There is no Doctrine of the Bible which can be safely, thoroughly and truly learned, except by the agency of the one authoritative Teacher. Ah, tell me not of systems of divinity, tell me not of schemes of theology, tell me not of infallible commentators, of most learned and most arrogant doctors. But tell me of the Great Teacher who shall instruct us, the sons of God and shall make us wise to understand all things! He is *the* Teacher. It matters not what this or that man says. I rest on no man's boasting authority, nor will you. You are not to be carried away with the craftiness of men, nor sleighs of words—this is the authoritative oracle, the Holy Spirit resting in the hearts of His children.

The other translation is *advocate*. Have you ever thought how the Holy Spirit can be said to be an Advocate? You know Jesus Christ is called The Wonderful, The Counselor and Mighty God. But how can the Holy Spirit be said to be an Advocate? I suppose it is thus—He is an Advocate on earth to plead against the enemies of the Cross. How was it that Paul could so ably plead before Felix and Agrippa? How was it that the Apostles stood unawed before the magistrates and confessed their Lord? How has it come to pass that in all times, God's ministers have been made fearless as lions and their brows have been firmer than brass, their hearts sterner than steel and their words like the language of God? Why, it is simply for this reason—that it was not the *man* who pleaded—but it was God the Holy Spirit pleading *through* him.

Have you ever seen an earnest minister, with hands uplifted and eyes dropping tears, pleading with the sons of men? Have you never admired that portrait from the hand of old John Bunyan? A grave person with eyes uplifted to Heaven, the best of books in his hand, the Law of Truth

written on his lips, the world behind his back, standing as if he pleaded with men and a crown of gold hanging over his head. Who gave that minister so blessed a manner and such goodly matter? From where came his skill? Did he acquire it in college? Did he learn it in a seminary? Ah, no. He learned it of the God of Jacob! He learned it of the Holy Spirit—for the Holy Spirit is the great Counselor who teaches us how to advocate His cause aright!

But, besides this, the Holy Spirit is the Advocate in men's hearts. Ah, I have known men reject a Doctrine until the Holy Spirit began to illumine them. We who are the advocates of the Truth are often very poor pleaders. We spoil our cause by the words we use. But it is a mercy that the brief is in the hand of a special Pleader who will advocate successfully and overcome the sinner's opposition. Did you ever know Him to fail once? Brethren, I speak to your souls! Has not God in old times convinced you of sin? Did not the Holy Spirit come and prove that you were guilty, although no minister could ever get you out of your self-righteousness? Did He not advocate Christ's righteousness? Did He not stand and tell you that your works were filthy rags? And when you had well-near still refused to listen to His voice, did He not fetch Hell's drum and make it sound about your ears, bidding you look through the vista of future years and see the Throne set, the Books open, the sword brandished, Hell burning, fiends howling and the damned shrieking forever? And did He not thus convince you of the judgment to come? He is a mighty Advocate when He pleads in the soul of sin, of righteousness and of the judgment to come. Blessed Advocate! Plead in my heart, plead with my conscience! When I sin, make conscience bold to tell me of it. When I err, make conscience speak at once—and when I turn aside to crooked ways, then advocate the cause of righteousness and bid me sit down in confusion, knowing my guiltiness in the sight of God!

But there is yet another sense in which the Holy Spirit advocates and that is He advocates our cause with Jesus Christ, with groaning that cannot be uttered. O my Soul, you are ready to burst within me! O my heart, you are swelled with grief. The hot tide of my emotion would well-near overflow the channels of my veins. I long to speak, but the very desire chains my tongue. I wish to pray, but the fervency of my feeling curbs my language. There is a groaning within that cannot be uttered. Do you know who can utter that groaning, who can understand it and who can put it into heavenly language and utter it in a celestial tongue so that Christ can hear it? Oh, yes, it is God the Holy Spirit! He advocates our cause with Christ and then Christ advocates it with His Father. He is the Advocate who makes intercession for us, with groaning that cannot be uttered!

Having thus explained the Spirit's office as Teacher and Advocate, we come now to the translation of our version—the *Comforter*. And here I shall have three divisions. First, the *Comforter*. Secondly, the *comfort*. And thirdly, the *comforted*.

I. First, then, the COMFORTER. Briefly let me run over in my mind and in your minds, too, the characteristics of this glorious Comforter. Let me tell you some of the attributes of His comfort so that you may understand how well adapted He is to your case.

And first, we will remark that God the Holy Spirit is a very *loving* Comforter. I am in distress and need consolation. Some passerby hears of my sorrow and he steps within, sits down and tries to cheer me. He speaks soothing words. But he loves me not—he is a stranger—he knows me not at all. He has only come in to try his skill. And what is the consequence? His words run over me like oil upon a slab of marble—they are like the pattering rain upon the rock. They do not break my grief. It stands unmoved, as adamant because he has no love for me. But let someone who loves me dearly as his own life come and plead with me. Then truly his words are music. They taste like honey. He knows the password of the doors of my heart and my ear is attentive to every word. I catch the intonation of each syllable as it falls, for it is like the harmony of the harps of Heaven. Oh, there is a voice in love—it speaks a language which is its own—it is an idiom and an accent which none can mimic! Wisdom cannot imitate it, oratory cannot attain unto it. It is love, alone, which can reach the mourning heart! Love is the only handkerchief which can wipe the mourner's tears away. And is not the Holy Spirit a loving Comforter? Do you know, O saint, how much the Holy Spirit loves you? Can you measure the love of the Spirit? Do you know how great is the affection of His soul towards you? Go, measure Heaven with your span. Go, weigh the mountains in the scales. Go, take the ocean's water and count each drop. Go count the sand upon the sea's wide shore—and when you have accomplished this—you can tell how much He loves you! He has loved you long, He has loved you well. He loved you always and He still shall love you. Surely He is the Person to comfort you, because He loves you. Admit Him, then, to your heart, O Christian, that He may comfort you in your distress!

But next He is a *faithful* Comforter. Love sometimes proves unfaithful. "Oh, sharper than a serpent's tooth" is an unfaithful friend! Oh, far more bitter than the gall of bitterness to have a friend to turn from me in my distress! Oh, woe of woes, to have one who loves me in my prosperity forsake me in the dark days of my trouble. Sad, indeed, but such is not God's Spirit! He always loves me and loves even to the end—a faithful Comforter! Child of God, you are in trouble, a little while ago you found

Him a sweet and loving Comforter. You obtained relief from Him when others were but broken cisterns. He sheltered you in His bosom and carried you in His arms. Oh, why do you distrust Him *now?* Away with your fears! For He is a faithful Comforter. "Ah, but" you say, "I fear I shall be sick and shall be deprived of His ordinances." Nevertheless, He shall visit you on your sick bed and sit by your side to give you consolation. "Ah, but I have distresses greater than you can conceive of, wave upon wave rolls over me. Deep calls unto deep at the noise of the eternal's waterspouts." Nevertheless, He will be faithful to His promise. "Ah, but I have sinned." So you have, but sin cannot sever you from His love. He loves you still! Think not, O poor downcast child of God, that He loves you less because the scars of your old sins have marred your beauty. Oh, no. He loved you when He foreknew your sin. He loved you with the knowledge of what the aggregate of your wickedness would be. And He does not love you less now. Come to Him in all boldness of faith. Tell Him you have grieved Him and He will forget your wandering and will receive you again. The kisses of His love shall be bestowed upon you and the arms of His Grace shall embrace you. He is faithful—trust Him. He will never deceive you, Trust Him—He will never leave you.

Again—He is an *unwearied* Comforter. I have sometimes tried to comfort persons that have been tried. You now and then meet with the case of a nervous person. You ask, "What is your trouble?" You are told and you try, if possible, to remove it. But while you are preparing your artillery to battle the trouble, you find that it has shifted its quarters and is occupying quite a different position. You change your argument and begin again. But lo, it is again gone and you are bewildered. You feel like Hercules cutting off the ever-growing heads of the Hydra. And you give up your task in despair. You meet with persons whom it is impossible to comfort, reminding me of the man who locked himself up in fetters and threw the key away, so that nobody could unlock him. I have found some in the fetters of despair. "O, I am the man," they say, "who has seen affliction. Pity me, pity me, O my Friends." And the more you try to comfort such people, the worse they get. And therefore, out of all heart, we leave them to wander alone among the tombs of their former joys. But the Holy Spirit is never out of heart with those whom He wishes to comfort. He attempts to comfort us and we run away from the sweet cordial. He gives some sweet draught to cure us and we will not drink it. He gives some wondrous potion to charm away all our troubles and we put it away from us. Still He pursues us. And though we say that we will not be comforted, He says we *shall* be and when He has said, He does it. He is not to be wearied by all our sins, not by all our murmurings.

And oh, how *wise* a Comforter is the Holy Spirit! Job had comforters and I think he spoke the truth when he said, "Miserable comforters are you all." But I dare say they esteemed themselves wise. And when the young man, Elihu, rose to speak, they thought he had a world of impudence. Were they not "grave and reverend seniors?" Did not they comprehend his grief and sorrow? If they could not comfort him, who could? But they did not find out the cause. They thought he was not really a child of God, that he was self-righteous. And they gave him the wrong medicine. It is a bad case when the doctor mistakes the disease and gives a wrong prescription and so, perhaps, kills the patient. Sometimes, when we go and visit people we mistake their disease—we want to comfort them on this point—whereas they do not require any such comfort at all. They would be better left alone than spoiled by such unwise comforters as we are. But oh, how wise the Holy Spirit is! He takes the soul, lays it on the table and dissects it in a moment. He finds out the root of the matter. He sees where the complaint is and then He applies the knife where something is required to be taken away, or puts a plaster where the sore is. And He never mistakes. Oh, how wise, the blessed Holy Spirit! From every comforter I turn and leave them all—for You are He who alone gives the wisest consolation!

Then mark how *safe* a Comforter the Holy Spirit is. All comfort is not safe. Mark that. There is a young man over there very melancholy. You know how he became so? He stepped into the House of God and heard a powerful preacher and the Word of God was blessed and convinced him of sin! When he went home, his father and the rest found there was something different about him. "Oh," they said, "John is mad. He is crazy," and what said his mother? "Send him into the country for a week, let him go to the ball or to the theater." John! Did you find any comfort there? "Ah, no, they made me worse, for while I was there, I thought Hell might open and swallow me up." Did you find any relief in the gaieties of the world? "No," you say, "I thought it was an idle waste of time." Alas, this is miserable comfort, but it is the comfort of the worldling! And when a Christian gets into distress, how many will recommend him this remedy and the other. "Go and hear Mr. So-and-So preach—have a few friends at your house—read such-and-such a consoling volume." And very likely it is the most unsafe advice in the world. The devil will sometimes come to men's souls as a false comforter and he will say to the soul, "What need is there to make all this ado about repentance? You are no worse than other people." And he will try to make the soul believe that what is *presumption* is the real assurance of the Holy Spirit. Thus he deceives many by false comfort. Ah, there have been many, like infants, destroyed by elixirs given to lull them to sleep. Many have been ruined by

the cry of "peace, peace," when there is no peace—hearing gentle things—when they ought to be stirred to the quick. Cleopatra's asp was brought in a basket of flowers. And men's ruin often lurks in fair and sweet speeches. But the Holy Spirit's comfort is safe and you may rest on it. Let Him speak and there is a reality about it. Let Him give the cup of consolation and you may drink it to the bottom, for in its depths there are no dregs, nothing to intoxicate or ruin—it is all safe.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit is an *active* Comforter—He does not comfort by words, but by deeds. Some comfort by, "Be you warmed and be you filled," giving nothing. But the Holy Spirit *gives.* He intercedes with Jesus. He gives us promises, He gives us Grace and so He comforts us. Mark again—He is always a *successful* Comforter. He never attempts what He cannot accomplish!

Then to close up—He is an *ever-present* Comforter, so that you never have to send for Him. Your God is always near you and when you need comfort in your distress, behold, the Word is near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart. He is an ever-present help in time of trouble. I wish I had time to expand these thoughts. But I cannot.

II. The second thing is the COMFORT. Now there are some persons who make a great mistake about the influence of the Holy Spirit. A foolish man who had a fancy to preach in a certain pulpit, though in truth was quite incapable of the duty, called upon the minister and assured him solemnly that it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he was to preach in his pulpit. "Very well," said the minister, "I suppose I must not doubt your assertion, but as it has not been revealed to me that I am to let you preach, you must go your way until it is." I have heard many fanatical persons say the Holy Spirit revealed this and that to them. Now that is very generally revealed nonsense! The Holy Spirit does not reveal anything fresh. He brings old things to our remembrance. "He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatever I have told you." The canon of Revelation is closed. There is no more to be added. God does not give a fresh Revelation, but the rivets of the old one. When it has been forgotten and laid in the dusty chamber of our memory, He fetches it out and cleans the picture. But He does not paint a new one. There are no new Doctrines, but the old ones are often revived! It is not, I say, by any new Revelation that the Spirit comforts. He does so by telling us old things over again. He brings a fresh lamp to manifest the treasures hidden in Scripture. He unlocks the strong chests in which the Truth has long lain and He points to secret chambers filled with untold riches. But He comes no more, for enough is done. Believer, there is enough in the Bible for you to live upon forever. If you should outnumber the years of Methuselah, there would be no need for a fresh

Revelation. If you should live till Christ should come upon the earth, there would be no necessity for the addition of a single word. If you should go down as deep as Jonah, or even descend as David said he did, into the belly of Hell, still there would be enough in the Bible to comfort you without a supplementary sentence. But Christ says, "He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you." Now let me just tell you briefly what it is the Holy Spirit tells us.

Ah, does He not whisper to the heart, "Saint, be of good cheer. There is One who died for you—look to Calvary—behold His wounds. See the torrent gushing from His side. There is your Purchaser and you are secure. He loves you with an everlasting love and this chastisement is meant for your good. Each stroke is working your healing—by the blueness of the wound your soul is made better. Whom He loves He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives. Doubt not His Grace because of your tribulation, but believe that He loves you as much in seasons of trouble as in times of happiness." And then, moreover, He says, "What is all your suffering compared with that of your Lord's or what, when weighed in the scales of Jesus' agonies, is all your distress?" And especially at times does the Holy Spirit take back the veil of Heaven and lets the soul behold the Glory of the upper world! Then it is that the saint can say, "Oh, you are a Comforter to me!"—

"Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall;
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my Heaven, my All."

Some of you could follow, were I to tell of manifestations of Heaven. You, too, have left sun, moon and stars at your feet while in your flight. Outstripping the tardy lightning, you have seemed to enter the gates of pearl and tread the golden streets, borne aloft on wings of the Spirit. But here we must not trust *ourselves*, lest, lost in reverie, we forget our theme.

III. And now thirdly, who are the COMFORTED persons? I like, you know, at the end of my sermon, to cry out, "Divide! Divide!" There are two parties here—some who are the comforted and others who are the comfortless ones. Some who have received the consolation of the Holy Spirit and some who have not. Now let us try and sift you and see which is the chaff and which is the wheat. And may God grant that some of the chaff may this night be transformed into His wheat!

You may say, "How am I to know whether I am a recipient of the comfort of the Holy Spirit?" You may know it by *one* rule. If you have received one blessing from God, you will receive all other blessings, too. Let me explain myself—if I could come here as an auctioneer and sell the Gospel off in lots, I should dispose of it all. If I could say, here is Justification through the blood of Christ, free, giving away, gratis—many a one would

say, "I will have Justification—give it to me. I wish to be justified, I wish to be pardoned." Suppose I took Sanctification, the giving up of all sin, a thorough change of heart, leaving off drunkenness and swearing? Many would say, "I don't want that. I should like to go to Heaven, but I do not want that holiness. I should like to be saved at last, but I should like to have my drink. I should like to enter Glory, but then I must have an oath or two on the road." No, but Sinner, if you have one blessing, you shall have all! God will never divide the Gospel. He will not give Justification to that man and Sanctification to another. He will not give pardon to one and holiness to another. No, it all goes together! Whom He calls, them He justifies. Whom He justifies, them He sanctifies. And whom He sanctifies, them He also glorifies. Oh, if I could lay down nothing but the *comforts* of the Gospel, you would fly to them as flies do to honey. When you come to be ill, you send for the clergyman. Ah, you all want your minister, then, to come and give you consoling words. But if he is an honest man, he will not give some of you a particle of consolation. He will not commence pouring oil when the knife would be better. I want to make a man feel his sins before I dare tell him anything about Christ. I want to probe into his soul and make him feel that he is lost before I tell him anything about the purchased blessing! It is the ruin of many to tell them, "Now just believe on Christ and that is all you have to do." If, instead of dying they get better, they rise up whitewashed hypocrites—that is all. I have heard of a city missionary who kept a record of two thousand persons who were supposed to be on their deathbed, but recovered and whom he would have put down as converted persons had they died. And how many do you think lived a Christian life afterwards out of the two thousand! Not two! Positively he could only find one who was found to live afterwards in the fear of God! Is it not horrible that when men and women come to die, they should cry, "Comfort, comfort"? and therefore their friends conclude that they are children of God, while, after all, they have no right to consolation, but are intruders upon the enclosed grounds of the blessed God. O God! May these people ever be kept from having comfort when they have no right to it! Have you the other blessings? Have you had conviction of sin? Have you ever felt your guilt before God? Have your souls been humbled at Jesus' feet? And have you been made to look to Calvary, alone, for your refuge? If not, you have no right to consolation! Do not take an atom of it. The Spirit is a Convincer before He is a Comforter. And you must have the other operations of the Holy Spirit before you can derive anything from this!

And now I have done. You have heard what this babbler has said once more. What has it been? Something about the Comforter. But let me ask you, before you go, what do you know about the Comforter? Each one of

you before descending the steps of this Chapel—let this solemn question run through your souls—"What do you know of the Comforter?" Oh, poor Souls, if you know not the Comforter, I will tell you what you shall know—you shall know the Judge! If you know not the Comforter on earth, you shall know the Condemner in the next world, who shall cry, "Depart you cursed into everlasting fire in Hell." Well might Whitefield call out, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord!" If we were to live here forever, you might slight the Gospel. If you had a lease of your lives, you might despise the Comforter. But sirs, you must die! Since last we met together, probably some have gone to their long last home. And before we meet again in this sanctuary, some here will be among the glorified above, or among the damned below! Which will it be? Let your soul answer. If tonight you fell down dead in your pews, or where you are standing in the gallery—where would you be?—In *Heaven* or in *Hell*?

Ah, deceive not yourselves—let conscience have its perfect work. And if, in the sight of God, you are obliged to say, "I tremble and fear lest my portion should be with unbelievers," listen one moment and then I have done with you. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved and he that believes not shall be damned." Weary Sinner, hellish Sinner, you who are the devil's castaway, reprobate, profligate, harlot, robber, thief, adulterer, fornicator, drunkard, swearer, Sabbath-breaker—listen! I speak to you as well as the rest. I exempt no man. God has said there is no exemption here. "*Whoever* believes in the name of Jesus Christ shall be saved." Sin is no barrier—your guilt is no obstacle. *Whoever*—though he were as black in sin as Satan, though he were filthy as a fiend—whoever this night believes, shall have every sin forgiven, shall have every crime erased, shall have every iniquity blotted out. He shall be saved in the Lord Jesus Christ and shall stand in Heaven safe and secure!

That is the glorious Gospel. May God apply it home to your hearts and give you faith in Jesus!—

"We have listened to the preacher—Truth
By Him has now been shown.
But we need a GREATER TEACHER,
From the everlasting Throne—
APPLICATION is the work of God alone."

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SWEET COMFORT FOR FEEBLE SAINTS
NO. 6

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 4, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"A bruised reed shall He not break and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory."
Matthew 12:20.

BABBLING fame always loves to talk of one man or another. Some there are whose glory it trumpets forth and whose honor it extols above the heavens. Some are her favorites and their names are carved on marble—heard in every land and every clime. Fame is not an impartial judge—she has her favorites. Some men she extols, exalts, and almost deifies—others, whose virtues are far greater and whose characters are more deserving of commendation, she passes by unheeded and puts the finger of silence on her lips. You will generally find that those persons beloved by fame are men made of brass or iron, and cast in a rough mold. Fame caresses Caesar because he ruled the earth with a rod of iron. Fame loves Luther because he boldly and manfully defied the Pope of Rome, and with knit brow dared laugh at the thunders of the Vatican. Fame admires Knox, for he was stern and proved himself the bravest of the brave. Generally, you will find her choosing the men of fire and mettle, who stood before their fellow creatures fearless of them—men who were made of courage—who were consolidated lumps of fearlessness, and never knew what timidity might be!

But you know there is another class of persons equally virtuous and equally to be esteemed—perhaps even more so—whom fame entirely forgets. You do not hear her talk of the gentle-minded Melancthon—she says but little of him—yet he did as much, perhaps, in the Reformation as even the mighty Luther! You do not hear fame talk much of the sweet and blessed Rutherford, and of the heavenly words that distilled from his lips, or of Archbishop Leighton, of whom it was said that he was never out of temper in his life. She loves the rough granite peaks that defy the storm cloud—she does not care for the more humble stone in the valley, on which the weary traveler rests. She wants something bold and prominent—something that courts popularity—something that stands out before the world. She does not care for those who retreat in the shade. Therefore, it is, my brethren, that the blessed Jesus, our adorable Master, has escaped fame. No one says much about Jesus, except His followers; we do not find His name written among the great and mighty men, though in truth He is the greatest, mightiest, holiest, purest, and best of

men that ever lived. But because He was, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild," and was emphatically the man whose Kingdom is not of this world—because He had nothing of the rough about Him, but was all love—because His words were softer than butter, His utterances more gentle in their flow than oil—because never man spoke so gently as this man—therefore He is neglected and forgotten.

He did not come to be a conqueror with his sword, nor a Mohammed with his fiery eloquence, but He came to speak with a "still small voice," that melts the rocky heart, that binds up the broken in spirit; a voice that continually says, "Come unto Me all you that are weary and heavy laden." "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls." Jesus Christ was all gentleness, and this is why He has not been extolled among men as otherwise He would have been. Beloved, our text is full of gentleness; it seems to have been steeped in love, and I hope I may be able to show you something of the immense sympathy, and the mighty tenderness of Jesus as I attempt to speak from it. There are three things to be noticed!—First, *mortal frailty;* secondly, *divine compassion;* and thirdly, *certain triumph*—"till He send forth judgment unto victory."

I. First, we have before us a view of MORTAL FRAILTY—bruised reed and smoking flax—two very suggestive metaphors, and very full of meaning. If it were not too fanciful—and if it is, I know you will excuse me—I should say that the *bruised reed is an emblem of a sinner in the first stage of his conviction*. The work of God's Holy Spirit begins with bruising. In order to be saved, the fallow ground must be plowed up—the hard heart must be broken—the rock must be split in sunder. An old divine says there is no going to heaven without passing hard by the gates of hell—without a great deal of soul-trouble and heart-exercise. I take it then that the bruised reed is a picture of the poor sinner when first God commences His operation upon the soul. He is a bruised reed, almost entirely broken and consumed—there is but little strength in him! The smoking flax I conceive to be *a backsliding Christian*—one who has been a burning and a shining light in his day, but by neglect of the means of Grace, the withdrawal of God's Spirit, and falling into sin, his light is almost gone out—not quite—it never can go out, for Christ says, "I will not quench it"; but it becomes like a lamp when ill-supplied with oil—almost useless. It is not quite extinguished—it smokes. It was a useful lamp once, but now it has become as smoking flax. So I think these metaphors very likely describe the contrite sinner as a bruised reed, and the backsliding Christian as smoking flax. However, I shall not choose to make such a division as that, but I shall put both the metaphors together, and I hope we may fetch out a few thoughts from them.

And first, the encouragement offered in our text applies to *weak* ones. What in the world is weaker than the bruised reed, or the smoking flax?

A reed that grows in the bog or marsh, let but the wild duck light upon it, and it snaps. Let but the foot of man brush against it, and it is bruised and broken. Every wind that comes howling across the river makes it shake to and fro, and well near tears it up by the roots. You can conceive of nothing more frail or brittle, or whose existence depends more upon circumstances than a bruised reed! Then look at smoking flax—what is it? It has a spark within it, that is true, but it is almost smothered—an infant's breath might blow it out, or the tears of a maiden quench it in a moment! Nothing has a more precarious existence than the little spark hidden in the smoking flax. *Weak things,* you see are here described. Well, Christ says of them, "The smoking flax I will not quench. The bruised reed I will not break." Let me go in search of the weaklings. Ah, I shall not have to go far. There are many in this house of prayer this morning who are, indeed, weak. But some of God's children, blessed be His name, are made strong to do mighty works for Him!

God has His Samsons here and there who can pull up Gaza's gates, and carry them to the top of the hill. He has here and there His mighty Gideons who can go to the camp of the Midianites, and overthrow their hosts. He has His mighty men who can go into the pit in winter and slay the lions—but the majority of His people are a timid, weak race. They are like the starlings that are frightened at every passerby, a little fearful flock. If temptation comes, they fall before it; if trial comes, they are overwhelmed by it—their frail skiff is danced up and down by every wave, and when the wind comes, they are drifted along like a sea bird on the crest of the billows. Weak things, without strength, without force, without might, without power! Ah, dear friends, I know I have got hold of some of your hands now, and your hearts too, for you are saying, "Weak? Ah, that I am! Full often I am compelled to say I would, but cannot sing; I would but cannot pray; I would, but cannot believe." You are saying that you cannot do anything! Your best resolves are weak and vain, and when you cry, "My strength renew," you feel weaker than before! You are weak, are you? Bruised reeds and smoking flax? Blessed be God, this text is for *you* then! I am glad you can come in under the denomination of weak ones, for here is a promise that He will never break nor quench them, but will sustain and hold them up.

I know there are some very strong people here—I mean strong in their own ideas. I often meet with persons who would not confess any such weakness as this. They are strong minds. They say, "Do you think that we go into sin, sir? Do you tell us that our hearts are corrupt? We do not believe any such thing; we are good, pure, and upright; we have strength and might." To you I am not preaching this morning; to you I am saying nothing. But take heed—your strength is vanity, your power is a delusion, your might is a lie—for however much you may boast in what you can do, it shall pass away! When you come to the real contest with death,

you shall find that you have no strength to grapple with it; when one of these days of strong temptation shall come, it will take hold of you moral man, and down you will go! And the glorious livery of your morality will be so stained that though you wash your hands in snow water, and make yourselves ever so clean, you shall be so polluted that your own clothes shall abhor you! I think it is a blessed thing to be weak. The weak one is a sacred thing; the Holy Spirit has made him such. Can you say, "I have no strength?" Then this text is for you!

Secondly, the things mentioned in our text are not only weak, but *worthless* things. I have heard of a man who would pick up a pin as he walked along the street, on the principle of economy, but I never yet heard of a man who would stop to pick up bruised reeds. They are not worth having! Who would care to have a bruised reed—a piece of rush lying on the ground? We all despise it as worthless. And smoking flax! What is the worth of that? It is an offensive and noxious thing, and the worth of it is nothing. No one would give the snap of a finger either for the bruised reed or the smoking flax. Well, then, beloved, in our estimation there are many of us who are worthless things. There are some here who if they could weigh themselves in the scales of the sanctuary, and put their own hearts into the balance of conscience, would appear to be good for nothing—worthless, useless! There was a time when you thought yourselves to be the very best people in the world—when if anyone had said that you had more than you deserved, you would have kicked at it, and said, "I believe I am as good as other people." You thought yourselves something wonderful—extremely worthy of God's love and regard, but you now feel yourselves to be worthless. Sometimes you imagine God can hardly know where you are, you are such a despicable creature—so worthless—not worth His consideration. You can understand how He can look upon a drop of water, or upon a grain of dust in the sunbeam, or upon the insect of the summer evening, but you can hardly tell how He can think of *you,* you appear so worthless—a dead blank in the world, a useless thing! You say, "What good am I? I am doing nothing. As for a minister of the Gospel, he is of some service; as for a deacon of the church he is of some use. As for a Sunday school teacher, he is doing some good—but of what service am I?"

And you might ask the same question here—what is the use of a bruised reed? Can a man lean upon it? Can a man strengthen himself with it? Shall it be a pillar in my house? Can you bind it up into the pipes of Pan, and make music come from a bruised reed? Ah, no, it is of no service! And of what use is smoking flax? The midnight traveler cannot be lighted by it; the student cannot read by the flame of it; it is of no use—men throw it into the fire and consume it. Ah, that is how you talk of yourselves; you are good for nothing! So are these things. But Christ will not throw you away because you are of no value. You do not know of

what use you may be, and after all you cannot tell how Jesus Christ values you. There is a good woman there, a mother, perhaps; she says, "Well, I do not often go out—I keep house with my children, and seem to be doing no good." Mother, do not say so, your position is a high, lofty, responsible one. In training up children for the Lord, you are doing as much for His name as yon eloquent Apollos, who so valiantly preached the Word! And you, poor man, all you can do is to toil from morning till night, and earn just enough to enable you to live day by day; you have nothing to give away, and when you go to the Sunday school, you can just read, you cannot teach much. Well, but unto him to whom little is given, of him little is required. Do you not know that there is such a thing as glorifying God by sweeping the street crossing? If two angels were sent down to earth, one to rule an empire, and the other to sweep a street, they would have no choice in the matter, as long as God ordered them. So God, in His providence has called you to work hard for your daily bread. Do it to His Glory! "Whatever you do; whether you eat or drink, do all to His honor."

But, ah, I know there are some of you here who seem useless to the church. You do all you can, but when you have done it, it is nothing. You can neither help us with money, nor talents, nor time, and therefore you think God must cast you out. You think if you were like Paul or Peter you might be safe. Ah, beloved, talk not so! Jesus Christ says He will not quench the useless flax, nor break the worthless bruised reed! He has something for the useless and for the worthless ones, but mark you, I do not say this to excuse *laziness*—to excuse those that *can* do, but do *not*—that is a very different thing! There is a whip for the ass, a scourge for idle men, and they must sometimes have it. I am speaking now of those who *cannot* do it. Not of Issachar, who is like a strong ass, crouching down between two burdens, and too lazy to get up with them. I say nothing for the sluggard who will not plow by reason of the cold; but of the men and women who really feel that they can be of little service—who cannot do more—to such the words of the text are applicable!

Now we will make another remark. The two things here mentioned are *offensive* things. A bruised reed is offensive, for I believe there is an illusion here to the pipes of Pan, which you all know are reeds put together, along which a man moves his mouth, thus causing some kind of music. This is the organ, I believe which Jubal invented, and which David mentions, for it is certain that the organ we use was not then in use. The bruised reed then, would of course spoil the melody of all the pipes; one unsound tube would so let the air out as to produce a discordant sound—or no sound at all—so that one's impulse would be to take the pipe out, and put in a fresh one. And as for smoking flax, the wick of a candle or anything of that kind I need not inform you that the smoke is offensive. To me no odor in the entire world is as abominably offensive as

smoking flax. But some say, "How can you speak in so low a style?" I have not gone lower than I could go myself, nor lower than you can go with me, for I am sure you are, if God the Holy Spirit has really humbled you, just as offensive to your own souls, and just as offensive to God as a bruised reed would be among the pipes, or as smoking flax to the eyes and nose! I often think of dear old John Bunyan, when he said he wished God had made him a toad, or a frog, or a snake, or anything rather than a *man,* for he felt he was so offensive. Oh, I can conceive a nest of vipers, and I think that they are obnoxious; I can imagine a pool of all kinds of loathsome creatures, breeding corruption, but there is nothing one half so worthy of abhorrence as the *human heart!* God spares from all eyes but His own that awful sight—the human heart! And could you and I but once see our heart, we would be driven mad, so horrible would be the sight! Do you feel like that? Do you feel that you must be offensive in God's sight—that you have so rebelled against Him, so turned away from His commandments, that surely you must be obnoxious to Him? If so, my text is yours.

Now, I can imagine some woman here this morning that has departed from the paths of virtue, and while she is standing in the throng up there, or sitting down, she feels as if she had no right to tread these hallowed courts and stand among God's people. She thinks that God might almost make the chapel break down upon her to destroy her, she is so great a sinner! Never mind, broken reed and smoking flax; though you are the scorn of man, and loathsome to yourself, yet Jesus says to you, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you." There is some man here who has something in his heart that I know not of—who may have committed secret crimes that we will not mention in public. His sins stick like a leech to him, and rob him of all comfort! Here you are young man, shaking and trembling lest your crime should be divulged before high Heaven. You are broken down, bruised like a reed, smoking like flax. Ah, I have a word for you, too. Comfort! Comfort! Comfort! Despair not, for Jesus says He will not quench the smoking flax; He will not break the bruised reed.

And yet, my dear friends, there is one thought before I turn away from this point—both of these articles, however worthless they may be, *may yet be of some service.* When God puts His hand to a man, if he were worthless and useless before, He can make him very valuable; you know the price of an article does not depend so much upon the value of the raw material as upon workmanship put upon it. Here is very bad raw material to begin with—bruised reeds and smoking flax; but by divine workmanship both these things become of wondrous value! You tell me the bruised reed is good for nothing. I tell you that Christ will take that bruised reed and mend it up, and fit it in the pipes of Heaven! Then when the grand orchestra shall send forth its music, when the organs of the

skies shall peal forth their deep-toned sounds, we shall ask, "What was that sweet note heard there, mingling with the rest?" And someone shall say, "It was a bruised reed!" Ah, Mary Magdalene's voice in heaven, I imagine, sounds more sweet and liquid than any other! And the voice of that poor thief, who said "Lord, remember me," if it is a deep bass voice, is more mellow and more sweet than the voice of any other—because he loved much, for he had much forgiven him. This reed may yet be of use!

Do not say you are good for nothing. You shall sing up in Heaven yet! Do not say you are worthless—at last you shall stand before the throne among the blood-washed company, and shall sing God's praise! Yes, and the smoking flax—what good can that be? I will soon tell you. There is a spark in that flax somewhere; it is nearly out, but still a spark remains. Behold the prairie on fire! Do you see the flames come rolling on? Do you see stream after stream of hot fire deluging the plain till all the continent is burnt and scorched—till heaven is reddened with the flame? Old night's black face is scarred with the burning, and the stars appear frightened at the conflagration; how was that mass ignited? By a piece of smoking flax dropped by some traveler! It was fanned by the soft wind till the whole prairie caught the flame. So one poor man—one ignorant man, one weak man—even one backsliding man, may be the means of the conversion of a whole nation! Who knows but that you who are nothing now, may be of more use than those of us who appear to stand better before God because we have more gifts and talents? God can make a spark set a world on fire—He can light up a whole nation with the spark of one poor praying soul! You may be useful yet—therefore be of good cheer! Moss grows upon gravestones; the ivy clings to the moldering pile; the mistletoe grows on the dead branch, and even so shall Grace, piety, virtue, holiness, and goodness come from smoking flax, and bruised reeds by God's Grace!

II. Thus, my dear Friends, I have tried to find out the parties for whom this text is meant, and I have shown you somewhat of mortal frailty. Now I mount a step higher—to DIVINE COMPASSION. "The bruised reed He will not break; the smoking flax He will not quench."

Notice what is first of all stated, and then let me tell you that Jesus Christ means a great deal more than He says. First of all, what does He say? He says plainly enough that He will not break the bruised reed. There is a bruised reed before me—a poor child of God under a deep sense of sin. It seems as if the whip of the law would never stop. It keeps on—lash, lash, lash! And though you say, "Lord stop it, and give me a little respite," still comes down the cruel thong—lash, lash, lash! You feel your sins. Ah, I know what you are saying this morning—"If God continues this a little longer, my heart will break—I shall perish in despair, I am almost distracted by my sin. If I lie down at night I cannot sleep; it appears as if ghosts were in the room—ghosts of my sins, and when I

awake at midnight, I see the black form of death staring at me, and saying, "You are my prey, I shall have you." All the while hell behind seems to burn; ah, poor bruised reed, He will not break you—conviction shall not be too strong—it shall be great enough to melt you, and to make you go to Jesus' feet; but, by His Grace it shall not be strong enough to break your heart altogether, so that you die. You shall never be driven to despair, but you shall be delivered! You shall come out of the fire, poor bruised reed, and shall not be broken!

So there is a backslider here this morning. He is like the smoking flax. Years gone by you found such happiness in the ways of the Lord, and such delight in His service, that you said, "There I would forever stay—

'What peaceful hours I then enjoyed;
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.'"

You are smoking and you think God will put you out. If I were an Arminian, I would tell you that He would—but being a believer in the Bible and nothing else—I tell you that He will not quench you! Though you are smoking, but you shall not die! Whatever your crime has been, the Lord says, "Return, you backsliding children of men, for I will have mercy upon you." He will not cast you away, poor Ephraim! Only come back to Him—He will not despise you, though you have plunged yourself in the mire and dirt; though you are covered from head to foot with filthiness! Come back, poor prodigal, come back, come back! Your Father calls you; listen poor Backslider! Come at once to Him whose arms are ready to receive you. He says He will not quench—He will not break, but there is more under cover than we see at first sight. When Jesus says He will not break, He means more than that; He means, "I will take that poor bruised reed, and I will plant it hard by the rivers of waters and (miracle of miracles) I will make it grow into a tree whose leaf shall not wither! I will water it every moment; I will watch it; there shall be heavenly fruits upon it. I will keep the birds of prey from it, but the birds of heaven, the sweet songsters of paradise shall make their dwellings in the branches."

When He says that He will not break the bruised reed, He means more; He means that He will nourish it, that He will help and strengthen, and support and glorify—that He will execute His commission on it, and make it glorious forever. And when He says to the backslider that He will not quench him, He means more than that—He means that He will fan him up to a flame! Some of you, I dare say, have gone home from chapel, and found that your fire had gone nearly out. I know how you deal with it; you blow gently at the single spark, if there is one—and least you should blow too hard, you hold your fingers before it, and if you were alone and had but one match, or one spark in the tinder—how gently would you blow it! So, Backslider, Jesus Christ deals with you—He does not put you out—He blows gently. He says, "I will not quench you." He

means, "I will be very tender, very cautious, very careful." He will put on dry material, so that by-and-by a little spark shall come to a flame and blaze up towards Heaven, and great shall be the fire thereof.

Now I want to say one or two things to Little-Faiths this morning. The little children of God who are here mentioned as being bruised reeds or smoking flax are just as safe as the great saints of God. I wish for a moment to expand this thought, and then I will finish with the other head. These saints of God who are called bruised reeds and smoking flax are just as safe as those who are mighty for their Master, and great in strength for several reasons. First of all, *the little saint is just as much God's elect as the great saint*. When God chose His people, He chose them all at once and altogether, and He elected one just as much as the other. If I choose a certain number of things, one may be less than the rest, but one is as much chosen as the other, and so Mrs. Fearing and Miss Despondency are just as much elected as Great-Heart, or Old Father Honest! Again—*the little ones are redeemed equally with the great ones!* The feeble saints cost Christ as much suffering as the strong ones; the tiniest child of God could not have been purchased with less of Jesus' precious blood, and the greatest child of God did not cost Him more. Paul did not cost any more than Benjamin—I am sure he did not—for I read in the Bible that "*there is no* difference." Besides, when of old they came to pay their redemption-money, every person brought a shekel—the poor shall bring no less, and the rich shall bring no more than just a shekel. The same price was paid for the one as the other!

Now, then, little child of God, take that thought to your soul. You see some men very prominent in Christ's cause—and it is very good that they should be—but they did not cost Jesus a farthing more than you did! He paid the same price for you that He paid for them. Recollect again *you are just as much a child of God as the greatest saint*. Some of you have five or six children; there is one child of yours perhaps, who is very tall and handsome, and has moreover, gifts of mind. And you have another child who is the smallest of the family, perhaps has but little intellect and understanding; but which is the more your child? "The more?" you say. "Both alike are my children, certainly one as much as the other." And so, dear friends, you may have very little learning, you may be very dark about divine things, you may but "see men as trees walking," but you are as much the children of God as those who have grown to the stature of men in Christ Jesus. Then remember, poor tried saint, *that you are just as much justified as any other child of God*. I know that I am completely justified—

"His blood and righteousness
My beauty are; my glorious dress."

I need no other garments except Jesus' doings and His imputed righteousness! The boldest child of God needs no more, and I, who am "less than the least of all saints," can be content with no less, and I shall have

no less! O Ready-to-Halt, you are as much justified as Paul, Peter, John the Baptist, or the loftiest saint in Heaven; there is no difference in that matter. Oh, take courage and rejoice!

Then one thing more. *If you were lost, God's honor would be as much tarnished as if the greatest one were lost.* A strange thing I once read in an old book about God's children and people being a part of Christ, and in union with Him. The writer says—"A father sits in his room, and there comes in a stranger; the stranger takes up a child on his knee, and the child has a sore finger, so he says, 'My child, you have a sore finger.'" "Yes," the child says. "Well, let me take it off and give you a golden one!" The child looks at him and says, "I will not go to that man any more, for he talks of taking off my finger. I love my finger, and I will not have a golden one instead of it." So the saint says, "I am one of the members of Christ, but I am like a sore finger, and He will take me off and put a golden one on." "No," says Christ, "No, no—I cannot have any of My members taken away! If the finger is a sore one, I will bind it up; I will strengthen it." Christ cannot allow a word about cutting His members off! If Christ loses one of His people, He would not be a whole Christ any longer! If the meanest of His children could be cast away, Christ would lack a part of His fullness—yes, Christ would be incomplete without His Church! If one of His children must be lost, it would be better that it should be a great one than a little one; if a little one were lost, Satan would say, "Ah, You save the great ones because they have strength and could help themselves, but the little one that has no strength, You could not save him." You know what Satan would say, but God would shut Satan's mouth by proclaiming, "They are all here, Satan—in spite of your malice, they are all here; everyone is safe! Now lie down in your den forever, and be bound eternally in chains and smoke and fire!" So shall he suffer eternal torment, but not one child of God ever shall!

One thought more, and I shall have done with this head. *The salvation of great saints often depends upon the salvation of little ones.* Do you understand that? You know that my salvation, or the salvation of any child of God, looking at second causes, very much depends upon the conversion of someone else. Suppose your mother is the means of your conversion; you would speaking after the manner of men, say that your conversion depended upon hers—for her being converted made her the instrument of bringing you in. Suppose such-and-such a minister to be the means of your calling. Then your conversion in some sense, though not absolutely, depends upon his. So it often happens that the salvation of God's mightiest servants depends upon the conversion of little ones. There is a poor mother—no one ever knows anything about her—she goes to the house of God; her name is not in the newspapers, or anywhere else. She teaches her child, and brings him up in the fear of God; she prays for that boy; she wrestles with God, and her tears and prayers

mingle together. The boy grows up. What is he? A missionary—a William Knibb—a Moffat—a Williams, but you do not hear anything about the mother. Ah, but if the mother had not been saved, where would the boy have been? Let this cheer the little ones, and may you rejoice that He will nourish and cherish you though you are like bruised reeds and smoking flax!

III. Now, to finish up, there is a CERTAIN VICTORY. "Till He send forth judgment unto victory."

Victory! There is something beautiful in that word. The death of Sir John Moore, in the Peninsular War, was very touching. He fell in the arms of triumph, and sad as was his fate, I doubt not that his eyes were lit up with luster by the shout of victory. So also, I suppose, that Wolfe spoke a truth when he said, "I die happy," having just before heard the shout, "They run, they run!" I know victory, even in that bad sense—for I look not upon earthly victories as of any value, but oh, how cheered the saint when he knows that victory is his! I shall fight during all my life, but I shall write *"Vici"* on my shield. I shall be "more than conqueror through Him that loved me." Each feeble saint shall win the day—each man upon his crutches—each lame one—each one full of infirmity, sorrow, sickness, and weakness shall gain the victory! "They shall come with singing unto Zion, as well the blind, lame, and the woman with child, together." So says the Scripture. Not one shall be left out. But He shall "send forth judgment unto victory." Victory! Victory! Victory! This is the lot of each Christian! He shall triumph through his dear Redeemer's name!

Now a word about this victory. I speak first to aged men and women. Dear brethren, you are often, I know, like the bruised reed. Coming events cast their shadows before them, and death casts the shadow of old age on you. You feel the grasshopper to be a burden; you feel full of weakness and decay; your frame can hardly hold together. Ah, you have here a special promise. "The bruised reed I will not break." "I will strengthen you." "When your heart and your flesh fails, I will be the strength of your heart, and your portion forever"—

"Even down to old age, all My people shall prove
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love!
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn
Like lambs they shall still in My bosom be borne."

Tottering on your staff, leaning, feeble, weak, and wan—fear not the last hour, for that last hour shall be your best! Your last day shall be a consummation devoutly to be wished for! Weak as you are, God will temper the trial to your weakness; He will make your pain less if your strength is less, and you shall sing in Heaven, "Victory! Victory! Victory!" There are some of us who could wish to change places with you, to be so near Heaven—to be so near Home. With all your infirmities, your gray hairs are a crown of glory to you, for you are near the end, as well as in the

way of righteousness. A word to you middle-aged men, battling in this life's rough storm. You are often bruised reeds. Your religion is so encumbered by your worldly callings, so covered up by the daily din of business, business, business, that you seem like smoking flax. It is as much as you can do to serve your God, and you cannot say that you are "fervent in spirit" as well as "diligent in business."

Man of business, toiling and striving in this world, He will not quench you when you are like smoking flax! He will not break you when you are like the bruised reed, but will deliver you from your troubles! You shall swim across the sea of life, and shall stand on the happy shore of Heaven. And you shall sing, "Victory," through Him that loved you. You youths and maidens! I speak to you, and have a right to do so. You and I oftentimes know what the bruised reed is when the hand of God blights our fair hopes. We are full of giddiness and waywardness—it is only the rod of affliction that can bring folly out of us—for we have much of it in us. Slippery paths are the paths of youths, and dangerous ways are the ways of the young. But God will not break or destroy us! Men by their over caution bid us never tread a step lest we fall. But God bids us go, and makes our feet like hind's feet, that we may tread upon high places. Serve God in your early days! Give your hearts to Him, and then He will never cast you out, but will nourish and cherish you!

Let me not finish without saving a word to little children. You who have heard of Jesus, He says to you, "The bruised reed I will not break, the smoking flax I will not quench." I believe there is many a little prattler, not six years old, who knows the Savior. I never despise infantile piety; I love it; I have heard little children talk of mysteries that gray-headed men knew not! Ah, little children who have been brought up in Sunday schools, and love the Savior's name, if others say you are too forward, do not fear, love Christ still—

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild
Still will look upon a child!
Pity your simplicity—
And allow you to come to Him.

He will not cast you away, for smoking flax He will not quench, and the bruised reed He will not break!

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A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 11, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."
1 Corinthians 1:23, 24.

WHAT contempt has God poured upon the wisdom of this world! How has He brought it to nothing and made it appear as nothing. He has allowed it to work out its own conclusions and prove its own folly. Men boasted that they were wise. They said that they could find out God to perfection. And in order that their folly might be refuted once and forever, God gave them the opportunity of doing so. He said, "Worldly wisdom, I will try you. You say that you are mighty, that your intellect is vast and comprehensive, that your eyes are keen, that you can unravel all secrets—now, behold, I try you—I give you one great problem to solve. Here is the universe. Stars make its canopy, fields and flowers adorn it and the floods roll over its surface. My name is written therein—the invisible things of God may be clearly seen in the things which are made. Philosophy, I give you this problem—find Me out. Here are My works—find Me out! Discover in the wondrous world which I have made, the way to worship Me acceptably. I give you space enough to do it—there is data enough. Behold the clouds, the earth and the stars. I give you time enough. I will give you four thousand years and I will not interfere—you shall do as you will with your own world. I will give you men in abundance, for I will make great minds and vast, whom you shall call lords of earth. You shall have orators, you shall have philosophers. Find Me out, O reason. Find Me out, O wisdom. Discover My nature if you can—find Me out unto perfection if you are able. And if you cannot, then shut your mouth forever and then I will teach you that the wisdom of God is wiser than the wisdom of man! Yes that the *foolishness* of God is wiser than men."

And how did the reason of man work out the problem? How did wisdom perform her feat? Look upon the heathen nations—there you see the result of wisdom's researches. In the time of Jesus Christ, you might have beheld the earth covered with the slime of pollution—a Sodom on a large scale—corrupt, filthy, depraved, indulging in vices which we dare

not mention, reveling in lusts too abominable even for our imagination to dwell upon for a moment! We find the men prostrating themselves before blocks of wood and stone, adoring ten thousand gods more vicious than themselves. We find, in fact, that reason wrote out her own depravity with a finger covered with blood and filth. That she forever cut herself out from all her glory by the vile deeds she did. She would not worship God. She would not bow down to Him who is "clearly seen," but she worshipped any creature—the reptile that crawled, the crocodile, the viper, everything might be a god, but not the God of Heaven! Vice might be made into a ceremony; the greatest crime might be exalted into a religion, but true worship she knew nothing of. Poor reason! Poor wisdom! How are you fallen from Heaven! Like Lucifer—you son of the morning you are lost. You have written out your conclusion, but it is a conclusion of consummate folly!

"After that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God; it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them who believe." Wisdom had had its time and time enough. It had done its all and that was little enough. It had made the world worse than it was before it stepped upon it. And now, says God, "Foolishness shall overcome wisdom. Now ignorance, as you call it, shall sweep away your science. Now, humble, child-like faith shall crumble to the dust all the colossal systems your hands have piled."

He calls His army. Christ puts His trumpet to His mouth and up come the warriors—clad in fisherman's garb, with the brogue of the Lake of Galilee—poor humble mariners. Here are the warriors, O wisdom, that are to confound you. These are the heroes who shall overcome your proud philosophers! These men are to plant their standard upon the ruined walls of your strongholds and bid them fall forever. These men and their successors are to exalt a gospel in the world which you may laugh at as absurd, which you may sneer at as folly, but which shall be exalted above the hills and shall be glorious even to the highest heavens! Since that day God has always raised up successors of the apostles. I claim to be a successor of the apostles, not by any lineal descent, but because I have the same roll and charter as any apostle and am as much called to preach the gospel as Paul, himself—if not as much acknowledged in the conversion of sinners—yet in a measure, blessed of God! And, therefore, here I stand, foolish as Paul might be, foolish as Peter, or any of those fisherman, but still with the might of God I grasp the sword of truth—coming here to "preach Christ and Him crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

Before I enter upon our text, let me very briefly explain what I believe preaching Christ and Him crucified is. My friends, I do *not* believe it is preaching Christ and Him crucified to give our people a batch of philosophy every Sunday morning and evening and neglect the truth of this Holy Book. I do *not* believe it is preaching Christ and Him crucified, to leave out the main cardinal doctrines of the word of God and preach a religion which is all a mist and a haze, without any definite truths of God whatever. I take it that man does not preach Christ and Him crucified, who can get through a sermon without mentioning Christ's name once!

Nor does that man preach Christ and Him crucified who leaves out the Holy Spirit's work, who never says a word about the Holy Spirit—so that indeed the hearers might say, "We do not so much as know whether there *is* a Holy Spirit." And I have my own private opinion that there is no such a thing as preaching Christ, and Him crucified, unless you preach what now-a-days is called Calvinism. I have my own ideas, and those I always state boldly. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel and nothing else! I do not believe we can preach the gospel if we do not preach justification by faith, without works; nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace. Nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering, love of Jehovah! Nor do I think we can preach the gospel unless we base it upon the peculiar redemption which Christ made for His elect and chosen people. Nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having believed! Such a gospel I abhor! The gospel of the Bible is not such a gospel as that. We preach Christ and Him crucified in a different fashion and to all gainsayers we reply, "We have not so learned Christ."

There are three things in the text. First, *a gospel rejected:* "Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness"; secondly, *a gospel triumphant:* "unto those which are called, both Jews and Greeks"; and thirdly, *a gospel admired:* it is to them who are called "the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

I. First, we have here A GOSPEL REJECTED. One would have imagined that when God sent His gospel to men, all men would meekly listen and humbly receive its truths. We would have thought that God's ministers had but to proclaim that life is brought to light by the gospel and that Christ is come to save sinners and every ear would be attentive, every eye would be fixed and every heart would be wide open to receive the truth! We would have said, judging favorably of our fellow creatures, that there would not exist in the world a monster so vile, so depraved, so polluted, as to put so much as a stone in the way of the progress of truth!

We could not have conceived such a thing. Yet that conception is the truth. When the gospel was preached, instead of being accepted and admired, one universal hiss went up to Heaven—men could not bear it—its first Preacher they dragged to the brow of the hill and would have sent Him down headlong—yes, they did more, they nailed Him to the cross. And there they let Him languish out His dying life in agony such as no man has borne since. All His chosen ministers have been hated and abhorred by worldlings. Instead of being listened to, they have been scoffed at—treated as if they were the offscouring of all things and the very scum of mankind. Look at the holy men in the old times, how they were driven from city to city, persecuted, afflicted, tormented, stoned to death wherever the enemy had power to do so.

Those friends of men, those *real* philanthropists, who came with hearts big with love, hands full of mercy, lips pregnant with celestial fire and souls that burned with holy influence—those men were treated as if they were spies in the camp—as if they were deserters from the common cause of mankind. They were treated as if they were enemies and not, as they truly were, the best of friends. Do not suppose, my friends, that men like the gospel any better, now, than they did then! There is an idea that you are growing better. I do not believe it. You are growing worse! In many respects men may be better—outwardly better—but the heart within is still the same; the human heart of today, dissected, would be just like the human heart a thousand years ago—the gall of bitterness within that breast of yours is just as bitter as the gall of bitterness in that of Simon of old. We have in our hearts the same latent opposition to the truth of God. And therefore we find men even as of old, who scorn the gospel!

I shall, in speaking of the gospel rejected, endeavor to point out the two classes of persons who equally despise the truth. The Jews make it a stumbling block and the Greeks account it foolishness. Now these two very respectable gentlemen—the Jew and the Greek—I am not going to make these ancient individuals the object of my condemnation. But I look upon them as members of a great parliament, representatives of a great constituency and I shall attempt to show that if all the race of Jews were cut off, there would still be a vast number in the world who would answer to the name of Jews, to whom Christ is a stumbling block! And that if Greece were swallowed up by some earthquake and ceased to be a nation, there would still be the Greek unto whom the gospel would be foolishness! I shall simply introduce the Jew and the Greek. And let them speak a moment to you, in order that you may see the gentlemen who represent you—the representative men. The persons who stand for many of you, who as yet are not called by divine grace.

The first is the Jew. To him the gospel is a stumbling block. A respectable man, the Jew was, in his day. All formal religion was concentrated in his person. He went up to the Temple very devoutly. He tithed all he had, even to the mint and the cumin. You would see him fasting twice in the week, with a face all marked with sadness and sorrow. If you looked at him, he had the law between his eyes. There was the phylactery and the borders of his garments of amazing width, that he might never be supposed to be a Gentile dog—that no one might ever conceive that he was not a Hebrew of pure descent! He had a holy ancestry. He came of a pious family. A right good man was he. He could not endure those Sadducees at all, who had no religion. He was thoroughly a religious man. He stood up for his synagogue; he would not have that temple on Mount Gerizim; he could not bear the Samaritans, he had no dealings with them. He was a religionist of the first order, a man of the very finest kind; a specimen of a man who is a moralist, and who loves the ceremonies of the law. Accordingly, when he heard about Christ, he asked who Christ was. "The son of a carpenter." "Ah, The son of a carpenter, and His mother's name was Mary. And His father's name Joseph." "That, of itself, is presumption enough," he said, "positive proof, in fact, that He cannot be the Messiah!"

And what does Christ say? Why He says, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. That won't do. Moreover," He says, "It is not by the works of the flesh that any man can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." The Jew tied a double knot in his phylactery at once. He thought he would have the borders of his garment made twice as broad. *He* bow to the Nazarene? No, no! And if so much as a disciple crossed the street, he thought the place polluted and would not tread in his steps. Do you think he would give up his old father's religion—the religion which came from Mount Sinai—that old religion that lay in the Ark and the overshadowing cherubim? He give that up? Not he! A vile impostor—that is all Christ was in his eyes. He thought, "A stumbling block to me? I cannot hear about it! I will not listen to it." Accordingly, he turned a deaf ear to all the Preacher's eloquence and listened not at all. Farewell, old Jew! You sleep with your fathers and your generation is a wandering race, still walking the earth. Farewell, I have done with you. Alas, poor wretch, that Christ who was your stumbling block, shall be your judge and on your head shall be that loud curse—"His blood be on us and on our children." But I am going to find out Mr. Jew here in Exeter Hall—persons who answer to his description—to whom Jesus Christ is a stumbling block.

Let me introduce you to yourselves, some of you. You were of a pious family, too, were you not? Yes. And you have a religion which you love—you love it so far as the chrysalis of it goes, the outside, the covering, the

husk. You would not have one rubric altered, or one of those dear old arches taken down, nor the stained glass removed for the entire world. And any man who should say a word against such things, you would set down as a heretic at once. Or, perhaps you do not go to such a place of worship, but you love some plain old meeting house where your forefathers worshipped, called a dissenting chapel. Ah, it is a beautiful, plain place. You love it, you love its ordinances, you love its exterior, and if anyone spoke against the place, how vexed you would feel! You think that what they do there, they ought to do everywhere. In fact *your* church is a model one. The place where you go is exactly the sort of place for everybody! And if I were to ask you why you hope to go to Heaven, you would, perhaps, say, "Because I am a Baptist," or, "Because I am an Episcopalian," or whatever other sect you belong to. There is yourself. I know Jesus Christ will be a stumbling block to you. What if I come and tell you that all your going to the House of God are good for nothing? What if I tell you that all those many times you have been singing and praying—all mean nothing in the sight of God—because you are a hypocrite and a formalist? What if I tell you that your heart is not right with God and that unless it is so, all the external is good for nothing? I know what you will say—"I shan't hear that young man again." It is a stumbling block. If you had stepped in anywhere where you had heard formalism exalted. If you had been told, "this must you *do* and this other must you *do* and then you will be saved," you would highly approve of it. But how many are there externally religious, with whose characters you could find no fault, but who have never had the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit? How many are there who never were made to lie prostrate on their face before Calvary's cross—who never turned a wishful eye to yonder Savior crucified?

How many are there who never put their trust in Him who was slain for the sons of men? They love a superficial religion, but when a man talks deeper than that, they set it down for cant! You may love all that is external about religion, just as you may love a man for his clothes—caring nothing for the man, himself. If so, I know you are one of those who reject the gospel. You will hear me preach, and while I speak about the externals, you will hear me with attention; and while I plead for morality and argue against drunkenness, or show the heinousness of Sabbath-breaking, all well and good; but if once I say, "Except you be converted and become as little children, you can in no wise enter into the kingdom of God." If once I tell you that you must be elect of God—that you must be purchased with the Savior's blood—that you must be converted by the Holy Spirit—you will say, "He is a fanatic! Away with him,

away with him! We do not want to hear that any more." Christ crucified is to the Jew—the ceremonialist—a stumbling block!

But there is another specimen of this Jew to be found. He is thoroughly orthodox in his sentiments. As for forms and ceremonies, he thinks nothing about them. He goes to a place of worship where he learns sound doctrine. He will hear nothing but what is true. He likes that we should have good works and morality. He is a good man and no man can find fault with him. Here he is, regular in his Sunday pew. In the market he walks before men in all honesty—so you would imagine. Ask him about any doctrine and he can give you a formal discourse upon it. In fact, he could write a treatise upon anything in the Bible and a great many things besides. He knows almost everything. And here, up in this dark attic of the head, his religion has taken up its abode. He has a better parlor down in his heart, but his religion never goes there—that is shut against it. He has money in there—mammon, worldliness. Or he has something else—self-love, pride. Perhaps he loves to hear experimental preaching. He admires it all. In fact, he loves anything that is sound. But then he has not any sound in himself—or rather, it is all sound and there is no substance. He likes to *hear* true doctrine. But it never penetrates his inner man. You never see him weep. Preach to him about Christ crucified, a glorious subject, and you never see a tear roll down his cheek. Tell him of the mighty influence of the Holy Spirit—he admires you for it—but he never had the hand of the Holy Spirit on his soul. Tell him about communion with God, plunging into the Godhead's deepest sea and being lost in its immensity—the man loves to hear—but he never experiences! He has never communed with Christ and accordingly when once you begin to strike home, when you lay him on the table, take out your dissecting knife, begin to cut him up and show him his own heart—let him see what it is by nature and what it must become by grace—the man starts, he cannot stand that! He wants none of that—Christ received in the heart and accepted.

Albeit that he loves it enough in the head, 'tis to him a stumbling block and he casts it away. Do you see yourselves here, my friends? Do you see yourselves as others see you? Do you see yourselves as God sees you? For so it is, here are many to whom Christ is as much a stumbling block now as ever He was. O you formalists! I speak to you! O you who have the nutshell, but abhor the kernel! O you who like the trappings and the dress, but care not for that fair virgin who is clothed therewith—O you who admire the paint and the tinsel, but abhor the solid gold, I speak to you! I ask you, does your religion give you solid comfort? Can you stare death in the face with it and say, "I know that my Redeemer lives"? Can you close your eyes at night, singing as your vesper song—

"I to the end must endure,

As sure as the earnest is given"?

Can you bless God for affliction? Can you plunge in, furnished as you are, and swim through all the floods of trial? Can you march triumphant through the lion's den, laugh at affliction and bid defiance to Hell? Can you? No! Your gospel is an effeminate thing, a thing of words and sounds, but not of power! Cast it from you, I beseech you—it is not worth your keeping. And when you come before the throne of God, you will find it will fail you, and fail you so that you shall never find another, for lost, ruined, destroyed, you shall find that Christ who is now *standing,* "a stumbling block," will be your judge!

I have found out the Jew and I have now to discover the Greek. He is a person of quite a different exterior to the Jew. As to the phylactery, to him it is all rubbish. And as to the broad-hemmed garment, he despises it. He does not care for the forms of religion. He has an intense aversion, in fact, to broad-brimmed hats, or to everything which looks like outward show. He appreciates eloquence. He admires a smart saying. He loves a quaint expression. He likes to read the last new book. He is a Greek and to him the gospel is foolishness! The Greek is a gentleman found in most places now-a-days—manufactured sometimes in colleges, constantly made in schools, produced everywhere. He is on the exchange; in the market; he keeps a shop; he rides in a carriage; he is a noble, a gentleman; he is everywhere. Even in court. He is thoroughly wise. Ask him anything and he knows it. Ask for a quotation from any of the old poets, or anyone else and he can give it you. If you are a Mohammedan and plead the claims of your religion, he will hear you very patiently. But if you are a Christian and talk to him of Jesus Christ, "Stop your cant," he says, "I don't want to hear anything about that." This Grecian gentleman believes all philosophy except the true one. He studies all wisdom except the wisdom of God. He seeks all learning except spiritual learning. He loves everything except that which God approves! He likes everything which man makes and nothing which comes from God. It is foolishness to him, confounded foolishness. You have only to discourse about one doctrine in the Bible and he shuts his ears. He wishes no longer for your company. It is foolishness. I have met this gentleman a great many times. Once when I saw him, he told me he did not believe in any religion at all. And when I said I did and had a hope that when I died I should go to Heaven, he said he dared say it was very comfortable, but he did not believe in religion and that he was sure it was best to live as nature dictated.

Another time he spoke well of all religions and believed they were very good in their place and all true. And he had no doubt that if a man were sincere in any kind of religion, he would be all right at last. I told him I did not think so and that I believed there was but one religion revealed of

God—the religion of God's elect, the religion which is the gift of Jesus. He then said I was a bigot and wished me good morning. It was to him foolishness. He had nothing to do with me at all. He either liked no religion, or every religion. Another time I held him by the coat button and I discussed with him a little about faith. He said, "It is all very well, I believe that is true Protestant doctrine." But presently I said something about election and he said, "I don't like that. Many people have preached that and turned it to bad account." I then hinted something about free grace, but that he could not endure, it was to him foolishness. He was a polished Greek and thought that if he were not chosen, he ought to be. He never liked that passage—"God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise and the things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are." He thought it was very discreditable to the Bible and when the Book was revised, he had no doubt it would be cut out. To such a man—for he is here this morning, very likely come to hear this reed shaken of the wind—I have to say this—Ah, you wise man, full of worldly wisdom. Your wisdom will stand you here, but what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? Philosophy may do well for you to lean upon while you walk through this world. But the river is deep and you will need something more than that. If you have not the arm of the Most High to hold you up in the flood and cheer you with promises, you will sink, Man! With all your philosophy, you will sink—with all your learning, you shall sink and be washed into that awful ocean of eternal torment, where you shall be forever. Ah, Greeks, it may be foolishness to you, but you shall see the Man, your judge and then you shall rue the day that ever you said that God's gospel was foolishness!

II. Having spoken thus far upon the gospel rejected, I shall now briefly speak upon the GOSPEL TRIUMPHANT. "Unto us who are called, both Jews and Greeks, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God." Yonder man rejects the gospel, despises grace and laughs at it as a delusion. Here is another man who laughed at it, too. But God will fetch him down upon his knees. Christ shall not die for nothing. The Holy Spirit shall not strive in vain. God has said, "My word shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be abundantly satisfied." If one sinner is not saved, another shall be. The Jew and the Greek shall never depopulate Heaven. The choirs of glory shall not lose a single songster by all the opposition of Jews and Greeks. For God has said it—some shall be called, some shall be saved—some shall be rescued—

"Perish the virtue, as it ought, abhorred,
And the fool with it, who insults his Lord!
The atonement a Redeemer's love has worked

Is not for you—the righteous need it not.
See you yon harlot wooing all she meets,
The worn-out nuisance of the public streets,
Herself from morn to night, from night to morn,
Her own abhorrence, and as much your scorn?
The gracious shower, unlimited and free,
Shall fall on her when Heaven denies it thee.
Of all that wisdom dictates, this the drift,
That man is dead in sin, and life a gift."

If the righteous and good are not saved—if they reject the gospel—there are others who are to be called, others who shall be rescued, for Christ will not lose the merits of His agonies, or the purchase of His blood! "*Unto us who are called.*" I received a note this week asking me to explain that word, "*called*"—because in one passage it says, "Many are called but few are chosen," while in another it appears that all who are called must be chosen. Now, let me observe that there are two calls. As my old friend, John Bunyan, says, "The hen has two calls, the common cluck, which she gives daily and hourly and the special one which she means for her little chickens." So there is a *general* call, a call made to every man—every man hears it. Many are called by it. You are all called this morning in that sense—but very few are chosen. The other is a *special* call, the children's call. You know how the bell sounds over the workshop to call the men to work—that is a general call. A father goes to the door and calls out, "John, it is dinner time!"—that is the special call. Many are called with the general call, but they are not chosen. The special call is for the children, only, and that is what is meant in the text, "Unto us who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." That call is always a special one. While I stand here and call men, nobody comes. While I preach to sinners universally, no good is done. It is like the sheet lightning you sometimes see on the summer's evening, beautiful, grand, but who has ever heard of anything being struck by it? But the special call is the forked flash from Heaven. It strikes somewhere, it is the arrow sent in between the joints of the harness. The call which saves is like that of Jesus, when He said, "Mary," and she said unto Him, "Rabboni." Do you know anything about that special call, my beloved? Did Jesus ever call you by name? Can you recollect the hour when He whispered your name in your ear, when He said, "Come to Me"? If so, you will grant the truth of what I am going to say next about it—that it is an *effectual call.*

There is no resisting it. When God calls with His special call, there is no keeping back. Ah, I know I laughed at religion. I despised, I abhorred it. But that call! Oh, I would not come. But Jesus said, "You shall come. All that the Father gives to Me shall come." "Lord, I will not." "But you shall," said Christ. And I have gone up to God's House, sometimes, al-

most with a resolution that I would not listen, but listen I must! Oh, how the word came into my soul! Was there a power of resistance? No. I was thrown down—each bone seemed to be broken. I was saved by *effectual grace*. I appeal to your experience, my friends. When God took you in hand, could you withstand Him? You stood against your minister times enough. Sickness did not break you down—disease did not bring you to God's feet. Eloquence did not convince you—but when God put His hand to the work, ah, then what a change! Like Saul, with his horses going to Damascus, that Voice from Heaven said, "I am Jesus whom you persecute. Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" There was no going further then. That was an effectual call! Like that, again, which Jesus gave to Zaccheus, when he was up in the tree—stepping under the tree, He said, "Zaccheus, come down, today I must abide at your house." Zaccheus, was taken in the net, he heard his own name. The call sank into his soul. He could not stay up in the tree, for an Almighty impulse drew him down. And I could tell you some singular instances of persons going to the House of God and having their characters described, to perfection, so that they have said, "He is describing me! He is describing me!" Just as I might say to that young man here who stole his master's gloves yesterday, that Jesus calls him to repentance. It may be that there is such a person here. And when the call comes to a peculiar character, it generally comes with a special power. God gives his ministers a brush and shows them how to use it in painting life-like portraits. And thus the sinner hears the special call. *I* cannot give the special call—*God* alone can give it and I leave it with Him. Some must be called. Jew and Greek may laugh, but still there are some who are called—both Jews and Greeks!

Then to close up this second point—it is a great mercy that many a Jew has been made to drop his self-righteousness, many a legalist has been made to drop his legalism and come to Christ. Many a Greek has bowed his genius at the throne of God's gospel. We have a few such. As Cowper says—

"We boast some rich ones whom the gospel sways,
And one who wears a coronet and prays.
Like gleanings of an olive tree they show,
Here and there one upon the topmost bough."

III. Now we come to our third point, A GOSPEL ADMIRED. Unto us who are called of God, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Now, beloved, this must be a matter of pure experience between your souls and God. If you are called of God this morning, you will know it. I know there are times when a Christian has to say—

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought—

Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

But if a man never in his life knew himself to be a Christian, he never was a Christian! If he never had a moment of confidence, when he could say, "Now I know in whom I have believed," I think I do not utter a harsh thing when I say that *that* man could not have been born-again, for I do not understand how a man can be born-again and not know it; I do not understand how a man can be killed and then made alive again, and not know it—how a man can pass from death unto life, and not know it—how a man can be brought out of darkness into marvelous light without knowing it! I am sure I know it, when I shout out my old verse—

"Now free from sin, I walk at large,
My Savior's blood's my full discharge.
At His dear feet content I lay,
A sinner saved, I'll homage pay."

There are moments when the eyes glisten with joy. And we can say, "We are persuaded, confident, certain." I do not wish to distress anyone who is under doubt. Often gloomy doubts will prevail. There are seasons when you fear you have not been called—when you doubt your interest in Christ. Ah, what a mercy it is that it is not your hold of Christ that saves you, but *His* hold of you! What a sweet fact that it is not how *you* grasp His hand, but His grasp of yours, that saves you! Yet I think you ought to know sometime or other, whether you are called of God. If so, you will follow me in the next part of my discourse which is a matter of pure experience—unto us who are saved, it is, "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

The gospel is to the true believer a thing of power. It is Christ, the power of God. Yes, there is a power in God's gospel beyond all description! Once, I, like Mazeppa, bound on the wild horse of my lust, bound hand and foot, incapable of resistance, was galloping on with Hell's wolves behind me, howling for my body and my soul, as their just and lawful prey. There came a mighty Hand which stopped that wild horse, cut my bands, set me down and brought me into liberty. Is there power, sir? Yes, there is power and he who has felt it must acknowledge it. There was a time when I lived in the strong old castle of my sins and rested in my works. There came a trumpeter to the door and bade me open it. I with anger chided him from the porch and said he should never enter. There came a goodly personage, with loving countenance. His hands were marked with scars, where nails were driven and His feet had nail prints, too. He lifted up His cross, using it as a hammer. At the first blow the gate of my prejudice shook. At the second it trembled more. At the third, down it fell and in He came. And He said, "Arise and stand upon your feet, for I have loved you with an everlasting love." A thing of

power! Ah, it is a thing of power. I have felt it here, in this heart. I have the witness of the Spirit within and know it is a thing of might, because it has conquered me! It has bowed me down—

"His free grace alone, from the first to the last,
Has won my affection, and held my soul fast."

The gospel to the Christian is a thing of power! What is it that makes the young man devote himself as a missionary to the cause of God—to leave father and mother—and go into distant lands? It is a thing of power that does it—it is the gospel. What is it that empowers yonder minister, in the midst of the cholera, to climb up that creaking staircase and stand by the bed of some dying creature who has that dire disease? It must be a thing of power which leads him to risk his life. It is love of the cross of Christ which bids him do it! What is that which enables one man to stand up before a multitude of his fellows, all unprepared he may be, but determined that he will speak nothing but Christ and Him crucified? What is it that enables him to cry, like the warhorse of Job in battle, "Aha," and move glorious in might? It is a thing of power that does it—it is Christ crucified! And what emboldens that timid female to walk down that dark lane in the wet evening that she may go and sit beside the victim of a contagious fever? What strengthens her to go through that den of thieves and pass by the profligate and profane? What influences her to enter into that charnel-house of death and there sit down and whisper words of comfort? Does gold make her do it? They are too poor to give her gold! Does fame make her do it? She shall never be known, nor written among the mighty women of this earth! What makes her do it? Is it love of merit? No! She knows she has no desert before high Heaven. What impels her to it? It is the power of the gospel on her heart! It is the cross of Christ! She loves it and she therefore says—

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That would be a present far too small!
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all!"

But I behold another scene. A martyr is hurried to the stake. The executioners are around him. The crowds are mocking, but he is marching steadily on. See, they bind him with a chain around his middle, to the stake. They heap fire wood all about him—the flame is lighted up—listen to his words—"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name." The flames are kindling round his legs. The fire is burning him even to the bone! See him lift up his hands and say, "I know that my Redeemer lives and though the fire devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see the Lord." Behold him clutch the stake and kiss it as if he loved it. Listen, as he says, "For every chain of iron that man girds me with, God shall give me a chain of gold. For all this fire wood and this ig-

nominy and shame, He shall increase the weight of my eternal glory!" See, all the under parts of his body are consumed—still he lives in the torture. At last he bows himself and the upper part of his body falls over. And as he falls you hear him say, "Into Your hands I commend my spirit." What wondrous magic was on him, sirs? What made that man strong? What helped him to bear that cruelty? What made him stand unmoved in the flames? It was the thing of power! It was the cross of Jesus crucified! For "unto us who are saved it is the power of God." But behold another scene far different. There is no crowd there. It is a silent room. There is a poor pallet, a lonely bed—a physician standing by. There is a young girl. Her face is blanched by consumption—long has the worm eaten her cheek and though sometimes the flush came, it was the death-flush of the deceitful Destroyer. There she lies, weak pale, wan, worn, dying—yet behold a smile upon her face, as if she had seen an angel! She speaks and there is music in her voice. Joan of Arc of old was not half so mighty as that girl! She is wrestling with dragons on her deathbed—but see her composure and hear her dying sonnet—

"Jesus! lover of my soul,
Let me to Your bosom fly,
While the billows near me roll,
While the tempest still is high!
Hide me, O my Savior! Hide
Till the storm of life is past!
Safe into the haven guide;
Oh, receive my soul at last!"

And with a smile she shuts her eyes on earth and opens them in Heaven! What enables her to die like that? It is the power of God unto salvation! It is the cross! It is Jesus crucified!

I have little time to discourse upon the other point and be it far from me to weary you by a lengthened and prosy sermon, but we must glance at the other statement—Christ is, to the called ones, the wisdom of God, as well as the power of God. To a believer, the gospel is the perfection of wisdom and if it appear not so to the ungodly, it is because of the perversion of judgment consequent on their depravity.

An idea has long possessed the public mind that a religious man can scarcely be a wise man. It has been the custom to talk of infidels, atheists and deists as men of deep thought and comprehensive intellect. And to tremble for the Christian controversialist, as if he must surely fall by the hand of the enemy! But this is purely a mistake. For the gospel is the sum of wisdom, an epitome of knowledge, a treasure house of truth and a Revelation of mysterious secrets! In it we see how justice and mercy may be married. Here we behold inexorable law entirely satisfied and sovereign love bearing away the sinner in triumph. Our meditation upon it enlarges the mind. And as it opens to our soul in successive flashes of

glory, we stand astonished at the profound wisdom manifest in it. Ah, dear friends! If you seek wisdom, you shall see it displayed in all its greatness, not in the balancing of the clouds, nor the firmness of earth's foundations; not in the measured march of the armies of the sky, nor in the perpetual motion of the waves of the sea; not even in vegetation with its entire fairy forms of beauty, nor in the animal with its marvelous tissue of nerve, vein and sinew—nor even in man, that last and loftiest work of the Creator. But turn aside and see this great sight! An incarnate God upon the cross! A Substitute atoning for mortal guilt! A Sacrifice satisfying the vengeance of Heaven—and delivering the rebellious sinner! Here is essential wisdom enthroned, crowned, glorified; admire this wisdom, you men of earth if you are not blind—even you who glory in your learning! If you will only bend your heads in reverence you will have to admit that all your skill could not have devised a gospel at once so just to God, so safe to man!

Remember, my friends, that while the gospel is, in itself, wisdom, it also confers wisdom on its students. She teaches young men wisdom and discretion and gives understanding to the simple. A man who is a believing admirer and a hearty lover of the truth, as it is in Jesus, is in a right place to follow with advantage any other branch of science. I confess I have a shelf in my head for everything now. Whatever I read I know where to put it. Whatever I learn I know where to stow it away. Once when I read books, I put all my knowledge together in glorious confusion. But ever since I have known Christ, I have put Christ in the center as my sun and each science revolves round it like a planet, while minor sciences are satellites to these planets! Christ is to me the wisdom of God. I can learn everything now. The science of Christ crucified is the most excellent of sciences—she is to me the wisdom of God. Oh, young man, build your studio on Calvary! There raise your observatory and scan by faith the lofty things of nature! Take a hermit's cell in the garden of Gethsemane and bathe your brow with the waters of Siloam. Let the Bible be your standard classic—your last appeal in matters of contention. Let its light be your illumination and you shall become wiser than Plato—more truly learned than the seven sages of antiquity!

And now, my dear friends, solemnly and earnestly, as in the sight of God, I appeal to you. You are gathered here this morning, I know, from different motives. Some of you have come from curiosity. Others of you are my regular hearers. Some have come from one place and some from another. What have you heard me say this morning? I have told you of two classes of persons who *reject* Christ: the religionist who has a religion of form and nothing else, and the man of the world who calls our gospel foolishness. Now put your hand upon your heart and ask yourself

this morning, "Am I one of these?" If you are, then walk the earth in all your pride. Then go as you came in. But know that for all this, the Lord shall bring you into judgment—know you that your joys and delights shall vanish like a dream, "and like the baseless fabric of a vision," be swept away forever! Know this, moreover, O Man, that one day in the halls of Satan, down in Hell, I perhaps may see you among those myriad spirits who revolve forever in a perpetual circle with their hands upon their hearts. If your hand is transparent, and your flesh transparent, I shall look through your hand and flesh, and see your heart within. And how shall I see it? Set in a case of fire—in a case of fire! And there you shall revolve forever, with the worm gnawing within your heart, which shall never die—a case of fire around your never-dying, ever-tortured heart. Good God! Let not these men still reject and despise Christ! But let this be the time when they shall be called.

To the rest of you who *are* called, I need say nothing. The longer you live, the more powerful will you find the gospel to be. The more deeply Christ-taught you are, the more you live under the constant influence of the Holy Spirit. The more you will know the gospel to be a thing of power, the more you will understand it to be a thing of wisdom! May every blessing rest upon you, and may God come up with us in the evening—

"Let men or angels dig the mines
Where nature's golden treasure shines.
Brought near the doctrine of the cross,
All nature's gold appears but dross!
Should vile blasphemers with disdain
Pronounce the truths of Jesus vain,
We'll meet the scandal and the shame.
And sing and triumph in His name."

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SPIRITUAL LIBERTY
NO. 9

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 18, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."
2 Corinthians 3:17.

LIBERTY is the birthright of every man. He may be born a pauper. He may be a foundling. His parentage may be altogether unknown. But liberty is his inalienable birthright. Black may be his skin. He may live uneducated and untaught. He may be poor as poverty, itself. He may never have a foot of land to call his own. He may scarcely have a particle of clothing, save a few rags to cover him—but, poor as he is, nature has fashioned him for freedom—he has a right to be free and if he has not liberty, it is his birthright and he ought not to be content until he wins it!

Liberty is the heirloom of all the sons and daughters of Adam. But where do you find liberty unaccompanied by religion? True it is that all men have a right to liberty, but it is equally true that you do not meet it in any country except where you find the Spirit of the Lord. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Thank God this is a free country! This is a land where I can breathe the air and say it is untainted by the groan of a single slave. My lungs receive it and I know there has never been mingled with its vapors the tear of a single slave woman shed over her child which has been sold from her. This land is the home of liberty. But why is it so? I take it, it is not so much because of our institutions as because the Spirit of the Lord is here—the spirit of true and hearty religion! There was a time, remember, when England was no more free than any other country, when men could not speak their sentiments freely, when kings were despots, when Parliaments were but a name. Who won our liberties for us? Who has loosed our chains? Under the hand of God, I say the men of religion—men like the great and glorious Cromwell, who would have liberty of conscience, or die—men who, if they could not reach kings' hearts because they were unsearchable in cunning, would strike kings low, rather than they would be slaves. We owe our liberty to men of religion—to men of the stern Puritan school—men who scorned to play the coward and yield their principles at the command of man. And if we are ever to maintain our liberty (as God grant we may) it shall be kept in England by religious liberty—by religion! This Bible is the Magna Charta of old Britain! Its truths, its doctrines have snapped our fetters and they never can be riveted on again, while men,

with God's Spirit in their hearts, go forth to speak its truths. In no other land, save where the Bible is unclasped—in no other realm, save where the gospel is preached—can you find liberty! Roam through other countries and you speak with bated breath. You are afraid. You feel you are under an iron hand. The sword is above you. You are not free. Why? Because you are under the tyranny engendered by a false religion—you have not free Protestantism there and it is not till Protestantism comes, that there can be freedom! It is where the Spirit of the Lord is that there is liberty and nowhere else. Men talk about being free—they describe model governments, Platonic republics, or Owenite paradises, but they are dreamy theorists. For there can be no freedom in the world, save, "where the Spirit of the Lord is."

I have commenced with this idea because I think worldly men ought to be told that if religion does not save them, yet it has done much for them—that the influence of religion has won them their liberties.

But the liberty of the text is no such freedom as this—it is an infinitely greater and better one! Great as civil or religious liberty may be, the liberty of my text transcendently exceeds. There is a liberty, dear friends, which Christian men and women, alone, enjoy. For even in Great Britain there are men who taste not the sweet air of liberty. There are some who are afraid to speak as men, who have to cringe and fawn, bow and stoop. They have no will of their own, no principles, no voice, no courage and who cannot stand erect in conscious independence! He is the free man, whom the truth makes free. He who has divine grace in his heart is free, he cares for no one. He has right upon his side. He has God within him—the indwelling Spirit of the Holy Spirit. He is a prince of the blood royal of heaven. He is a noble, having the true patent of nobility. He is one of God's elect, distinguished, chosen children. He is not the man to bend, or meanly cringe. No! Sooner would he walk the burning furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—sooner would he be cast into the lion's den with Daniel, than yield a point in principle. He is a free man. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" in its fullest, highest and widest sense!

Friends, may God give you that "Spirit of the Lord," for without it, even in a free country, you may still be bondsmen. And where there are no serfs in body, you may be slaves in soul. The text speaks of Spiritual liberty—and now I address the children of God. Spiritual liberty, brethren, you and I enjoy if we have "the Spirit of the Lord" within us. What does this imply? It implies that there was a time when we had *not* that Spiritual liberty—when we were slaves. But a little while ago all of us who now are free in Christ Jesus, were slaves of the devil—we were led captives at his will. We talked of free will, but free will is a slave. We boasted that we could do what we pleased. But oh, what a slavish and dreamy

liberty we had! It was a fancied freedom. We were slaves to our lusts and passions—slaves to sin. But now we are freed from sin. We are delivered from our tyrant. A stronger than he has cast out the strong man armed and we are free!

Let us now examine, a little more closely, in what our liberty consists.

I. And first, my friends, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" from the *Bondage of Sin*. Ah, I know I shall speak feelingly to some of you when I talk about the bondage of sin. You know what that misery means. Of all bondage and slavery in this world, there is none more horrible than the bondage of sin. Tell me of Israel in Egypt preparing their tale of bricks unsupplied with straw. Tell me of the Negro beneath the lash of his cruel taskmaster, and I confess it is bondage fearful to be borne. But there is one far worse—the bondage of a convicted sinner when he is brought to feel the burden of his guilt! The bondage of a man when once his sins are baying at him like hounds about a weary stag! The bondage of a man when the burden of sin is on his shoulder—a burden too heavy for his soul to bear—a burden which will sink him forever in the depths of everlasting torment, unless he escapes from it. I think I see such a person. He has never a smile upon his face—dark clouds have gathered on his brow—solemn and serious he stands. His very words are sighs. His songs are groans. His smiles are tears. And when he seems most happy, hot drops of grief roll in burning showers, scalding furrows on his cheek. Ask him *what he is* and he tells you he is "a wretch undone." Ask him *how he is* and he confesses that he is "misery incarnate." Ask him what he *shall be* and he says, "I shall be lost in flames forever and there is no hope." Behold him alone in his retirement—when he lays his head on his pillow, up he starts again—at night he dreams of torment and by day he almost feels that of which he dreamed. Such is the poor convicted sinner under bondage! Such have I been in my days and such have you been, friends. I speak to those who understand it.

You have passed through that gloomy Slough of Despond. You have gone through that dark Valley of Penitence—you have been made to drink the bitter cup of repentance—and I know you will say, "Amen" when I declare that of all bondage this is the most painful—the bondage of the law, the bondage of corruption. "O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from it?" But the Christian is free! He can smile, now, though he wept before. He can rejoice now, whereas he lamented. "There is," he says, "no sin upon my conscience now, there is no crime upon my breast. I need not walk through the earth fearful of every shadow and afraid of every man I meet, for sin is washed away—my spirit is no guiltier!" It is pure, it is holy. There no longer rests the frown of God upon me! My Father smiles—I see His eyes—they are glancing love—I hear His voice—it is full of sweetness. I am forgiven, I am forgiven, I am forgiven!

All hail, you breaker of fetters! Glorious Jesus! Ah, that moment when first the bondage passed away! I think I recollect it now. I saw Jesus on His cross before me. I thought on Him and as I mused upon His death and sufferings, I thought I saw Him cast a look on me. And when He gazed on me, I looked at Him and said—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Your bosom fly."

He said "Come," and I flew to Him and clasped Him and when He let me go, again, I wondered where my burden was. It was gone! There, in the sepulcher it lay and I felt light as air! Like a winged sylph, I could fly over mountains of trouble and despair. And oh, what liberty and joy I had! I could leap with ecstasy for I had much forgiven and now I was freed from sin. Beloved, this is the first liberty of the children of God. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" from the bondage of sin!

2. *Liberty from the penalty of sin.* What is it? Eternal death—torment forever—that is the sad penalty of sin. It is no sweet thing to fear that if I died, now, I might be in hell. It is no pleasant thought for me to stand here and believe that if I dropped down I must sink into the arms of Satan and have him for my tormentor. Why, sirs, it is a thought that would plague me! It is a thought that would be the bitterest curse of my existence. I would rather be dead and rotting in the tomb rather than walk the earth with the thought that I might suffer such a penalty as this. There are some of you here who know right well that if you die, hell is your portion. You don't attempt to deny it. You believe the Bible and there you read your doom, "He that believes not shall be damned." You cannot put yourselves among believers. You are still without Christ. Have any of you been brought into such a condition that you believe yourself so full of sin that God could not be just if He did not punish you? Have you not felt that you have so rebelled against God by secret crimes, yes, I say, by *secret* crimes and by open transgression, that if He did not punish you, He would cease to be God and lay aside His scepter? And then you have trembled, groaned and cried out under the fear of the penalty of sin. You thought when you dreamed, that you saw that burning lake whose waves are fire and whose billows are ever blazing brimstone! And each day you walked the earth it was with fear and dread lest the next step should let you into the pit of hell which is without a bottom! But Christian, Christian, you are free from the penalty of sin! Do you know it? Can you recognize the fact? You are free at this moment from the penalty of sin! Not only are you forgiven, but you never can be punished on account of your sins however great and enormous they may have been—

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God—
His pardon at once he receives

Salvation in full through His blood,"

and he never can be punished on account of sin! Talk of the punishment of a believer! There is not such a thing. The afflictions of this mortal life are not punishments for sin to Christians—they are fatherly chastisements and not the punishments of a judge. For me there is no hell. Let it smoke and burn—if I am a believer I shall never have my portion there. For me there are no eternal racks, no torments—for if I am justified—I cannot be condemned!

Jesus has suffered the punishment in my place and God would be unjust if He were to punish me again—Christ has suffered once and satisfied justice forever! When conscience tells me I am a sinner, I tell conscience I stand in Christ's place and Christ stands in mine. True, I am a sinner, but Christ died for sinners. True, I deserve punishment, but if my Ransom died, will God ask for the debt twice? Impossible! He has cancelled it. There never was and never shall be one believer in hell. We are free from punishment and we never need quake on account of it. However horrible it may be—if it is eternal, as we know it is—it is nothing to us, for we never can suffer it. Heaven shall open its pearly portals to admit us. And hell's iron gates are barred forever against every believer. Glorious liberty of the children of God!

3. But there is one fact more startling than both of these things and I dare say some of you will object to it. Nevertheless it is God's truth and if you don't like it, you must leave it! There is *liberty from the guilt of sin.* This is the wonder of wonders. The Christian is positively not guilty any longer the moment he believes. Now, if Her Majesty in her goodness spares a murderer by giving him a free pardon, that man cannot be punished—but still he will be a guilty man. She may give him a thousand pardons and the law cannot touch him, but still he will be guilty. The crime will always be on his head and he will be branded as a murderer as long as he lives! The Christian is not only delivered from the bondage and from the punishment, but he is positively absolved from the guilt! Now this is something at which you will stand amazed. You say, "What? Is a Christian no more a sinner in God's sight?" I answer, he is a sinner as considered in himself. But in the person of Christ, he is no more a sinner than the angel Gabriel. For snowy as angelic wings and spotless as cherubic robes, an angel cannot be more pure than the poor blood-washed sinner when he is made whiter than snow! Do you understand how it is that the very guilt of the sinner is taken away? Here I stand, today, a guilty and condemned traitor—Christ comes for my salvation—He bid me leave my cell, "I will stand where you are. I will be your Substitute. I will be the sinner. All your guilt is to be imputed to Me. I will die for it, I will suffer for it. I will have your sins." Then stripping Himself of His robes, He says, "There, put them on. You shall be considered as if

you were Christ. You shall be the righteous one. I will take *your* place, you take *Mine*." Then He casts around me a glorious robe of perfect righteousness. And when I behold it, I exclaim, "Strangely, my Soul, are you arrayed, with my elder brother's garments." Jesus Christ's crown is on my head. His spotless robes are round my loins and His golden sandals are the shoes of my feet. And now is there any sin? The sin is on Christ—the righteousness is on me! Ask for the sinner, justice! Let the voice of justice cry, "Bring forth the sinner!" The sinner is brought. Who does the executioner lead forth? It is the incarnate Son of God! True, He did not commit the sin. He was without fault. But it is imputed to Him—He stands in the sinner's place.

Now justice cries, "Bring forth the righteous, the perfectly righteous." Whom do I see? Lo, the church is brought, each believer is brought. Justice says, "Are these perfectly righteous?" "Yes they are. What Christ did is theirs, what they did is laid on Christ. His righteousness is theirs—their sins are His." I appeal to you, you ungodly. This seems strange and startling, does it not? You have set it down to hyper-Calvinism and you laugh at it. Set it down for what you please, sirs! God has set it up as His truth—He has made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. And now, if I am a true believer, I stand here freed from every sin. There is not a crime against me in the Book of God, it is blotted out forever. It is cancelled. And not only can I never be punished, but I have nothing to be punished for! Christ has atoned for my sins and I have received His righteousness, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

4. Furthermore, the Christian, while delivered from the guilt and punishment of sin, is likewise delivered from *the dominion of it*. Every living man, before he is converted, is a slave to lust. Profane men glory in free living and free thinking. They call *this* free living—a full glass, a Bacchanalian revel, shouting wantonness, chambering; free living, sir? Let the slave hold up his fetters and jingle them in my ears, and say, "This is music and I am free." The man is a poor maniac. Let the man chained in his cell, the madman of Bedlam, tell me he is a king and grin a horrible smile. I say, "Ah, poor wretch, I know why he thinks he is a king. He is demented and is mad." So it is with the worldling who says he is free. Free, sir? You are a slave! You think you are happy. But at night, when you lay yourself upon your bed, how many times have you tossed from side to side sleepless and ill at ease? And when you awake, have you not said, "Ah, that yesterday—that yesterday!" And though you plunged into another day of sin—that "yesterday," like a hell-dog barked at you, and followed at your heels. You know it, sir—sin is bondage and slavery! And have you ever tried to get rid of that slavery? "Yes," you say, "I have." But I will tell you what has been the end of it. When you have tried, you have

bound your fetters firmer than ever. You have riveted your chains. A sinner without grace attempting to reform himself is like Sisyphus rolling the stone up hill, which always comes down with greater force. A man without grace attempting to save himself, is engaged in as hopeless a task as the daughters of Danaus, when they attempted to fill a vast vessel with bottomless buckets. He has a bow without a string, a sword without a blade, a gun without powder! He needs strength. I grant you, he may produce a hollow reformation. He may dig around the volcano and sow flowers around its crater. But when it once begins to stir again, it shall move the earth away and the hot lava shall roll over all the fair flowers which he had planted—and devastate both his works and his righteousness!

A sinner without divine grace is a slave—he cannot deliver himself from his sins! But not so the Christian! Is he a slave to his sin? Is a true-born heir of God a slave? Oh, no! He does not sin because he is born of God. He does not live in uncleanness because he is an heir of immortality. You beggars of the earth may stoop to deeds of wrong, but princes of heaven's blood must follow acts of right. You poor worldlings, mean and pitiful wretches in God's sight—you may live in dishonesty and unrighteousness, but the heir of heaven cannot. He loves his Lord. He is free from the power of sin. His work is righteousness and his end his everlasting life. We are free from the dominion of sin!

5. Once more—"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" in all holy acts of love—*liberty from a slavish fear of law*. Many people are honest because they are afraid of the policeman. Many are sober because they are afraid of the eye of the public. Many persons are seemingly religious because of their neighbors. There is much virtue which is like the juice of the grape—it has to be squeezed before you get it. It is not like the generous drop of the honeycomb, distilling willingly and freely. I am bold to say that if a man is destitute of the grace of God, his works are only works of slavery, he feels forced to do them.

I know before I came into the liberty of the children of God, if I went to God's House, I went because I thought I must do it. If I prayed, it was because I feared some misfortune would happen in the day if I did not. If I ever thanked God for a mercy, it was because I thought I should not get another if I were not thankful. If I performed a righteous deed it was with the hope that very likely God would reward me at last and I should be winning some crown in heaven. A poor slave, a mere Gibeonite, hewing wood and drawing water. If I could have left off doing it, I would have loved to do so. If I could have had my will, there would have been no chapel attendance for me, no religion for me—I would have lived in the world and followed the ways of Satan if I could have done as I pleased. As for righteousness, it was slavery. Sin would have been my liberty.

But now, Christian, what is your liberty? What makes you come to the House of God today?—

"Love made your willing feet
In swift obedience move."

What makes you bend your knees in prayer? It is because you like to talk with your Father who sees in secret. What is it that opens your purses and makes you give liberally? It is because you love the poor children of God and you feel so much being given to you that it is a privilege to give something back to Christ. What is it that burdens you to live honestly, righteously and soberly? Is it the fear of the jail? No. You might pull the jail down. You might annihilate the convict settlements. You might hurl all chains into the sea. And we should be just as holy as we are now. Some people say, "Then, sir, you mean to say that Christians may live as they like?" I wish they could, sir. If I could live as I liked, I would, always live holily. If a Christian could live as he liked, he would always live as he ought. It is a slavery to him to sin—righteousness is his delight! Oh, if I could but live as I like, I would desire to live as I ought! If I could but live as I would I would live as God commands me. The greatest happiness of a Christian is to be holy! It is no slavery to him. Put him where you will, he will not sin. Expose him to any temptation, if it were not for that evil heart still remaining, you would never find him sinning. Holiness is his pleasure—sin is his slavery. Ah, you poor bondsmen who come to church or chapel because you must! Ah, you poor slavish moralists that are honest because of the fetters and sober because of the prison. Ah, you poor slaves!

We are not so. We are not under the law, but under grace. Call us Antinomians if you will. We will even glory in the scandalous title! We are freed from the law, but we are freed from it that we may obey it more than we ever did! The true-born child of God serves his Master more than he ever did! As old Erskine says—

"Slight now His loving presence if they can—
No, no, His conquering kindness leads the van!
When everlasting love exerts the sway,
They judge themselves most kindly bound to obey—
Bound by redeeming love in stricter sense,
Than ever Adam was in innocence."

6. But to conclude, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" from *the fear of death*. O death! How many a sweet cup have you made bitter; O death! How many a revel have you broken up; O death! How many a gluttonous banquet have you spoiled; O death! How many sinful pleasures have you turned into pain; take, my friends, the telescope this morning and look through the vista of a few years and what do you see? You see grim death in the distance grasping his scythe. He is coming, coming, coming. And what is behind him? Ah, that depends upon your

character. If you are the sons of God, there is the palm branch. If you are not, you know what follows death—hell follows him! O death! Your specter has haunted many a house where sin otherwise would have rioted. O death! Your chilly hand has touched many a heart that was big with lust and made it start, frightened from its crime! Oh, how many men are slaves to the fear of death? Half the people in the world are afraid to die. There are some madmen who can march up to the cannon's mouth. There are some fools who rush with bloody hands before their Maker's tribunal. But most men fear to die. Who is the man that does not fear to die? I will tell you. The man that is a believer—fear to die? Thank God, I do not! The cholera may come again next summer—I pray God it may not, but if it does, it matters not to me—I will toil and visit the sick by night and by day, until I drop—and if it takes me, sudden death is sudden glory!

And so—with the weakest saint in this hall—the prospect of dissolution does not make you tremble. Sometimes you fear, but more often you rejoice. You sit down calmly and think of dying. What is death? It is a low porch through which you stoop to enter heaven. What is life? It is a narrow screen that separates us from glory and death kindly removes it. I recollect a saying of a good old woman, who said, "Afraid to die, sir? I have dipped my foot in Jordan every morning before breakfast for the last fifty years and do you think I am afraid to die now?" Die? Beloved, we die hundreds of times! We "die daily," we die every morning; we die each night when we sleep. By faith we die and so dying will be old work when we come to it! We shall say, "Ah, death! You and I have been old acquaintances. I have had you in my bedroom every night. I have talked with you each day. I have had the skull upon my dressing table and I have oftentimes thought of you. death! You are come at last, but you are a welcome guest—you are an angel of light and the best friend I have had." Why dread death since there is no fear of God's leaving you when you come to die? Here I must tell you that anecdote of the good Welch lady, who, when she lay a-dying, was visited by her minister. He said to her, "Sister are you sinking?" She answered him not a word, but looked at him with an incredulous eye. He repeated the question, "Sister, are you sinking?" She looked at him, again, as if she could not believe that he would ask such a question! At last, rising a little in the bed, she said, "*Sinking*? *Sinking*? *Did you ever know a sinner sink through a rock*? *If I had been standing on the sand, I might sink—but thank God I am on the Rock of Ages—and there is no sinking there*." How glorious to die! Oh, angels, come! Oh, cohorts of the Lord of Hosts, stretch, stretch your broad wings and lift us up from earth. O, winged seraphs, bear us far above the reach of these inferior things. But till you come, I'll sing—

"Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing—
But gladly put off these garments of clay!

To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to glory, though death leads the way."

And now, dear friends, I have shown you as briefly as I can the negative side of this liberty. I have tried to tell you, as well as I could put it in a few words, what we are *freed from*. But there are two sides to such questions as this. There are some glorious things that we are *free to*. Not only are we freed from sin in every sense from the law and from the fear of death—but we are free to do something. I shall not occupy many moments, but shall just run over a few things we are free to, for, my brother and sister Christians, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." And that liberty gives us certain rights and privileges.

In the first place, we are free to *heaven's charter*. There is heaven's charter—the Magna Charta—the Bible. And, my brethren, you are free to it. There is a choice passage here—"When you pass through the river I will be with you and the floods shall not overflow you." You are free to that! Here is another—"Mountains may depart and hills may be removed, but My loving-kindness shall not depart"—you are free to that! Here is another—"Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end." You are free to that! "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Here is a chapter touching election—you are free to that if you are elect. Here is another, speaking of the non-condemnation of the righteous and their justification—you are free to that. You are free to all that is in the Bible! Here is a never-failing treasure filled with boundless stores of divine grace. It is the bank of heaven—you may draw from it as much as you please without let or hindrance. Bring nothing with you except faith! Bring as much faith as you can get and you are welcome to all that is in the Bible. There is not a promise—not a word in it—that is not yours. In the depths of tribulation let it comfort you. Mid waves of distress let it cheer you. When sorrows surround you, let it be your helper. This is your Father's love token—let it never be shut up and covered with dust. You are free to it—use, then, your freedom!

Next, recollect that you are free to the throne of grace. It is the privilege of Englishmen that they can always send a petition to Parliament. And it is the privilege of a believer that he can always send a petition to the throne of God. I am free to God's throne. If I want to talk to God tomorrow morning, I can. If tonight I wish to have conversation with my Master, I can go to Him. I have a right to go to His throne. It matters not how much I may have sinned—I go and ask for pardon. It signifies nothing how poor I am—I go and plead His promise that He will provide all things necessary. I have a right to go to His throne at all times—in midnight's dark hour, or in noontide's heat. Wherever I am, if Fate commands me to the utmost verge of the wide earth, I have still constant admission to His throne! Use that right, beloved—use that right! There is not one of you that lives up to his privilege. Many a gentleman will live

beyond his income, spending more than he has coming in. But there is not a Christian that does that—I mean that lives up to his *spiritual* income. Oh, no, you have an infinite income—an income of promises—an income of grace. And no Christian ever lived up to his income. Some people say, "If I had more money I would have a larger house, horses, carriage and so on." Very well and good. But I wish the Christian would do the same. I wish they would set up a larger house and do greater things for God—look happier and take those tears away from their eyes—

"Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less."

With such stores in the bank and so much in hand that God gives you, you have no right to be poor! Up! Rejoice! Rejoice! The Christian ought to live up to his income—not below it.

Then, if you have the "Spirit of the Lord," dear friends, you have a right to enter into the City. There are many of the freemen of the city of London here, I dare say and that is a great privilege, very likely. I am not a freeman of London, but I am a freeman of a better City—

"Savior, if of Zion's city,
I, by grace, a member am,
Let the world revile or pity,
I will glory in Your name."

You have a right to the freedom of Zion's city and you do not exercise it. I want to have a word with some of you. You are very good Christian people, but you have never joined the church yet. You know it is quite right, that he that believes should be baptized. But I suppose you are afraid of being drowned, for you never come. Then the Lord's Table is spread once every month and it is free to all God's children, but you never approach it. Why is that? It is your banquet. I do not think if I were an alderman I should omit the city banquet! And being a Christian, I cannot omit the Christian banquet. It is the banquet of the saints—

"Never did angels taste above
Redeeming grace and dying love."

Some of you never come to the Lord's Table. You neglect His ordinances. He says, "This do in remembrance of Me." You have obtained the freedom of the City, but you won't take it up. You have a right to enter in through the gates into the City, but you stand outside. Come in brethren! I will give you my hand. Don't remain outside the church any longer, for you have a right to come in!

Then, to conclude, you have the freedom of Jerusalem, the mother of us all. That is the best gift. We are free to *heaven.* When a Christian dies, he knows the *open sesame* that can open the gates of heaven! He knows the password that can make the gates fly wide open. He has the white stone whereby he shall be known as a ransomed one and that shall pass him at the barrier. He has the passport that shall let him into the domin-

ions of Jehovah! He has liberty to enter into heaven. I think I see you, you unconverted, in the land of shades, wandering up and down to find your portion. You come to the porch of heaven. It is great and lofty. The gate has written over it, "The righteous only are admitted here." As you stand, you look for the porter. A tall archangel appears from above the gate and you say, "Angel, let me in." "Where is your robe?" You search and you have none. You have only some few rags of your own spinning, but no wedding garment. "Let me in," you say, "for the Fiends are after me to drag me to yonder pit of hell. Oh, let me in." But with a quiet glance the angel lifts up his finger and says, "Read up there." And you read, "None but the righteous enter here." Then you tremble, your knees knock together, your hands shake. Were your bones of brass they might melt and were your ribs of iron they might be dissolved. Ah, there you stand, shivering, quaking, and trembling. But not long, for a Voice which frightens you from your feet and lays you prostrate, cries, "Depart you cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

O dear Hearers, shall that be *your* portion? My friends, as I love you—I do this morning and hope I always will—shall this be your lot? Will you not have freedom to enter into the City? Will you not seek that Spirit which gives liberty? Ah, I know you will not have it if left to yourselves. Some of you, perhaps, never will. O God, grant that that number may be but few, but may the number of the saved be great, indeed!

"Turn, then my soul unto Your rest
The ransom of your great High Priest,
Has set the captive free!
Trust to His efficacious blood
Nor fear your banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee."

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THE KINGLY PRIESTHOOD OF THE SAINTS
NO. 10

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 28, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"And has made us unto our God kings and priests.
And we shall reign on the earth."
Revelation 5:10.

"MUSIC has charms." I am sure sacred music has. For I have felt something of its charms while we have been singing that glorious hymn just now. There is potency in harmony, there is a magic power in melody which either melts the soul to pity or lifts it up to unspeakable joy. I do not know how—it may be with some minds they possibly may resist the influence of singing. But I cannot. When the saints of God, in full chorus, "chant the solemn lay," and when I hear sweet syllables fall from their lips, keeping measure and time, then I feel elevated—and, forgetting for a time everything terrestrial—I soar aloft towards heaven! If such is the sweetness of the music of the saints below, where there is much of discord and sin to mar the harmony, how sweet must it be to sing above with cherubim and seraphim! Oh, what songs must those be which the eternal always hears upon His throne! What seraphic sonnets must those be which are thrilled from the lips of pure immortals, untainted by sin, unmingled with a groan—where they always warble hymns of joy and gladness, never intermingled with one sigh, or groan, or worldly care! Happy songsters! When shall I join your chorus? There is one of your hymns that runs—

"Hark! How they sing before the throne!"

And I have sometimes thought I could "hark! How they sing before the throne." I have imagined that I could hear the full burst of the swell of the chorus, when it pealed from heaven like mighty thunders and the sound of many waters. I have almost heard those lull-toned strains, when the harpers harped with their harps before the throne of God! Alas, it was but imagination. We cannot hear it now. These ears are not fitted for such music. These souls could not be contained in the body, if we were once to hear some stray note from the harps of angels! We must wait till we get up yonder. Then, purified like silver seven times from the defilement of earth, washed in our Savior's precious blood, sanctified by the purifying influence of the Holy Spirit—

"We shall, unblemished and complete,
Appear before our Father's throne
With joys divinely great!
Then loudest of the crowd we'll sing,

While heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace."

Our friend, John, the highly favored apostle of the Apocalypse, has given us just one note from heaven's song. We shall strike that note and sound it again and again. I shall strike this tuning fork of heaven and let you hear one of the key notes. "And have made us unto our God kings and priests. And we shall reign on the earth." May the great and gracious Spirit, who is the only illumination of darkness, light up my mind while I attempt, in a brief and hurried manner, to speak from this text.

There are three things in it—first, *the Redeemer's doings*—"and have made us." Secondly, *the saints' honors*—"and have made us kings and priests unto our God." And, thirdly, *the world's future*—"and we shall reign upon the earth."

I. First, then, we have THE REDEEMER'S DOINGS. They who stand before the throne sing of the Lamb—the Lion of the tribe of Judah who took the book and broke the seals thereof—"You have made us kings and priests unto our God." In heaven they do not sing—

"Glory, honor, praise and power
Be unto ourselves forever!
We have been our own Redeemers—Hallelujah,"

They *never* sing praise to themselves. They glorify not their own strength—they do not talk of their own free will and their own might. But they ascribe their salvation from beginning to end, to God. Ask them how they were saved and they reply—"The Lamb has made us what we are." Ask them from where their glories came and they tell you—"They were bequeathed to us by the dying Lamb." Ask from where they obtained the gold of their harps and they say, "It was dug in mines of agony and bitterness by Jesus." Inquire who stringed their harps and they will tell you that Jesus took each sinew of His body to make them. Ask them where they washed their robes and made them white and they will say—

"In yonder fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

Some persons on earth do not know where to put the crown, but those in heaven do. They place the diadem on the right head. And they always sing—"And He has made us what we are."

Well, then, beloved, would not this note well become us here? For "what have we that we have not received?" Who has made us to differ? I know, this morning, that I am a justified man. I have the full assurance that—

"The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do.
My Savior's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view."

There is not a sin against me in God's book—they have all been forever obliterated by the blood of Christ and cancelled by His own right hand. I have nothing to fear. I cannot be condemned. "Who shall lay anything to

the charge of God's elect?" Not God, for He has justified. Not Christ, for He has died. But if I am justified, who made me so? I say—"And has made me what I am." Justification from first to last is of God. Salvation is of the Lord alone!

Many of you are sanctified persons, but you are not perfectly sanctified. You are not redeemed altogether from the dross of earth. You have still another law in your members, warring against the law of your mind and you always will have that law while you tabernacle in faith. You never will be perfect in your sanctification until you get up yonder before the solemn throne of God—where even this imperfection of your soul will be taken away—and your carnal depravity rooted out. But yet, beloved, there is an inward principle imparted. You are growing in grace—you are making *progress* in holiness. Well, but who made you have that progress? Who redeemed you from that lust? Who ransomed you from that vice? Who bade you say farewell to that practice in which you indulged? Cannot you say of Jesus, "And has made us"? It is Christ who has done it all—and to His name be honor, glory, praise and dominion!

Let us dwell one moment on this thought and show you how it is that it can be said that Christ has made us thus. When did Christ make His people kings and priests? When could it be said, "And has made us kings and priests unto our God"?

1. First of all, He made us kings and priests, virtually, when He signed the Everlasting Covenant. Far, far back in eternity, the Magna Charta of the saints was written by the hand of God and it needed one signature to make it valid. There was a stipulation in that Covenant that the Mediator should become incarnate, should live a suffering life and at last endure a death of ignominy! And it needed but one signature—the signature of the Son of God—to make that Covenant eternally valid and "ordered in all things and sure." I think I see Him now, as my imagination pictures the lofty Son of God grasping the pen. See how His fingers write the name. And there it stands in everlasting letters—"THE SON!" O sacred ratification of the treaty! It is stamped and sealed with the great seal of our Father in heaven. O glorious Covenant—then forever made secure! At the moment of the signature of this wondrous document, the spirits before the throne—I mean the angels—might have taken up the song and said of the whole body of the elect, "And have made you kings and priests unto your God." And could all the chosen company have started into existence, they could have clapped their hands and sung, "Here we are by that very signature, constituted kings and priests unto our God."

2. But He did not stop there. It was not simply agreeing to the terms of the treaty. But in due time He filled it all—yes, to its utmost jot and tittle. Jesus said, "I will take the cup of salvation," and He did take it—the cup of our deliverance. Bitter were its drops—gall lay in its depths. There were groans and sighs and tears within the red mixture. But He took it all and drank it to its dregs and swallowed all the awful draught. All was

gone. He drank the cup of salvation and He ate the bread of affliction. Look at Him as He drinks the cup in Gethsemane, when the fluid of that cup did mingle with His blood and make each drop a scalding poison. Mark how the hot feet of pain did travel down His veins. See how each nerve is twisted and contorted with His agony. Behold His brow covered with sweat. Witness the agonies as they follow each other into the very depths of His soul. Speak, you lost! Tell what hell's torment means. But you cannot tell what the torments of Gethsemane were. Oh, the unutterable deep! There was a depth which couched beneath, when our Redeemer bowed His head—when He placed Himself betwixt the upper and nether millstones of His Father's vengeance—and when His whole soul was ground to powder. Ah, that wrestling Man—God—that suffering Man of Gethsemane. Weep over Him, Saints—weep over Him when you see Him rising from that prayer in the Garden, marching forth to His cross! When you picture Him hanging on His cross four long hours in the scorching sun, overwhelmed by His Father's passing wrath—when you see His side streaming with gore—when you hear His death-shriek, "It is finished!"—and see His lips all parched—moistened by nothing save the vinegar and the gall—ah, then prostrate yourselves before that cross, bow down before that Sufferer and say, "*You have made us—You have made us* what we are. We are nothing without You." The cross of Jesus is the foundation of the glory of the saints. Calvary is the birthplace of heaven. Heaven was born in Bethlehem's manger. Had it not been for the sufferings and agonies of Golgotha we would have had no blessing. Oh, Saint! In every mercy, see the Savior's blood—look on this book—it is sprinkled with His blood. Look on this house of prayer—it is sanctified by His sufferings. Look on your daily food—it is purchased with His groans. Let every mercy come to you as a blood-bought treasure. Value it because it comes from Him. And evermore say, "You have made us what we are."

3. Beloved, our Savior Jesus Christ finished the great work of making us what we are by His Ascension into heaven. If He had not risen up on high and led captivity captive, His death would have been insufficient. He "died for our sins," but He "rose again for our justification." The resurrection of our Savior, in His majesty when He burst the bonds of death, was to us the assurance that God had accepted His Sacrifice. And His Ascension up on high was but as a type and a figure of the real and actual ascension of all His saints—when He shall come in the clouds of judgment—and shall call all His people to Him. Mark the Man-God as He goes upward towards heaven. Behold His triumphal march through the skies, while stars sing His praises and planets dance in solemn order. Behold Him traverse the unknown fields of ether till He arrives at the throne of God in the seventh heaven! Then hear Him say to His Father, "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do, behold Me and the children You have given Me. I have fought a good fight. I have finished My

course. I have done all. I have accomplished every type. I have finished every part of the Covenant. There is not one iota I have left unfulfilled, or one tittle that is left out. All is done." And hark, how they sing before the throne of God when thus He speaks—"You have made us unto our God kings and priests. And we shall reign on the earth."

Thus have I briefly spoken upon the dear Redeemer's doings. Poor lips cannot speak better, faint heart will not rise up to the height of this great argument. Oh, that these lips had language eloquent and lofty, that they might speak more of the wondrous doings of our Redeemer!—

"Crown Him! Crown Him!
Crowns become the Savior's brow!"

II. Now, secondly, THE SAINTS' HONORS—"And have made us unto our God kings and priests." The most honorable of all monarchs have always been esteemed to be those who had a right not only to royalty, but to sacerdotal supremacy. Those kings who could wear at one time the crown of loyalty and at another the miter of the priesthood—who could both use the censer and hold the scepter—who could offer intercession for the people and then govern the nations. Those who are kings and priests are great, indeed! And here you behold the saint honored, not with one title, or one office, but with two. He is made not merely a king, but a king and a priest—not merely a priest, but a priest and a king! The saint has two offices conferred upon him at once—he is made a priestly monarch and a regal priest!

I shall take, first of all, the royal office of the saints. They are KINGS. They are not merely to be kings in heaven, but they are also kings on earth, for if my text does not say so, the Bible declares it in another passage—"You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." We are kings *even now*. I want you to understand that—before I explain the idea. Every saint of the living God not only has the prospect of *being a king* in heaven, but positively, in the sight of God, he *is a king* now! And he must say, with regard to his brethren and himself, "And have made us," even now, "unto our God kings and priests. And we shall reign upon the earth." A Christian is a king! He is not simply *like* a king, but He *is* a king, actually and truly! However I shall try and show you how He is like a king.

Remember *his royal ancestry*. What a fuss some people make about their grandfathers and grandmothers and distant ancestors. I remember seeing in Trinity College the pedigree of some great lord that went back just as far as Adam and Adam was there digging the ground—the first man! It was traced all the way up. Of course I did not believe it. I have heard of some pedigrees that go back further—I leave that to your own common sense to believe it or not! A pedigree in which shall be found dukes, marquises and kings and princes—oh, what would some give for such a pedigree? I believe, however, that it is not what our *ancestors were*, but what *we are*, that will make us shine before God. It is not so

much in knowing that we have royal or priestly blood in our veins, as knowing that we are an honor to our race—that we are walking in the ways of the Lord and reflecting credit upon the church and upon the grace that makes us honorable. But since some men will glory in their descent, I will glory that the saints have the proudest ancestry in the entire world! Talk of Caesars, or of Alexanders, or tell me even of our own good Queen—I say that I am of as high descent as Her Majesty, or the proudest monarch in the world! I am descended from the King of kings. The saint may well speak of his ancestry—he may exult in it, he may glory in it—for he is a child of God, positively and actually. His mother, the church, is the Bride of Jesus. He is a twice-born child of heaven—one of the blood royal of the universe. The poorest woman or man on earth, loving Christ, is of a royal line. Give a man the grace of God in his heart and his ancestry is noble. I can turn back the roll of my pedigree and I can tell you that it is so ancient, that it has no beginning. It is more ancient than all the rolls of mighty men put together—from all eternity my Father existed—and therefore, I have indeed a right royal and ancient ancestry!

And then, again, *the saints, like monarchs, have a splendid retinue*. Kings and monarchs cannot travel without a deal of state. In olden times, they had far more magnificence than they have now. But even in these days we see much of it when royalty is abroad. There must be a peculiar kind of horse, a splendid chariot, and outriders with all the etceteras of gorgeous pomp. Yes, and the kings of God, whom Jesus Christ has made kings and priests unto their God, have also a royal retinue. "Oh," you say, "but I see some of them in rags. They are walking through the earth, alone, sometimes without a helper or a friend." Ah, but the fault is in your eyes. If you had eyes to see, you would perceive a body-guard of angels always attending every one of the blood-bought family! You remember Elijah's servant could not see anything around Elijah till his master opened his eyes. Then he could see that there were horses and chariots round about Elijah. Lo! There are horses and chariots about *me!* And you, saint of the Lord—wherever you are—there are horses and chariots! In that bedchamber, where I was born, angels stood to announce my birth on high. In seas of trouble, when wave after wave seems to go over me, angels are there to lift up my head. When I come to die, when sorrowing friends shall, weeping, carry me to the grave, angels shall stand by my bier—and, when put into the grave, some mighty angel shall stand and guard my dust and contend for its possession with the devil. Why should I fear? I have a company of angels about me! And whenever I walk abroad, the glorious cherubim march in front. Men see them not, but I see them. For "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." We have a royal retinue—we are kings, not merely by ancestry, but by our retinue!

Now, notice *the insignia and regalia of the saints*. Kings and princes have certain things that are theirs by perspective right. For instance, Her

Majesty has her Buckingham Palace and her other palaces, her crown royal, her scepter and so on. But, has a saint a palace? Yes. I have a palace! And its walls are not made of marble, but of gold. Its borders are carbuncles and precious gems. Its windows are of agates. Its stones are laid with fair colors—around it there is a profusion of every costly thing—rubies sparkle here and there, yes, pearls are but common stones within it! Come, call it a mansion. But I have a right to call it a palace, too, for I am a king! It is a mansion when I look at God. It is a palace when I look at men, because it is the habitation of a prince. Mark where this palace is; I am not a prince of India—I have no inheritance in any far-off land that men dream of—I have no El Dorado, or Home of Prester John. But yet I have a substantial palace! Yonder, on the hills of heaven it stands—I know not its position among the other mansions of heaven, but there it stands—and "I know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Have Christians a crown, too? O yes, but they do not wear it every day. They have a crown, but their coronation day is not yet arrived. They have been anointed monarchs, they have some of the authority and dignity of monarchs—but they are not crowned monarchs yet. But the crown is made. God will not have to order heaven's goldsmiths to fashion it in later—it is already made —hanging up in glory! God has "laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Oh, saint, if you did just open some secret door in heaven and went into the treasure chamber, you could see it filled with crowns. When Cortez entered the palace of Montezuma, he found a secret chamber bricked up and he thought the wealth of all the world was there, so many different things were there stowed. Could you enter God's secret treasure house, what wealth would you see? "Are there so many monarchs," you would say, "so many crowns, so many princes?" Yes and some bright angel would say, "Mark that crown? It is yours." And if you were to look within, you would read, "Made for a sinner saved by grace, whose name was ____." And then you would hardly believe your eyes, as you saw your own name engraved upon it! You are indeed a king before God, for you have a crown laid up in heaven! Whatever other insignia belongs to monarchs, saints shall have. They shall have robes of whiteness. They shall have harps of glory. They shall have all things that become their regal state, so that we are, indeed, monarchs, you see. Not mock-monarchs, clothed in purple garments of derision and scoffed at with, "Hail, King of the Jews." But we *are real* monarchs—"He has made us kings and priests unto our God."

There is another thought here. *Kings are considered the most honorable among men*. They are always looked up to and respected. If you should say, "A monarch is here!" A crowd would give way. I should not command much respect if I were to attempt to move about in a crowd. But if anyone should shout, "Here is the Queen!" everyone would step

aside and make room for her. A monarch generally commands respect. Ah, beloved, we think that worldly princes are the most honorable of the earth, but if you were to ask God, He would reply, "My saints, in whom I delight, these are the honorable ones." Tell me not of tinsel and gewgaw. Tell me not of gold and silver. Tell me not of diamonds and pearls. Tell me not of ancestry and rank. Preach to me not of pomp and power. But oh, tell me that a man is a saint of the Lord—for then he is an honorable man! God respects him. Angels respect him and the universe one day shall respect him, when Christ shall come to call him to his account and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord." You may despise a child of God now, sinner. You may laugh at him; you may say he is a hypocrite; you may call him a saint, a Methodist, a cant and everything you like—but know that those titles will not mar his dignity—he is the honorable of the earth and God estimates him as such!

But some persons will say, "I wish you would prove what you affirm, when you say that saints are kings, for, if we were kings, we should never have any sorrows—kings are never poor as we are and never suffer as we do." Who told you so? You say if you are kings, you would live at ease? Do not kings ever suffer? Was not David an anointed king? And was he not hunted like a partridge on the mountains? Did not the king, himself, pass over the brook Kidron and all his people weeping as he went, when his son Absalom pursued him? And was he not a monarch when he slept on the cold ground, with no couch save the damp heather? O yes, kings have their sorrows—crowned heads have their afflictions—

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

Do not expect that because you are a king you are to have no sorrows! "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink." And it is often so. The saints get but little wine here. It is not for kings to drink the wine of pleasure. It is not for kings to have much of the intoxicating drink and the surfeits of this world's delight. They shall have joy enough up yonder, when they shall drink it new in their Father's kingdom! Poor Saint! Do dwell on this. You are a king! I beseech you let it not go away from your mind. But in the midst of your tribulation, still rejoice in it! If you have to go through the dark tunnel of infamy for Christ's name; if you are ridiculed and reviled, still rejoice in the fact, "I am a king and all the dominions of the earth shall be mine!"

This last idea and I have done with this part of the subject. *Kings have dominion.* Do you know I am a fifth monarchy man? In Cromwell's time, some said there had been four monarchies and the fifth would come and overturn every other. Well, I never wish to do as they did. But I believe with them, that a fifth monarchy shall come. There have now existed four great empires, arrogating universal dominion and there never shall be another world-wide monarchy until Christ shall come. Jesus, our Lord, is to be King of all the earth and rule all nations in a glorious spiritual or

personal reign! The saints, as being kings in Christ, have a right to the whole world.

Here am I this morning and my congregation before me. Some persons say, "Keep to your own place and preach." I have heard the advice, "Do not go out of your parish." But Rowland Hill used to say he never went out of his parish in his life—his parish was England, Scotland and Wales—he never went out of it. I suppose that is my parish and the parish of every gospel minister. When we see a city full of sin and iniquity, what should we say? "That is ours; we will go and storm it"? When we see a street or some crowded area where the people are very bad and wicked, should we say, "That is our alley; we will go and take it"? When we see a house where people will not receive the gospel, should we say, "That is our house, we will go and attack it"? We will not go with the strong arm of the law. We will not ask the policeman or government to help us! But we will take with us "the weapons of our warfare" which "are not carnal but spiritual and mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds." We will go and, by God's Spirit, we shall overcome! There is a town where the children are running about the street uneducated. We will go and take those children—kidnap them for Christ! We will have a Sunday school. If they are ragged urchins who cannot come to a Sunday school, we will have a Ragged School. There is a part of the world where the inhabitants are sunk in ignorance and superstition—we will send a missionary to them. Ah, those who do not like missionary enterprises do not know the dignity of the saint! Talk of India, talk of China. "They are mine," says the saint. All the kingdoms of the earth are ours. "Africa is my wash pot—I will triumph over Asia. They are mine! They are mine!" "Who shall bring me into the strong city?" Is it not You, O Lord? God shall give us the kingdom of Christ! The whole earth is ours. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, Baal shall bow, Nebo shall stoop, the gods of the heathen, Buddha and Brahma shall be cast down and all nations will bow before the scepter of Christ. "He has made us kings."

Our second point, upon which I shall be very brief, is, "He has made us kings and PRIESTS." Saints are not only kings, but priests. I shall go to it at once, without any preface.

We are priests, because *priests are divinely chosen persons* and so are we. "No man takes this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." But we have that calling and election. We were all ordained to it from the foundations of the world. We were predestinated to be priests and in process of time we had a special effectual call, which we could not and did not resist! And it at last overcame us that we became at once the priests of God. We are priests, divinely constituted. When we say we are priests, we do not talk as certain parties do, who say they are priests, wishing thereby to arrogate to them a distinction. I always have an objection—I must state it strongly—to calling a clergyman, or any man that preaches a priest! We are no more so than you are! All saints

are priests. But, for a man to stand up and say he is a priest, any more than those he preaches to, is a lie! I detest the distinction of clergy and laity. I like *Scriptural* priestcraft, for that is the craft or work of the people who are all priests. But all other priestcraft I abhor. Every saint of the Lord is a priest at God's altar and is bound to worship God with the holy incense of prayer and praise. We are priests, each one of us, if we are called by divine grace, and for thus we are priests by divine constitution.

Then, next, we are priests because *we enjoy divine honors*. None but a priest might enter within the veil. There was a court of the priests into which none might ever go except the called ones. Priests had certain rights and privileges which others had not. Saint of Jesus! Heir of heaven! You have high and honorable privileges which the world knows not of! Have you ever been within the veil in communion with Christ? Have you ever been in the court of the Lord's House, the court of the priests, where He has taught you and manifested Himself to you? Have you? Yes, you know you have—you enjoy constant access to God's throne! You have a right to come and tell your griefs and sorrows into the ears of Jehovah. The poor worldling must not come there; the poor child of wrath has no God to tell his troubles to. He must not go within the veil—he has no wish to go—but you may. You may come to God's ear, swing the censer before the throne and offer your petition in the name of Jesus! Others have not these divine honors. You are divinely honored and divinely blessed!

Then another remark, to finish up with, shall be, *we have a divine service to perform*. And as I want you all, this morning, to turn this chapel into one great altar—as I want to make you all *working* priests and this the temple for sacrifice—look earnestly at your service! You are all priests, because you love His dear name and have a great sacrifice to perform—not a propitiation for your sins—for that has been once offered—but a sacrifice this day of *holy thanksgiving*. Oh, how sweet in God's ears is the prayer of His people! That is the sacrifice that He accepts. And when their holy hymn swells upwards towards the sky, how pleasant it is in His ears, because then He can say, "My hosts of priests are sacrificing praise." And do you know, beloved, there is one point in which most of us fail in our oblations before God? We offer our prayer. We present our praise. But how little do we sacrifice of our substance unto the Lord! I had thought, this morning, seeing I desire to make you amazingly liberal, to have made this my text, "Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your increase—so shall your barns be filled with plenty and your presses shall burst out with new wine." And I had thought of showing that our substance was the Lord's—that we were bound to devote no small portion of it to Him—and that if we did do so we might expect prosperity even in worldly business, for He would make our barns full and our presses burst with new wine! However, I conceive it to be needless to preach a collection sermon—I thought I

would rather tell you about your honor and dignity—and then you shall just give what you like, for the only free will I like, is a free will offering! Allow, beloved, a few words! God has said in His word that you are to honor Him with your substance. As a priest of the Lord will you not sacrifice something to the Lord this day? Here we have a great objective before us. We need more room for the crowds who come to hear the gospel. It seems important, when such a throng is gathered, that none should go away. Ought we not to bless God that they come? There was a time you were few, indeed, and the cry was, "Who has believed our report?" But God has given us great success. The ministry here has been blessed to the conversion of not a few souls. I have many cases, now in this chapel, of broken hearts and contrite spirits. Doubtless, there are many more than I know of and I believe the blessed Spirit will bring them out in due time. Oh, do you not grieve that any should have to turn away from the voice of the ministry—that any who come here should have to go away, perhaps to spend the Sabbath in sin? You know not where they have to go, when they cannot get within these walls! The thing is we have come to the resolution that this chapel should be enlarged so that there should be accommodation for a larger number. Now, you priests, sacrifice to the Lord! Let the priests build the house of Lord. Let those who worship in the sanctuary take up the trowel today! Let the mortar and the brick be laid and let this house be once more filled with the glory of the Lord and an abundant congregation!

III. Now I have to close up with THE WORLD'S FUTURE. "We shall reign on the earth." I have not much time for this and I dare say it is expected that I shall tell you about the millennium and the personal reign of Christ. I shall not at all, because I don't know anything about it! I have heard a great many people talk of it. If anybody shows me a book on the millennium, I say, "I cannot read it just yet." A good man has lately written a book on it, and a gentleman recommended it to me so strongly, that I could not but buy it out of courtesy! But I elevated it to the aristocratic region of my library—in the higher ranks—and there it rests in quiet repose! I do not think myself capable of threading the labyrinths of the subject and I do not believe the very respectable author can do it either! It is a subject so dark and I have read so many different views upon it, that it is all a phantasmagoria with me. I believe the entire Bible says of a glorious future, but I cannot pretend to be a maker of charts for all time. Only this I gather as a positive fact—that the saints will one day reign on the earth! This truth appears to me clear enough; whatever may be the different views on the millennium. The saints do not reign visibly *now*. They are *despised*. They were driven, in old times, into dens and caves of the earth—but the time is coming when kings will be saints and princes the called ones of God—when queens shall be the nursing mothers and kings the nursing fathers of Christ's church. The hour is coming when the saint, instead of being dishonored, shall be honored. And mon-

archs, once the foes of truth, shall become its friends! The saints shall reign. They shall have the majority. The kingdom of Christ shall have the upper hand. It shall not be cast down—this shall not be Satan's world any longer—it shall again sing with all its sister stars, the never ceasing song of praise! Oh, I believe there is a day coming when Sabbath bells shall sprinkle music over the plains of Africa—when the deep thick jungle of India shall see the saints of God going up to the sanctuary and I am assured that the teeming multitudes of China shall gather together in temples built for prayer! As you and I have done, they, too, shall sing to the ever glorious Jehovah—

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

Happy day! Happy day! May it speedily come!

Now, to close up, one very practical inference; you are kings and priests unto your God; then how much ought kings to give to the collection this morning? Thus speak you to yourselves. "I am a king. I will give as a king gives unto a king." Now, mark you, no paltry subscriptions! We don't expect kings to put down their names for trifles. Then, again—you are a priest. Well, priest, do you mean to sacrifice? "Yes." But you would not sacrifice a crippled lamb, or a blemished bullock, would you? Would you not select the best of the flock? Yes, you would! Then select the very best of the Queen's coins and offer, if you can, sheep with golden fleece.

Excuse my pressing this subject. I want to get this chapel enlarged. So do you. We are all agreed about it. We are all rowing in one boat. I have set my mind on £50 and I must and will, have it today, if possible. I hope you won't disappoint me. It is not my *own* cause, but my Master's—at other times you have given liberally—I am not afraid of you—but hope to come forward, next Sabbath morning, with the cheering announcement that the £50 is all raised. Then I think my spirit will be so elevated, that, by the help of God, I will venture to promise you one of the best sermons I am capable of delivering!

[The Christian reader will be pleased to learn, that after this appeal, the sum of £50, 11 1/2d. was collected at the doors towards defraying the expenses of the enlargement.]

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THE PEOPLE'S CHRIST
NO. 11

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 25, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"I have exalted one chosen out of the people."
Psalm 89:19.

ORIGINALLY, I have no doubt, these words referred to David. He was chosen out of the people. His lineage was respectable, but not illustrious. His family was holy, but not exalted—the names of Jesse, Obed, Boaz and Ruth awoke no royal recollections and stirred up no remembrances of ancient nobility or glorious pedigree. As for himself, his only occupation had been that of a shepherd boy, carrying lambs in his bosom, or gently leading the ewes great with young—a simple youth of a right royal soul and undaunted courage, but yet a plebeian—one of the people. But this was no disqualification for the crown of Judah. In God's eyes the extraction of the young hero was no barrier to his mounting the throne of the holy nation, nor shall the proudest admirer of descent and lineage dare to insinuate a word against the valor, wisdom and the justice of the government of this monarch of the people!

We do not believe that Israel or Judah ever had a better ruler than David and we are bold to affirm that the reign of the man "chosen out of the people" outshines in glory the reigns of high-bred emperors and princes with the blood of a score of kings running in their veins! Yes, more—we will assert that the humility of his birth and education, so far from making him incompetent to rule, rendered him, in a great degree, more fit for his office and able to discharge its mighty duties. He could legislate for the many, for he was one of themselves—he could rule the people as the people should be ruled, for he was "bone of their bone" and "flesh of their flesh"—their friend, their brother, as well as their king!

However, in this sermon we shall not speak of David, but of the Lord Jesus Christ, for David, as referred to in the text, is an eminent *type* of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who was chosen out of the people. Jesus is He of whom His Father can say, "I have exalted one chosen out of the people."

Before I enter into the illustration of this truth I wish to make one statement, so that all objections may be avoided as to the doctrine of my sermon. Our Savior Jesus Christ, I say, was *chosen* out of the people—but this merely respects His *Manhood*. As "very God of very God" He was *not* chosen out of the people—for there was none except Him! He was His Father's only-begotten Son, "begotten of the Father before all worlds." He was God's Fellow, co-equal and co-eternal—consequently when we speak

of Jesus as being chosen out of the people, we must speak of Him as a Man. We are, I conceive, too forgetful of the real Manhood of our Redeemer, for a Man He was to all intents and purposes—and I love to sing—

"A Man there was, a real Man
Who once on Calvary died."

He was not Man and God amalgamated—the two natures suffered no confusion—He was very God without the diminution of His essence or attributes. And He was equally, verily and truly, Man. It is *as a Man* I speak of Jesus this morning! And it rejoices my heart when I can view the human side of that glorious miracle of incarnation and can deal with Jesus Christ as my brother—inhabitant of the same mortality, wrestler with the same pains and ills, companion in the march of life and, for a little while, a fellow-sleeper in the cold chamber of death!

There are three things spoken of in the text—first of all, Christ's extraction—He was one of the people. Secondly, His election—He was chosen out of the people. And thirdly, Christ's exaltation—He was exalted. You see I have chosen three words all commencing with the letter E, to ease your memories that you may be able to remember them the better—extraction, election, exaltation!

I. We will commence with our Savior's EXTRACTION. We have had many complaints this week and for some weeks past, in the newspapers concerning the families. We are governed—and, according to the firm belief of a great many of us, very badly governed—by certain aristocratic families. We are not governed by men chosen out of the people, as we ought to be. And this is a fundamental wrong in our government—that our rulers, even when elected *by* us, can scarcely ever be elected *from* us. Families, where certainly there is not a monopoly of intelligence or prudence, seem to have a patent for promotion. While a man—a commoner, a tradesman, of however good sense—cannot rise to the government. I am no politician and I am about to preach no political sermon. But I must express my sympathy with the people and my joy that we, as Christians, are governed by "one chosen out of the people." Jesus Christ is the people's Man! He is the people's friend—yes, one of themselves. Though He sits high on His Father's throne, He was "one chosen out of the people." Christ is not to be called the aristocrat's Christ. He is not the noble's Christ. He is not the king's Christ. But He is "one chosen out of the people." It is this thought which cheers the hearts of the people and ought to bind their souls in unity to Christ and the holy religion of which He is the Author and Finisher. Let us now beat out this wedge of gold into leaf and narrowly inspect its truthfulness!

Christ, by His very birth was one of the people. True, He was born of a royal ancestry. Mary and Joseph were both of them descendants of a kingly race but the glory had departed. A stranger sat on the throne of Judah, while the lawful heir grasped the hammer and the axe. Mark you well the place of His nativity. Born in a stable—cradled in a manger

where the horned oxen fed—His only bed was their fodder and His slumbers were often broken by their longings. He might be a Prince by birth—but certainly He had not a princely retinue to wait upon Him! He was not clad in purple garments, neither wrapped in embroidered clothing. The halls of kings were not trod by His feet. The marble palaces of monarchs were not honored by His Infant smiles. Take notice of the visitors who came around His cradle. The shepherds came, first of all. We never find that they lost their way. No, God guides the shepherds and He did direct the wise men, too, but they lost their way. It often happens, that while shepherds find Christ, wise men miss Him. However, both of them came, the magi and the shepherds—both knelt round that manger, to show us that Christ was the Christ of *all* men—that He was not merely the Christ of the magi, but that He was the Christ of the shepherds. They showed us that He was not merely the Savior of the peasant shepherd, but also the Savior of the learned, for—

"None are excluded hence, but those
Who do themselves exclude.
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude."

In His very birth He was one of the people. He was not born in a populous city—but in the obscure village of Bethlehem, "the house of bread." The Son of Man made His advent, unushered by pompous preparations and unheralded by the blast of courtly trumpets!

His *education*, too, demands our attention. He was not taken as Moses was, from his mother's breast, to be educated in the halls of a monarch. He was not brought up with all those affected airs which are given to persons who have golden spoons in their mouths at their births. He was not brought up as the lordling, to look with disdain on everyone. His father, being a carpenter, doubtless He toiled in His father's workshop. "Fit place," a quaint author says, "for Jesus. For He had to make a ladder that would reach from earth to heaven! And why should He not be the son of a carpenter?" Full well He knew the curse of Adam—"in the sweat of your face shall you eat bread." Had you seen the Holy child Jesus, you would have beheld nothing to distinguish Him from other children, save that unsullied purity which rested in His very countenance. When our Lord entered into *public life*, still He was the same. What was His rank? Did He array Himself in scarlet and purple? Oh, no—He wore the simple garb of a peasant—that robe "without seam the top to the bottom," one simple piece of stuff, without ornament or embroidery. Did He dwell in state and make a magnificent show in His journey through Judea? No. He toiled His weary way and sat down on the well of Sychar. He was like others, a poor Man. He had not courtiers around Him. He had fishermen for His companions. And when He spoke, did He speak with smooth and oily words? Did He walk with dainty footsteps, like the king of Amalek? No. He often spoke like the rough Elijah. He spoke what He meant and He meant what He said. He spoke to the people as the people's Man. He

never cringed before great men. He knew not what it was to bow or stoop. He stood and cried, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Woe unto you, whitewashed sepulchers." He spared no class of sinners—rank and fortune made no difference to Him. He uttered the same truths to the rich men of the Sanhedrin, as to the toiling peasants of Galilee. He was "one of the people."

Notice His *doctrine*. Jesus Christ was one of the people in His doctrine. His gospel was never the philosopher's gospel, for it is not abstruse enough. It will not consent to be buried in hard words and technical phrases—it is so simple that He who can spell over, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," may have a saving knowledge of it! Hence, worldly-wise men scorn the science of truth and sneeringly say, "Why, even a blacksmith can preach now-a-days and men who were at the plow tail may turn preachers." And priestcraft demands, "What right have they to do any such thing, unauthorized by us?" Oh, sad case, that gospel truth should be slighted because of its plainness, and that my Master should be despised because He will not be exclusive—will not be monopolized by men of talent and erudition! Jesus is the ignorant man's Christ as much as the learned man's Christ, for He has chosen "the base things of the world and the things that are despised." Ah, much as I love true science and real education, I mourn and grieve that our ministers are so much diluting the word of God with philosophy—desiring to be intellectual preachers, delivering model sermons. Their sermons are well fitted for a room full of college students and professors of theology, but of no use to the masses—being destitute of simplicity, warmth, earnestness, or even solid gospel matter! I fear our college training is but a poor gain to our churches, since it often serves to wean the young man's sympathies from the people and wed them to the few of the intellectual and wealthy of the church. It is good to be a fellow citizen in the republic of letters but better far to be an able minister of the kingdom of heaven! It is good to be able, like some great minds, to attract the mighty. But the more useful man will still be he, who, like Whitefield, uses "market language." It is a sad fact that high places and the gospel seldom well agree. And, moreover, be it known that the doctrine of Christ is the doctrine of the *people*. It was not meant to be the gospel of a caste, a clique, or any one class of the community! The covenant of grace is not ordered for men of one peculiar grade, but some of all sorts are included. There were a few of the rich who followed Jesus in His own day and it is so now. Mary, Martha and Lazarus were well-to-do and there was the wife of Herod's steward, with some more of the nobility. These, however, were but a few—His congregation was made up of the lower orders—the masses—the multitude. "The common people heard Him gladly." And His doctrine was one which did not allow for distinction, but put all men as sinners, naturally, on an equality in the sight of God!

One is your Father, "one is your Master, even Christ and all you are brothers and Sisters." These were words which He taught to His disci-

ples, while in His own person. He was the mirror of humility and proved Himself the friend of earth's poor sons and the lover of mankind. O you purse proud! O you who cannot touch the poor even with your white gloves! Ah, you with your miters and your staffs! Ah, you with your cathedrals and splendid ornaments! This is the Man whom you call Master—the people's Christ—one of the people! And yet you look down with scorn upon the people—you despise them! What are they in your opinion? *The common herd—the multitude*. Out with you! Call yourselves no more the ministers of Christ! How can you be, unless, descending from your pomp and your dignity, you come among the poor and visit them? Unless you walk among our teeming population, and preach to them the gospel of Christ Jesus? We believe you to be the descendants of the fishermen? Ah, not until you remove your grandeur and, like the fishermen, come out—the people's men and preach to the people—speak to the people, instead of lolling on your splendid seats and making yourselves rich at the expense of your pluralities! Christ's ministers should be the friends of manhood at large, remembering that their Master was the people's Christ. Rejoice! O rejoice! You multitudes, rejoice! rejoice! for Christ was one of the people!

II. Our second point was ELECTION. God says, "I have exalted one chosen out of the people." Jesus Christ was elected—chosen. Somehow or other, that ugly doctrine of election will come out. Oh, there are some, the moment they hear that word, election, put their hands upon their foreheads and mutter, "I will wait till that sentence is over, there will be something I shall like better, perhaps." Some others say, "I shall not go to that place again! The man is a hyper-Calvinist." But the man is not a hyper-Calvinist—the man said what was in his Bible—that is all. He is a Christian and you have no right to call him by those ill-names, if indeed an ill-name it is, for we never blush at whatever men call us.

Here it is—"one chosen out of the people." Now, what does that mean, but that Jesus Christ is chosen? Those who do not like to believe that the heirs of heaven were elect cannot deny the truth proclaimed in this verse—that Jesus Christ is the subject of election—that His Father chose Him and that He chose Him out of the people! As a Man He was chosen out of the people—to be the people's Savior and the people's Christ! And now let us gather up our thoughts and try to discover the transcendent wisdom of God's choice. Election is no blind thing. God sovereignly chooses but He always chooses wisely. There is always some secret reason for His choice of any particular individual—though that motive does not lie in us, or in our own merits—yet there is always some secret cause far more remote than the doings of the creature. Some mighty reason unknown to all but Him. In the case of Jesus the motives are apparent. And without pretending to enter the cabinet council of Jehovah, we may discover them.

1. First, we see that *justice is thereby fully satisfied* by the choice of one out of the people. Suppose God had chosen an angel to make satis-

faction for our sins—imagine that an angel were capable of bearing that vast amount of suffering and agony which was necessary to our atonement! Yet after the angel had done it all, justice would never have been satisfied, for this one simple reason—that the law declares, "The soul that sins IT shall die." Now, *man* sins and therefore *man* must die! Justice required that as by man came death, by man also should come the resurrection and the life. The law required, that as man was the sinner, man should be the victim—that as in Adam all died, even so in another Adam should all be made alive. Consequently it was necessary that Jesus Christ should be chosen out of the people. For had yon blazing angel near the throne, that lofty Gabriel, laid aside his splendors, descended to our earth, endured pain, suffered agonies, entered the vault of death and groaned out a miserable existence in an extremity of woe—after all *that*—he would not have satisfied inflexible justice, because it is said, a *man* must die and otherwise the sentence is not executed!

2. But there is another reason why Jesus Christ was chosen out of the people. It is because *thereby the whole race receives honor*. Do you know I would not be an angel if Gabriel would ask me? If he would beseech me to exchange places with him, I would not. I would lose so much by the exchange and he would gain so much. Poor, weak and worthless though I am, yet I am a *man*—and being a man there is a dignity about manhood—a dignity lost one day in the Garden of the Fall but regained in the garden of Resurrection! It is a fact that a man is greater than an angel—that in heaven humanity stands nearer the throne than angelic existence! You will read in the Book of Revelation that the 24 elders stood around the throne and in the *outer* circle stood the angels. The elders, who are the representatives of the whole Church, were honored with a greater nearness to God than the ministering spirits. Why man—elect man—is the greatest being in the universe, except God! Man sits up there; look! At God's right hand—radiant with glory—there sits a MAN! Ask me who governs Providence and directs its awfully mysterious machinery. I tell you it is a Man—the Man Christ Jesus! Ask me who has, during the past month, bound up the rivers in chains of ice and who now has loosed them from the shackles of winter. I tell you a Man did it—Christ! Ask me who shall come to judge the earth in righteousness and I say a Man. A real, veritable Man is to hold the scales of judgment and to call all nations around Him. And who is the channel of grace? Who is the emporium of all the Father's mercy? Who is the great gathering up of all the love of the covenant? I reply a Man—the Man Christ Jesus! And Christ, being a Man, has exalted you and exalted me and put us into the highest ranks. He made us, originally, a little lower than the angels and now despite our fall in Adam, He has crowned us, His elect, with glory and honor! And He has set us at His right hand in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.

3. But, my brethren, let us take a sweeter view than that. Why was He chosen out of the people? Speak my heart! What is the first reason that rushes up to you? For heart-thoughts are best thoughts. Thoughts from the head are often good for nothing but thoughts of the heart, deep musings of the soul; these are priceless as pearls of Ormuz! If it is a humbler poet, provided that his songs gush from his heart, they shall better strike the cords of my soul than the lifeless emanations of a mere brain. Here, Christian—what do you think is the sweet reason for the election of your Lord, He being one of the people? Was it not this—*that He might be able to be my brother, in the blest tie of kindred blood?* Oh, what relationship there is between Christ and the believer! The believer can say—

"One there is above all others
Well deserves the name of friend—
His is love beyond a brother's
Faithful, free and knows no end."

I have a great brother in heaven. I have heard boys say sometimes in the street that they would tell their brother and I have often said so when the enemy has attacked me—"I will tell my brother in heaven." I may be poor, but I have a brother who is rich! I have a brother who is a king! I am brother to the prince of the kings of the earth! And will He allow me to starve, or need, or lack, while He is on His throne? Oh, no! He loves me. He has fraternal feelings towards me. He is my brother. But more than that—think, O believer! Christ is not merely your brother, but He is your husband! "Your maker is your husband, the Lord of Hosts is His name." It rejoices the wife to lean her head on the broad breast of her husband, in full assurance that his arms will be strong to labor for her, or defend her. She knows that his heart always throbs with love to her and that all he has and is, belongs to her, as the sharer of his existence. Oh, to know by the influence of the Holy Spirit, that the sweet alliance is made between my soul and the ever precious Jesus! It is enough to quicken all my soul to music and make each atom of my frame a grateful songster to the praise of Christ. Come, let me remember when I lay like an infant in my blood, cast out in the open field. Let me recollect the notable moment when He said, "Live!" And let me never forget that He has educated me, trained me up and one day will espouse me to Himself in righteousness, crowning me with a nuptial crown in the palace of His Father! Oh, it is bliss unspeakable! I wonder not that the thought does stagger my words to utter it!—that Christ is one of the people, that He might be nearly related to you and to me, that He might be the kinsman, next of kin—

"In ties of blood with sinners one,
Our Jesus is to glory gone!
Has all His foes to ruin hurled —
Sin, Satan, earth, death, hell, the world."

Saint, wrap this blessed thought, like a necklace of diamonds, around the neck of your memory. Put it, as a golden ring, on the finger of recollection and use it as the king's own seal, stamping the petitions of your faith with confidence of success!

4. But now another idea suggests itself. Christ was chosen out of the people—that He might know our needs and sympathize with us. You know the old tale—that one half the world does not know how the other half lives—and that is very true. I believe some of the rich have no notion whatever of what the distress of the poor is. They have no idea of what it is to labor for their daily food. They have a very faint conception of what a rise in the price of bread means. They do not know anything about it. And when we put men in power who never were of the people, they do not understand the art of governing us. But our great and glorious Jesus Christ is one chosen out of the people and, therefore, He knows our needs. *Temptation and pain* He suffered before us. Sickness He endured, for when hanging upon the cross, the scorching of that broiling sun brought on a burning fever. *Weariness*—He has endured it, for weary He sat by the well. *Poverty*—He knows it, for sometimes He had not bread to eat, except that bread of which the world knows nothing. To be *houseless*—He knew it, for the foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but He had not where to lay His head. My brother and Sister Christian, there is no place where you can go where Christ has not been before you, sinful places alone excepted! In the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death you may see His bloody footsteps—footprints marked with gore. Yes, and even at the deep waters of the swelling Jordan, you shall, when you come hard by the side, say, "There are the footprints of a Man—whose are they?" Stooping down, you shall discern a nail-mark and shall say, "Those are the footsteps of the blessed Jesus." He has been before you! He has smoothed the way. He has entered the grave, that He might make the tomb the royal bedchamber of the ransomed race—the closet where they lay aside the garments of labor, to put on the vestments of eternal rest. In all places, wherever we go, the Angel of the covenant has been our forerunner. Each burden we have to carry has once been laid on the shoulders of Immanuel—

"His way was much rougher and darker than mine.
Did Christ my Lord suffer—and shall I repine?"

I am speaking to those in great trial. Dear fellow traveler! Take courage—Christ has consecrated the road and made the narrow way the king's own road to life!

One thought more and then I will pass on to my third point. There is a poor soul over there who is desirous of coming to Jesus, but he is in very great trouble, lest he should not come right. And I know many Christians who say, "Well, I hope I have come to Christ, but I am afraid I have not come right." There is a little footnote to one of the hymns in dear Mr. Denham's collection in which he says, "Some people are afraid they do not come right. Now, no man can come except the *Father draws him*. So I apprehend, if they come at all, they cannot come wrong!" So do I apprehend, if men come at all, they must come right. Here is a thought for you, poor coming sinner. Why are you afraid to come? "Oh," you say, "I am so great a sinner, Christ will not have mercy upon me." Oh, you do

not know my blessed Master! He is more loving than you think Him to be. I was once wicked enough to think the same, but I have found Him ten thousand times more kind than I thought. I tell you, He is so loving, so gracious, so kind, there never was one half so good as He. He is kinder than ever you can think. His love is greater than your fears and His merits are more prevalent than your sins! But still you say, "I am afraid I shall not come aright, I think I shall not use acceptable words." I tell you why that is—because you do not remember that Christ was taken out of the people. If Her Majesty were to send for me tomorrow morning, I dare say I should feel very anxious about what kind of clothes I should wear and how I should walk in and how I should observe court etiquette and so on. But if one of my friends here were to send for me, I should go straight off and see him, because he is one of the people and I like him. Some of you say, "How can I go to Christ? What shall I say? What words shall I use?" If you were going to one above you, you might ask so—but He is one of the people. Go as you are, poor sinner—just in your rags, just in your filth—in all your wickedness, just as you are! O conscience-stricken sinner, come to Jesus! He is one of the people. If the Spirit has given you a sense of sin, do not study how you are to come—come anyway! Come with a groan, come with a sigh, come with a tear. Any way you come, if you do but come, will do, for He is one of the people. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. Let him that hears say, Come."

Here I cannot resist airing an illustration. I have heard that in the deserts, when the caravans are in need of water and they are afraid they shall not find any, they are accustomed to send on a camel, with its rider, some distance in advance. Then after a little space follows another. And then at a short interval, another—as soon as the first man finds water, almost before he stoops down to drink, he shouts aloud, "Come!" The next one, hearing the voice, repeats the word, "Come!" while the nearest again takes up the cry, "Come!" until the whole wilderness echoes with the word "Come!" So in that verse, "The Spirit and the Bride say, first of all, Come—then let him that hears say, Come and whoever is thirsty, let him come and take of the Water of Life freely." With this picture I leave our survey of the reasons for the election of Christ Jesus.

III. And now I am to close up with His EXALTATION. "I have exalted one chosen out of the people." You will recollect while I am speaking upon this exaltation that it is really the exaltation of *all* the elect in the person of Christ. For all that Christ is and all that Christ has, is mine. If I am a believer, whatever He is in His exalted person, that I am, for I am made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places!

1. First, dear friends, it was exaltation enough for the body of Christ to be exalted into union with the Divinity. That was honor which none of us can ever receive. We never hope to have this body united with a God. It cannot be. Once has Incarnation been done—never but once. Of no other man can it be said, "He was one with the Father and the Father was one with Him." Of no other man shall it be said that the Deity taber-

nacled in Him and that God was manifest in His flesh, seen of angels, justified of the spirit and carried up to heaven!

2. Again—Christ was exalted by His Resurrection. Oh, I should have liked to have stolen into that tomb of our Savior. I suppose it was a large chamber—within it lay a massive marble sarcophagus and very likely a ponderous lid was laid upon it. Then outside the door there lay a mighty stone and guards kept watch before it. Three days did that Sleeper slumber there! Oh, I could have wished to lift the lid of that sarcophagus and look upon Him. Pale He lay. Blood-streaks there were upon Him, not all quite washed away by those careful women who had buried Him. Death, exulting, cries, "I have slain Him—the Seed of the woman who is to destroy me is now my captive!" Ah, how grim death laughed! Ah, how he stared through his bony eyelids as he said, "I have the boasted Victor in my grasp." "Ah," said Christ, "but I have you!" And up He sprang, the lid of the sarcophagus started up. And He, who has the keys of death and hell, seized death, ground his iron limbs to powder, dashed him to the ground and said, "O death, I will be your plague. O hell, I will be your destruction." Out He came and in turn the watchmen fled away. Startling with glory, radiant with light, effulgent with Divinity, He stood before them. Christ was then exalted in His Resurrection!

3. But how exalted was He in His Ascension! He went out from the city to the top of the hill, His disciples attending Him while He waited the appointed moment. Mark His Ascension! Bidding farewell to the whole circle, up He went gradually ascending like the exaltation of a mist from the lake or the cloud from the steaming river. Aloft He soared—by His own mighty buoyancy and elasticity He ascended up on high—not like Elijah, carried up by fiery horses. Nor like Enoch of old, it could not be said He was not, for God took Him. He went Himself. And as He went, I think I see the angels looking down from heaven's battlements and crying, "See the conquering Hero comes!" While at His nearer approach, again they shouted, "See the conquering Hero comes!" So His journey through the plains of ether is complete—He nears the gates of heaven—attending angels shout, "Lift up your heads, you everlasting gates. And be you lift up, you everlasting doors!" The glorious hosts within scarcely ask the question, "Who is the king of glory?" When from ten thousand, thousand tongues there rolls an ocean of harmony, beating in mighty waves of music on the pearly gates and opening them at once, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle!"

Lo! Heaven's barriers are thrown wide open and cherubim are hastening to meet their Monarch—

"They brought His chariot from afar,
To bear Him to His throne;
Clapped their triumphant wings and said,
'The Savior's work is done.'"

Behold He marches through the streets! See how kingdoms and powers fall down before Him! Crowns are laid at His feet and His Father says,

"Well done, My Son, well done!" while heaven echoes with the shout, "Well done! Well done!" Up He climbs to that high throne, side by side with the Paternal Deity. "I have exalted one chosen out of the people."

4. The last exaltation of Christ which I shall mention is that which is to come—when He shall sit upon the throne of His Father David and shall judge all nations. You will observe I have omitted that exaltation which Christ is to have as the King of this world during the millennium. I do not profess to understand it, and therefore I leave that alone. But I believe Jesus Christ is to come upon the throne of judgment, "and before Him shall be gathered all nations. And He shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." Sinner! You believe that there is a judgment. You know that the tares and wheat cannot always grow together—that the sheep and the goats shall not always feed in one pasture. But do you know of that Man who is to judge you? Do you know that He who is to judge you is a Man? I say a MAN—a Man once despised and rejected—

"The Lord shall come, but not the same
As once in lowliness He came—
A humble Man before His foes;
A weary Man and full of woes."

Ah, no! Rainbows shall be about His head. He shall hold the sun in His right hand as the token of His government. He shall put the moon and stars beneath His feet, as the dust of the pedestal of His throne, which shall be of solid clouds of light. The books shall be opened—those massive books, which contain the deeds of both the quick and the dead. Ah, how shall the despised Nazarene sit triumphant over all His foes! No more the taunt, the jeer, the scoff. But one hideous cry of misery, "Hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne!" Oh you, my hearers, who now look with contempt on Jesus and His cross, I tremble for you. Oh, fiercer than a lion on his prey, is love when once incensed. Oh despisers! I warn you of that day when the placid brow of the Man of Sorrows shall be knit with frowns. When the eyes which once were moistened by dew-drops of pity, shall flash lightning on their enemies! And the hands, which once were nailed to the cross for our redemption, shall grasp the thunderbolt for your damnation! While the mouth which once said, "Come unto Me, you weary," shall pronounce in words louder and more terrible than the voice of the thunder, "Depart you cursed!" Sinners! You may think it a trifle to sin against the Man of Nazareth, but you shall find that in so doing you have offended the Man who shall judge the earth in righteousness. And for your rebellion you shall endure waves of torment in the eternal ocean of wrath. From that doom may God deliver you! But I warn you of it.

You have all read the story of the lady, who, on her wedding day stepped up stairs and seeing an old chest, in her fun and frolic stepped inside, thinking to hide herself an hour, that her friends might hunt for her. But a spring lock lay in ambush there and fastened her down forev-

er. Nor did they ever find her until years had passed. When moving that old lumbering chest they found the bones of a skeleton, with here and there a jeweled ring and some fair thing. She had sprung in there in pleasantry and mirth but was locked down forever. Young brethren! Take heed that you are not locked down forever by your sins! One jovial glass—it is all. "One moment's step," so said she. But there's a secret lock lays in ambush. One turn into that house of ill-fame—one step from the paths of rectitude—that is all. Oh, sinner! It is all. But do you know what that all is? To be fastened down forever? Oh, if you would shun this, listen to me, while—for I have but one moment more—I tell you yet again of the Man who was "chosen out of the people."

You proud ones! I have a word for you. You delicate ones, whose footsteps must not touch the ground! You who look down in scorn upon your fellow mortals—proud worms despising your fellow worms, because you are somewhat more showily dressed! What do you think of this? The Man of the people is to save you, if you are saved at all. The Christ of the crowd—the Christ of the mass—the Christ of the people—*He* is to be your Savior! You must stoop, proud man! You must bow, proud lady! You must lay aside your pomp, or else you will never be saved. For the Savior of the people must be your Savior!

But to the poor trembling sinner, whose pride is gone, I repeat the comforting assurance. Would you shun sin? Would you avoid the curse? My Master tells me to say this morning—"Come unto Me all you that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." I remember the saying of a good old saint. Someone was talking about the mercy and love of Jesus and concluded by saying, "Ah, is it not astonishing?" She said, "No, not at all." But they said it was. "Why," she said, "It is just like He—it is just like He!" You say, can you believe such a thing of a person? "Oh yes!" It may be said, "That is just His nature." So you, perhaps, cannot believe that Christ would save you, guilty creature as you are? I tell you it is just like He! He saved Saul—He saved me—He may save you! Yes, what is more, He *will* save you—for whosoever comes unto Him, He will in no wise cast out!

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THE PECULIAR SLEEP OF THE BELOVED
NO. 12

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 4, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

"For so He gives His beloved sleep."
Psalm 127:2.

THE sleep of the body is the gift of God; so said Homer of old, when he described it as descending from the clouds, and resting on the tents of the warriors around old Troy; and so sang Virgil, when he spoke of Palinurus falling asleep upon the prow of the ship. Sleep is the gift of God. We think that we lay our heads upon our pillows and compose our bodies in a peaceful posture and that therefore, we naturally and necessarily sleep. But it is not so. Sleep is the gift of God and not a man would close his eyes did not God put His fingers on his eyelids—did not the Almighty send a soft and balmy influence over his frame which lulled his thoughts into quiescence, making him enter into that blissful state of rest which we call sleep. True, there are some drugs and narcotics whereby men can poison themselves well near to death and then call it sleep. But the sleep of the healthy body is the gift of God. He bestows it, He rocks the cradle for us every night. He draws the curtain of darkness. He bids the sun shut up his burning eyes and then He comes and says, "Sleep, sleep My child. I give you sleep." Have you not known what it is at times to lie upon your bed and strive to slumber? And as it is said of Darius, so might it be said of you—"The king sent for his musicians, but his sleep went from him." You have attempted it, but you could not do it. It is beyond your power to procure a healthy repose. You imagine if you fix your mind upon a certain subject until it shall engross your attention you will then sleep. But you find yourself unable to do so. Ten thousand things drive through your brain as if the whole earth were agitated before you. You see all things you ever beheld dancing in a wild phantasmagoria before your eyes. You close your eyes, but still you see. And there are things in your ears and head and brain which will not let you sleep. It is God, alone, who alike seals up the sea boy's eyes upon the giddy mast and gives the monarch rest—for with all appliances and means to boot—he could not rest without the aid of God. It is God who steeps the mind in oblivion and bids us slumber, that our bodies may be refreshed, so that for tomorrow's toil we may rise recruited and strengthened.

O my friends, how thankful should we be for sleep! Sleep is the best physician that I know of. Sleep has healed more pains of wearied bones

than the most eminent physicians upon earth. It is the best medicine—the choicest thing of all the names which are written in all the lists of pharmacy. There is nothing like sleep! What a mercy it is that it belongs alike to all! God does not make sleep the gift of the rich man. He does not give it merely to the noble, or the rich, so that they can keep it as a peculiar luxury for themselves. He bestows it upon all. Yes, if there is a difference, the sleep of the laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much, and he who toils, sleeps all the sounder for his toil. While luxurious effeminacy cannot rest, tossing itself from side to side upon a bed of soft down, the hard-working laborer, with his strong and powerful limbs worn out and tired, throws himself upon his hard couch and sleeps—and waking, thanks God that he has been refreshed! You know not, my friends, how much you owe to God, that He gives you rest at night. If you had sleepless nights, you would then value the blessing. If for weeks you lay tossing on your weary bed, you then would thank God for your favor. And as it is the gift of God, it is a gift most precious—one that cannot be valued until it is taken away. Yes, even then we cannot appreciate it as we ought!

The Psalmist says there are some men who deny themselves sleep. For purposes of gain, or ambition, they rise up early and sit up late. Some of us who are here present may have been guilty of the same thing. We have risen early in the morning that we might turn over the ponderous volume, in order to acquire knowledge. We have sat at night until our burned-out lamp has chided us and told us that the sun was rising—while our eyes have ached, our brain has throbbed, our heart has palpitated. We have been weary and worn out. We have risen up early and sat up late and have in that way come to eat the bread of sorrow. Many of you business men are toiling in that style. We do not condemn you for it. We do not forbid rising up early and sitting up late. But we remind you of this text—"It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows—for so He gives His beloved sleep." And it is of this sleep—that God gives to His beloved—that we mean to speak this morning, as God shall help us—a sleep peculiar to the children of God—a sleep which He gives to "His beloved." Sleep is sometimes used in a bad sense in the Word of God, to express the condition of carnal and worldly men. Some men have the sleep of carnal ease and sloth—of whom Solomon tells us they are unwise sons that slumber in the harvest, causing shame, so that when the harvest is spent and the summer is ended, they are not saved. Sleep often expresses a state of sloth, of deadness, of indifference in which all ungodly men are found, according to the words, "It is time for us to awake out of sleep." "Let us not sleep as do others, but let us who are of the day be sober." There are many who are sleeping the sluggard's sleep, who are resting upon the bed of sloth. But an awful

waking shall it be to them when they shall find that the time of their probation has been wasted. That the golden sands of their life have dropped unheeded from the hourglass. And that they have come into that world where there are no acts of pardon passed, no hope, no refuge, no salvation! In other places you find sleep used as the figure of carnal security in which so many are found. Look at Saul, lying asleep in fleshly security—not like David, when he said, "I will lay me down and sleep, for You, Lord, make me to dwell in safety." Abner lay there and all the troops lay around him, but Abner slept. Sleep on, Saul, sleep on! But there is an Abishai standing at your pillow and with a spear in his hand he says, "Let me smite him even to the earth at once." Still he sleeps. He knows it not. Such are many of you, sleeping in jeopardy of your soul. Satan is standing, the Law is ready, vengeance is eager and all are saying, "Shall I smite him? I will smite him this once and he shall never wake again." Christ says, "Stay, Vengeance, stay." Lo, the spear is even now quivering—"Stay, spare him yet another year in the hope that he may yet wake from the long sleep of his sin." Like Sisera, I tell you, Sinner, you are sleeping in the tent of the destroyer! You may have eaten butter and honey out of a lordly dish, but you are sleeping on the doorstep of hell! Even now the enemy is lifting up the hammer and the nail to smite you through your temples and fasten you to the earth, that there you may lie forever in the death of everlasting torment—if it may be called a death.

Then there is also mentioned in Scripture a sleep of lust, like that which Samson had when he lost his locks and such sleep as many have when they indulge in sin and wake to find themselves stripped, lost and ruined. There is also the sleep of negligence such as the virgins had, when it is said, "they all slumbered and slept." And the sleep of sorrow, which overcame Peter, James and John; but none of these are the gifts of God. They are incident to the frailty of our nature. They come upon us because we are fallen men. They creep over us because we are the sons of a lost and ruined parent. These sleeps are not the benisons of God. Nor does He bestow them on His beloved.

We now come to tell you what those sleeps are which He bestows.

I. First, there is a *miraculous sleep* which God has sometimes given to His beloved—which He does not NOW grant. Into that kind of miraculous sleep, or rather trance, fell Adam when he slept sorrowfully and alone. But when he awoke he was no more so, for God had given him that best gift which He had then bestowed on man. The same sleep Abram had when it is said that a deep sleep came on him. He laid down and saw a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, while a voice said to him, "Fear not, Abram. I am your shield and your exceeding great reward." Such a hallowed sleep also was that of Jacob, when, with a stone for his pillow, the hedges for his curtains, the heavens for his canopy, the winds for his

music and the beasts for his servants, he laid down and slumbered. Dreaming, he saw a ladder set upon the earth, the top of which reached to heaven. The angels of God were ascending and descending upon it. Such a sleep had Joseph when he dreamed that the other sheaves made obeisance to his sheaf and that the sun, moon and twelve stars were subject unto him.

So oftentimes did David rest, when his sleep was sweet unto him, as we have just read. And such a sleep was that of Daniel when he said, "I was asleep upon my face and behold the Lord said unto me, Arise and stand upon your feet." And such, moreover, was the sleep of the reputed father of our blessed Lord, when in a vision of the night an angel said unto him, "Arise, Joseph, and take the young Child and His mother and flee into Egypt, for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." These are miraculous slumbers. God's angel has touched His servants with the magic wand of sleep and they have slept, not simply as we do, but slept a wondrous sleep! They have dived into the tenfold depths of slumber, they have plunged into a sea of sleep where they have seen the invisible, talked with the unknown and heard mystic and wondrous sounds—and when they have awakened, they have said, "What a sleep! Surely, my sleep was sweet unto me." "So He gives His beloved sleep."

But, nowadays, we do not have such sleeps as these. Many persons dream very wonderful things but most people dream nonsense. Some persons put faith in dreams—and, certainly God does warn us in dreams and visions even now. I am sure He does. There is not a man but can mention one or more instances of a warning, or a benefit, he has received in a dream. But we never trust dreams. We remember what Rowland Hill said to a lady, who knew she was a child of God because she dreamed such-and-such a thing—"Never mind, Ma'am, what you did when you were asleep. Let us see what you will do when you are awake!" That is my opinion of dreams. I never will believe a man to be a Christian merely because he has dreamed himself one. For a dreamy religion will make a man a dreamer all his life—and such dreamers will have an awful waking at last, if that is all they have to trust to!

II. He gives His beloved, in the second place, the sleep of a quiet conscience. I think most of you saw that splendid picture in the Exhibition of the Royal Academy—the Sleep of Argyle—where he lay slumbering on the very morning before his execution. You saw some noblemen standing there, looking at him, almost with compunction. The jailer is there, with his keys rattling—but positively the man sleeps, though tomorrow morning his head shall be severed from his body and a man shall hold it up and say, "This was the head of a traitor." He slept because he had a quiet conscience—for he had done no wrong. Then look at Peter. Did you ever notice that remarkable passage where it is said that Herod intended to

bring out Peter on the morrow, but, behold, as Peter was sleeping between two guards, the angel smote him? *Sleeping between two guards,* when on the morrow he was to be crucified or slain! He cared not, for his heart was clear. He had committed no evil. He could say, "If it is right to serve God or man, judge you." And, therefore, he laid down and slept. O sirs! Do you know what the sleep of a quiet conscience is? Have you ever stood out and been the butt of calumny—pelted by all men; the object of scorn—the laugh, the song of the drunkard? And have you known what it is, after all, to sleep, as if you cared for nothing because your heart was pure? Ah, you who are in debt! You who are dishonest—you who love not God and love not Christ—I wonder you can sleep, for sin does put pricking thorns in the pillow. Sin puts a dagger in a man's bed so that whichever way he turns it pricks him! But a quiet conscience is the sweetest music that can fill the soul to sleep. The demon of restlessness does not come to that man's bed who has a quiet conscience—a conscience right with God—who can sing—

"With the world, myself and Thee,
I, before I sleep, at peace shall be."

"So He gives His beloved sleep."

But let me tell you who have no knowledge of your election in Christ Jesus, no trust in the ransom of a Savior's blood—you who have never been called by the Holy Spirit. You who never were regenerated and born-again—let me tell you that you do not know this slumber. You may say your conscience is quiet. You may say you do no man any wrong and that you believe at the bar of God you shall have little to account for. But, sirs, you know you have sinned! And your virtues cannot atone for your vices. You know that the soul that sins, if it sins but once, must die! If the picture has a single flaw, it is not a perfect one. If you have sinned but once, you shall be dammed for it, unless you have something to take away that one sin. You do not know this sleep, but the Christian does—for all his sins were numbered on the "scapegoat's head of old." Christ has died for all his sins, however great or enormous and there is not now a sin written against him in the Book of God. "I, even I," says God, "am He that blots out your transgressions for My name's sake, and I will not remember your sins." Now you may sleep, for "so He gives His beloved sleep."

III. Again—there is the sleep of contentment which the Christian enjoys. How few people in this world are satisfied. No man ever needs fear offering a reward of a thousand pounds to a contented man! For if anyone came to claim the reward, he would of course prove his discontent. We are all in a measure, I suspect, dissatisfied with our lot. The great majority of mankind are always on the wing. They never settle, they never light on any tree to build their nest—they are always flittering from one to the other. This tree is not green enough, that one is not high

enough, this one is not beautiful enough, that one is not picturesque enough. So they are always on the wing and never build a peaceful nest at all. The Christian builds his nest. And as the noble Luther said, "Like yon little bird upon the tree, he has fed himself tonight—he knows not where his breakfast is tomorrow. He sits there while the winds rock the tree—he shuts his eyes, puts his head under his wing and sleeps. And when he awakes in the morning, sings—

'Mortals cease from toil and sorrow—
God provides for the morrow.'"

How few there are who have that blessed contentment—who can say, "I need nothing else, I need but little here below—yes, I long for nothing more—I am satisfied—I am content." You sung a beautiful hymn just now, but I suspect that many of you had no right to it, because you did not feel it—

"***With Your will I leave the rest.***
Grant me but this one request.
Both in life and death to prove
Tokens of Your special love."

Could you say there was nothing you needed on earth, save Jesus? Did you mean that you are perfectly content—that you had the sleep of contentment? Ah, no! You, who are apprentices, are sighing till you shall be journeymen; you who are journeymen, are groaning to be masters; masters are longing till they shall retire from business, and when they have retired, they are longing that all their children shall be settled in life! Man always looks for a yet beyond—he is a mariner who never gets to port—an arrow which never reaches the target! Ah, the Christian has sleep. One night I could not rest and in the wild wanderings of my thoughts I met this text and communed with it—"So He gives His beloved sleep." In my reverie, as I was on the border of the land of dreams, I thought I was in a castle. Around its massive walls there ran a deep moat. Watchmen paced the walls both day and night. It was a fine old fortress, bidding defiance to the foe. But I was not happy in it. I thought I lay upon a couch—and scarcely had I closed my eyes, before a trumpet blew, "To arms! To arms!" And when the danger was over, I lay down again. "To arms! To arms!" once more resounded and again I started up. Never could I rest. I thought I had my armor on and moved about perpetually clad in mail, rushing each hour to the castle top, awakened by some fresh alarm! At one time a foe was coming from the west. At another, from the east. I thought I had a treasure somewhere down in some deep part of the castle and all my care was to guard it. I dreaded, I feared, I trembled lest it should be taken from me! I awoke and I thought I would not live in such a tower as that for all its grandeur. It was the castle of discontent, the castle of ambition in which man never rests. It is always, "To arms! To arms! To arms!" There is a foe here or a foe there.

His dear-loved treasure must be guarded. Sleep never crossed the drawbridge of the castle of discontent. Then I thought I would supplant it by another reverie. I was in a cottage. It was in what poets call a beautiful and pleasant place, but I cared not for that; I had no treasure in the world, save one sparkling jewel on my breast, and I thought I put my hand on that and went to sleep, nor did I wake till morning light—that treasure was a quiet conscience, and the love of God—"the peace that passes all understanding." I slept because I slept in the house of content, satisfied with what I had. Go, you overreaching misers! Go, you grasping ambitious men! I envy not your life of inquietude. The sleep of statesmen is often broken. The dream of the miser is always evil. The sleep of the man who loves gain is never hearty, but God "gives," by contentment, "His beloved sleep."

IV. Once more—God gives His beloved the *sleep of quietness of soul as to the future*. O that dark future! That future! That future! The present may be well but ah, the next wind may wither all the flowers and where shall I be? Clutch your gold, miser, for "riches make to themselves wings and flee away." Hug that babe to your breast, mother, for the rough hand of death may rob you of it. Look at your fame and wonder at it, O you man of ambition! But one slight report shall wound you to the heart and you shall sink as low as ever you have been lifted high by the voices of the multitude. The future! All persons have need to dread the future, except the Christian. God gives to His beloved a happy sleep with regard to the events of coming time—

"What may be my future lot,
High or low concerns me not;
This does set my heart at rest,
What my God appoints is best."

Whether I am to live or die is no matter to me. Whether I am to be the "offscouring of all things," or "the man whom the king delights to honor," matters not to me. All alike is provided by my Father if He does but give it. "So He gives His beloved sleep."

How many of you have arrived at that happy point that you have no wish of your own at all? It is a sweet thing to have but one wish, but it is a better thing to have no wish at all—to be all lost in the present enjoyment of Christ and the future anticipation of the vision of His face! O my soul! What would the future be to you if you had not Christ? If it is a bitter and a dark future, what matters it, so long as Christ your Lord sanctifies it and the Holy Spirit still gives you courage energy and strength? It is a blessed thing to be able to say with Madame Guyon—

"To me 'tis equal, whether love ordained,
My life or death, appoint me pain or ease.
My soul perceives no real ill in pain
In ease or health, no real good she sees.
One good she covets, and that good alone,

To choose Your will, from selfish bias free,
And to prefer a cottage to a throne,
And grief to comfort, if it pleases Thee.
That we should bear our cross is Your command—
Die to the world and live to sin no more,
Suffer unmoved beneath the rudest hand,
As pleased when shipwrecked, as when safe on shore."

It is a happy condition to attain. "So He gives His beloved sleep." Ah, if you have self-will in your hearts, pray to God to uproot it! Have you self-love? Beseech the Holy Spirit to turn it out, for if you will always will to do as God wills, you must be happy. I have heard of some good old woman in a cottage, who had nothing but a piece of bread and a little water. Lifting up her hands, she said, as a blessing, "What? All this, and Christ, too?" It is "all this," compared with what we deserve. And I have read of someone dying, who was asked if he wished to live or die and he said, "I have no wish at all about it." "But if you might wish, which would you choose?" "I would not choose at all." "But if God bade you choose?" "I would beg God to choose for me, for I should not know which to take." Happy state! Happy state! To be perfectly content—

"To lie passive in His hands,
And know no will but His."

"So He gives His beloved sleep."

V. In the fifth place—there is the *sleep of security*. Solomon slept with armed men round his bed and thus slumbered securely. But Solomon's father slept one night on the bare ground—not in a palace—with no moat round his castle wall—and he slept quite as safely as his son, for David said, "I laid me down and slept and I awaked, for the Lord sustained me." Now, some persons never feel secure in this world at all. I query whether one half of my hearers feel themselves so. Suppose I burst out in a moment and sing this—

"I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy but not more secure,
Are the glorified spirits in heaven,"

wouldn't you say that is too high a doctrine? And I would reply, very likely it is for you, but it is the truth of God and it is sweet doctrine for me. I love to know that if I am predestinated according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, I must be saved if I was purchased by His Son's blood! I cannot be lost, for it would be impossible for Jesus Christ to lose one whom He has redeemed, otherwise He would be dissatisfied with His labors. I know that where He has begun the good work He will carry it on. I never fear that I shall fall away, or be lost. My only fear is lest I should not have been right at first. But, provided I am right, if I am really a child of God, I might believe that the sun would be smitten with madness and go reeling through the universe like a drunken man before I may perish! I

might believe that the stars would run from their courses and instead of marching with their measured steps, as now they do, whirl on in wild courses like the dance of Bacchanals! I could even conceive that this great universe might all subside in God, "even as a moment's foam subsides again upon the wave that bears it." But neither reason, heresy, logic, eloquence, nor a conclave of divines shall make me pay a moment's attention to the vile suggestion that a child of God may ever perish! Hence I tread this earth with confidence.

Arguing a little while ago with an Arminian, he said, "Sir you ought to be a happy man, for if what you say is true, why you are as secure of being in heaven as if you were there already!" I said, "Yes, I know it." "Then you ought to live above cares and tribulations and sing happily from morning to night." I said, "So I ought and so I will, God helping me." This is security—"He gives His beloved sleep." To know that if I died I should enter heaven—to be as sure as I am of my own existence that God, having loved me with an everlasting love and He, being immutable—will never hate me if He has once loved me! To know that I must enter the kingdom of glory—is not this enough to make all burdens light and give me the hind's feet wherewith I may stand upon my high places? Happy state of security! "So He gives His beloved sleep."

And there is a sleep, my dear friends, of security which is enjoyed on earth even in the midst of the greatest troubles. Do you remember that passage in the book of Ezekiel where it is said, "They shall dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods"? A strange place to sleep, "In the woods." There is a wolf over yonder. There is a tiger in the jungle; an eagle is soaring in the air; a horde of robbers dwell in the dark forest. "Never mind," says the child of God—

"He that has made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode!
Shall walk all day beneath His shade,
And there at night shall rest his head."

I have often admired Martin Luther and wondered at his composure. When all men spoke so ill of him, what did he say? Turn to that Psalm—"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble; therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." In a far inferior manner I have been called to stand up in the position of Martin Luther and have been made the butt of slander, a mark for laughter and scorn. But it has not broken my spirit, yet, nor will it, by His grace, while I am enabled to enjoy that latent state of—"So He gives His beloved sleep"! But thus far I beg to inform all those who choose to slander or speak ill of me that they are very welcome to do so till they are tired of it. My motto is *cedo nulli*—I yield to none. I have not courted any man's love. I asked no man to attend my ministry. I preach what I like and when I like and as I like. Oh,

happy state—to be bold, though downcast and distressed—to go and bend my knees and tell my Father all and then to come down from my chamber and say—

"If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
For You'll remember me."

VI. The last sleep God gives His beloved is *the sleep of a happy dismission*. I have stood by the graves of many servants of the Lord. I have buried some of the excellent of the earth. And when I bid farewell to my brother down below, there slumbering in his coffin, I usually commence my speech with those words, "So He gives His beloved sleep." Dear servants of Jesus! There I see them! What can I say of them, but that "so He gives His beloved sleep"? Oh, happy sleep! This world is a state of tossing to and fro. But in that grave they rest. No sorrows there. No sighs. No groans to mingle with the songs that warble from immortal tongues. Well may I address the dead thus—"My brother, oftentimes have you fought the battles of this world. You have had your cares, your trials and your troubles. But now you are gone—not to worlds unknown but to yonder land of light and glory. Sleep on, brother! Your soul sleeps not, for you are in heaven! But your body sleeps. Death has laid you in your last couch. It may be cold, but it is sanctified. It may be damp, but it is safe. And on the resurrection morning, when the archangel shall set his trumpet to his mouth, you shall rise! "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord—yes, says the Spirit, for they rest from their labors and their works do follow them." "Sleep on in your grave, my brother, for you shall rise to glory." "So He gives His beloved sleep." Some of you fear to die and have good reason to do so, for death for you would be the beginning of sorrows. And as it approaches, you might hear the voice of the angel of the Apocalypse—"One woe is past, but behold two woes more are to come." If, sirs, you were to die unprepared and unconverted and unsaved, "There remains nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." I need not speak like a Boanerges, for it is to you a well-known truth that without God, without Christ, "strangers from the commonwealth of Israel," your portion must be among the damned—the fiends—the tortured—the shrieking ghosts—the wandering souls who find no rest—

"On waves of burning brimstone tossed,
Forever, O forever lost!"

"The wrath to come!" "The wrath to come!" "The wrath to come!"

But, beloved Christian brothers and sisters, why do *you* fear to die? Come let me take your hand—

"To you and me by grace 'tis given
To know the Savior's precious name!
And shortly we shall meet in heaven

Our end, our hope, our way the same."

Do you know that heaven is just across that narrow stream? Are you afraid to plunge in and swim across? Do you fear to be drowned? I feel the bottom—it is good. Do you think you shall sink? Hear the voice of the Spirit—"Fear not, I am with you, be not dismayed, I am your God—when you pass through the river, I will be with you and the floods shall not overflow you." Death is the gate of endless joys and do you dread to enter there? What? Fear to be emancipated from corruption? Oh, say not so, but rather gladly lay down and sleep in Jesus and be blessed.

I have finished expounding my subject. There is only one question I want to ask of you before you pass out of those doors. Do you seriously and solemnly believe that you belong to the "beloved" here mentioned? I may be impertinent in asking such a question. I have been accused of that before now and I have never denied it. I rather take the credit of it than not. But seriously and solemnly I ask you—Do you know yourselves to be among the beloved? And if it happens that you need a test, allow me to give you three tests, very briefly and I have done. It has been said that there are three kinds of preachers—doctrinal preachers, experimental preachers and practical preachers. Now I think there are three things that make up a Christian—true doctrine, real experience and good practice.

Now, then, as to your doctrine; you may tell whether you are the Lord's beloved partly by that. Some think it matters not what a man believes. Excuse me—the truth of God IS ALWAYS precious and the least atom of the truth of God is worth searching out! Nowadays the sects do not clash so much as they did. Perhaps that is good, but there is one evil about it. People do not read their Bibles as much as they did. They think we are all right. Now I believe we may be all right in the main, but we cannot be all right where we contradict one another! And it becomes every man to search the Bible to see which is right. I am not afraid to submit my Calvinism, or my doctrine of believer's baptism, to the searching of the Bible. A learned lord, an infidel, once said to Whitefield, "Sir, I am an infidel, I do not believe the Bible, but if the Bible is true, you are right and your Arminian opponents are wrong. If the Bible is the word of God, the doctrines of grace are true." He added that if any man would grant him the Bible to be the truth, he would challenge him to disprove Calvinism, the doctrines of original sin, election, effectual calling, final perseverance, and all those great truths of God which are called Calvinism—though Calvin was not the author of them, but simply an able writer and preacher upon the subject! These are, I believe, the essential doctrines of the gospel that is in Jesus Christ. Now, I do not ask you whether you believe all this—it is possible you may not—but I believe you will before you enter heaven. I am persuaded, that as God may have washed your

hearts, He will wash your brains before you enter heaven! He will make you right in your doctrines. But I must inquire whether you read your Bibles. I am not finding fault with you, this morning, for differing from me. I may be wrong—but I want to know whether you search the Scriptures to find what truth is. And if you are not a reader of the Bible, if you take doctrines second-hand, if you go to chapel and say, "I do not like that," what matters your not liking it provided it is in the Bible? Is it Biblical truth, or is it not? If it is God's truth let us have it exalted. It may not suit you, but let me remind you that the truth that is in Jesus never was palatable to carnal men and I believe never will be. The reason you love it not is because it cuts too much at your pride. It lets you down too low. Search yourselves, then, in doctrine.

Then take care that you remember the experimental test. I am afraid there is very little experimental religion among us—but where there is true doctrine, there ought always to be a vital experience. Sirs, try yourselves by the experimental test! Have you ever had an experience of your wretchedness, of your depravity, your inability, your death in sin? Have you ever felt life in Christ, an experience of the light of God's Countenance, of wrestling with corruption? Have you had a grace-given Holy Spirit-implanted experience of a communion with Christ? If so, then you are right on the experimental test.

And, to conclude, take care of the practical test. "Faith without works is dead, being alone." He that walks in sin is a child of the devil and he that walks in righteousness is a child of light. Do not think because you believe the right doctrines, therefore you are right. There are many who believe right, act wrong and they perish. "Be not deceived. God is not mocked, whatever man sows, that shall he also reap."

I have done. Now let me beseech you by the frailty of your own lives—by the shortness of time—by the dreadful realities of eternity—by the sins you have committed—by the pardon that you need—by the blood and wounds of Jesus—by His second coming to judge the world in righteousness—by the glories of heaven—by the awful horrors of hell—by time—by eternity—by all that is good—by all that is sacred—let me beg of you, as you love your own souls, to search and see whether you are among the beloved to whom He gives sleep. God bless you.

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CONSOLATION PROPORTIONATE TO SPIRITUAL SUFFERINGS
NO. 13

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 11, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ."
2 Corinthians 1:5.

SEEK you rest from your distresses, you children of woe and sorrow? This is the place where you may lighten your burden and lose your cares. Oh, son of affliction and misery, would you forget for a time your pains and griefs? This is the Bethesda, the house of mercy! This is the place where God designs to cheer you and to make your distresses stay their never-ceasing course. This is the spot where His children love to be found, because here they find consolation in the midst of tribulation, joy in their sorrows and comfort in their afflictions. Even worldly men admit that there is something extremely comforting in the sacred Scriptures and in our holy religion! I have even heard it said of some that after they had, by their logic, as they thought, annihilated Christianity and proved it to be untrue, they acknowledged that they had spoilt an excellently comforting delusion and that they could almost sit down and weep to think it was not a reality. Yes, my friends, if it were not true, you might weep. If the Bible were not the truth of God—if we could not meet together around His mercy seat, then you might put your hands upon your loins and walk about as if you were in travail. If you had not something in the world beside your reason, beside the fleeting joys of earth—if you had not something which God had given to you, some hope beyond the sky, some refuge that should be more than terrestrial, some deliverance which should be more than earthly, then you might weep—ah, weep your heart out at your eyes and let your whole bodies waste away in one perpetual tear! You might ask the clouds to rest on your head, the rivers to roll down in streams from both your eyes, for your grief would "have need of all the watery things that nature could produce." But, blessed be God, we have consolation, we have joy in the Holy Spirit! We find it nowhere else. We have raked the earth through, but we have never discovered a jewel. We have turned this dunghill of a world over and over a thousand times and we have found nothing that is precious. But here, in this Bible, here in the religion of the blessed Jesus, we, the sons of God, have

found comfort and joy. We can truly say, "As our afflictions abound, so our consolations also abound by Christ."

There are four things in my text to which I invite your attention. The first is *the sufferings to be expected*—"The sufferings of Christ abound in us." Secondly, *the distinction to be noticed—they are the sufferings of Christ*. Thirdly, *a proportion to be experienced*—as the sufferings of Christ abound, so our consolations abound. And fourthly, *the person to be honored.* "So our consolation abounds by CHRIST."

I. Our first division, then, is THE SUFFERINGS TO BE EXPECTED. Our holy apostle says, "The sufferings of Christ abound in us." Before we buckle on the Christian armor we ought to know what that service is which is expected of us. A recruiting sergeant often slips a shilling into the hand of some ignorant youth and tells him that Her Majesty's service is a fine thing, that he has nothing to do but walk about in his flaming colors, that he will have no hard service—in fact, that he has nothing to do but to be a soldier and go straight on to glory! But the Christian servant, when he enlists a soldier of the Cross, never deceives him like that. Jesus Christ Himself said, "Count the cost." He wished to have no disciple who was not prepared to go all the way—"to bear hardness as a good soldier." I have sometimes heard religion described in such a way that its high coloring has displeased me. It is true, "her ways are ways of pleasantness," but it is *not true* that a Christian never has sorrow or trouble! It is true that light-eyed cheerfulness and airy-footed love can go through the world without much depression and tribulation—but it is not true that Christianity will shield a man from trouble; nor ought it to be so represented. In fact, we ought to speak of it in the other way. Soldier of Christ, if you enlist, you will have to do hard battle! There is no bed of down for you, there is no riding to heaven in a chariot. The rough way must be trod, mountains must be climbed, rivers must be forded, dragons must be fought, giants must be slain, difficulties must be overcome and great trials must be borne. It is not a smooth road to heaven, believe me. For those who have gone but a very few steps therein have found it to be a rough one. It is a pleasant one, it is the most delightful in the entire world—but it is not easy in itself. It is only pleasant because of the company, because of the sweet promises on which we lean, because of our beloved who walks with us through all the rough and thorny ferns of this vast wilderness.

Christian, expect trouble—"Count it not strange concerning the fiery trial and as though some strange thing had happened unto you." For as truly as you are a child of God, your Savior has left you His legacy—"In the world, you shall have tribulation, in Me you shall have peace." If I had no trouble I would not believe myself one of the family. If I never had

a trial, I would not think myself an heir of heaven. Children of God must not, shall not, escape the rod. Earthly parents may spoil their children, but the heavenly Father never shall His. "Whom He loves He chastens," and scourges every son whom He has chosen. His people must suffer—therefore, expect it Christian. If you are a child of God, believe it—look for it—and when it comes say, "Well, suffering, I foresaw you. You are no stranger, I have looked for you continually." You cannot tell how much it will lighten your trials if you await them with resignation. In fact, make it a wonder if you get through a day easily! If you remain a week without persecution, think it a remarkable thing. And if you should, perchance, live a month without heaving a sigh from your inmost heart, think it a miracle of miracles! But when the trouble comes, say, "Ah, this is what I looked for. It is marked in the chart to heaven, the rock is put down. I will sail confidently by it—my Master has not deceived me"—

"Why should I complain of need or distress
Temptation or pain? He told me no less."

But why must the Christian expect trouble? Why must he expect the sufferings of Christ to abound in him? Stand here a moment, my brethren, and I will show you four reasons why you must endure trial. First, look upward, then look downward, then look around you and then look within you and you will see four reasons why the sufferings of Christ should abound in you!

Look upward. Do you see your heavenly Father, a pure and holy Being, spotlessly just, perfect? Do you know that you are one day to be like He? Think you that you will easily come to be conformed to His Image? Will you not require much furnace work, much grinding in the mill of trouble, much breaking with the pestle in the mortar of affliction, much being broken under the wheels of agony? Think you it will be an easy thing for your heart to become as pure as God is? Do you think you can so soon get rid of your corruptions and become perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect?

Lift up your eye again. Do you discern those bright spirits clad in white, purer than alabaster, more chaste, more fair than Parian marble? Behold them as they stand in Glory. Ask them from where their victory came. Some of them will tell you—they swam through seas of blood. Behold the sears of honor on their brows. See, some of them lift up their hands and tell you they were once consumed in fire—others were slain by the sword, torn in pieces by wild beasts, were destitute, afflicted, tormented. O you noble army of martyrs, you glorious hosts of the living God! Must you swim through seas of blood and shall I hope to ride to heaven wrapped in furs and ermine? Did you endure suffering and shall I be hampered with the luxuries of this world? Did you fight and then

reign and must I reign without a battle? Oh, no! By God's help I will expect that as you suffered, so must I and as through much tribulation you entered the kingdom of heaven, so shall I.

Next, Christian, turn your eyes downward. Do you know what foes you have beneath your feet? There are hell and its lions against you! You were once a servant of Satan and no king will willingly lose his subjects. Do you think that Satan is pleased with you? Why, you have changed your country! You were once a liege servant of Apollyon, but now you have become a good soldier of Jesus Christ. And do you think the devil is pleased with you? I tell you no. If you had seen Satan the moment you were converted, you would have beheld a wondrous scene. As soon as you gave your heart to Christ, Satan spread his bat-like-wings—down he flew into hell—and summoning all his counselors he said, "Sons of the pit, true heirs of darkness, you who once were clad in light but who fell with me from high dignities—another of my servants has forsaken me. I have lost another of my family. He is gone over to the side of the Lord of Hosts. Oh you, my compeers, you fellow helpers of the powers of darkness, leave no stone unturned to destroy him. I bid you all hurl all your fiercest darts at him. Plague him. Let hell dogs bark at him. Let fiends besiege him. Give him no rest, harass him to the death. Let the fumes of our corrupt and burning lake ever rise in his nostrils. Persecute him, the man is a traitor, give him no peace! Since I cannot have him here to bind him in chains of adamant; since I never can have him here to torment and afflict him, as long as you can, till his dying day, I bid you howl at him! Until he crosses the river, afflict him, grieve him, torment him, for the wretch has turned against me and become a servant of the Lord." Such may have been the scene in hell that very day when you did love the Lord. And do you think Satan loves you better, now? Ah, no. He will always be at you, for your enemy, "like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour." Expect trouble therefore, Christian, when you look beneath you.

Then, man of God, look around you. Do not be asleep. Open your eyes and look around you. Where are you? Is that man a friend next to you? No! You are in an enemy's country. This is a wicked world. Half the people, I suppose, profess to be irreligious and those who profess to be pious often are not. "Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm." "Blessed is he that trusts in the Lord and whose hope the Lord is." "As for men of low degree, they are vanity." The voice of the crowd is not worth having. And as for "men of high degree, they are a lie," which is worse still. The world is not to be trusted, not to be relied upon. The true Christian treads it beneath his feet, with "all that earth calls good or great." Look around you, my brethren. You will see some good hearts,

strong and valiant. You will see some true souls, sincere and honest. You will see some faithful lovers of Christ. But I tell you O child of light, that where you meet one sincere man, you will meet 20 hypocrites. Where you will find one that will lead you to heaven, you will find a score who would push you to hell. You are in a land of enemies, not of friends. Never believe the world is good for much. Many people have burned their fingers by taking hold of it. Many a man has been injured by putting his hand into a nest of the rattlesnake—the world—thinking that the dazzling hues of the sleeping serpent were securities from harm. O Christian! The world is not your friend! If it is, then you are not God's friend. For he who is the friend of the world is the enemy of God. And he who is despised of men, is often loved of Jehovah. You are in an enemy's country, man—therefore expect trouble—expect that the man who "eats your bread will lift up his heel against you." Expect that you shall be estranged from those that love you. Be assured that since you are in the land of the enemy, you shall find the enemy everywhere. When you sleep, think that you sleep on the battlefield. When you walk believe that there is an ambush in every hedge. Oh, take heed, take heed! This is not a good world to shut your eyes in. Look around you, man. And when you are upon the watchtower, reckon surely that trouble comes!

But then, look *within* you; there is a little world in here, which is quite enough to give us trouble. A Roman once said he wished he had a window to his heart, that all people might see what was going on there. I am very glad I have not. If I had, I would shut it up as closely as Apsley House used to be. I would take care to have all the shutters up. Most of us would have great need of shutters if we had such a window! However, for one moment, peep into the window of your heart, to observe what is there. Sin is there—original sin and corruption. And, what is more, self is still within. Ah, if you had no devil to tempt you, you would tempt yourself. If there were no enemies to fight you, you would be your worst foe. If there were no world, still you would be bad enough, for "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Look within you, believer, know that you bear a cancer in your very vitals. Know that you carry within you a bombshell, ready to burst at the slightest spark of temptation. Know that you have inside your heart an evil thing, a coiled-up viper, ready to sting you and bring you into trouble, pain and unutterable misery. Take heed of your heart, Christian! And when you find sorrow, trouble and care, look within and say, "Verily, I may well receive this, considering the evil heart of unbelief which I carry about with me."

Now do you see, brethren? There is no hope to escape trouble! What shall we do, then? There is no chance for us. We must bear suffering and affliction. Therefore, let us endure it cheerfully. Some of us are the offic-

ers in God's regiments and we are the mark of all the riflemen of the enemy. Standing forward, we have to bear all the shots. What a mercy it is that not one of God's officers ever fall in battle! God always keeps them. When the arrows fly fast, the shield of faith catches them all. And when the enemy is most angry, God is most pleased. So, for all we care, the world may go on, the devil may revile, flesh may rise, "for we are more than conquerors through Him that has loved us." Therefore, all honor be unto God, alone. Expect suffering—this is our first point.

II. Now, secondly, there is A DISTINCTION TO BE NOTICED. Our sufferings are said to be the *sufferings of Christ*. Now, suffering in itself is *not* an evidence of Christianity! There are many people who have trials and troubles who are not children of God. I have heard some poor whining people come and say, "I know I am a child of God because I am in debt, because I am in poverty, because I am in trouble." Do you, indeed? I know a great many *rascals* in the same condition. And I don't believe you are a child of God any the more because you happen to be in poor circumstances. There are abundance who are in trouble and distress besides God's children. It is not the peculiar lot of God's family—and if I had no other ground of my hope as a Christian, except my experience of trials—I should have but very poor ground, indeed! But there is a distinction to be noticed. Are these sufferings the sufferings of Christ or are they not? A man is dishonest and is put in jail for it. A man is a coward and men hiss at him for it. A man is insincere and, therefore, persons avoid him. Yet he says he is persecuted! Persecuted? Not at all—it serves him right. He deserves it. But such persons will comfort themselves with the thought that they are "the dear people of God," because other people avoid them when it so happens that they just deserve it. They do not live as they ought to do, therefore the world's punishment is their desert. Take heed, beloved, that your sufferings are the sufferings of Christ—be sure they are not your own sufferings. For if they are, you will get no relief—it is only when they are the sufferings of Jesus that we may take comfort.

"Well," you say, "what is meant by our sufferings being the sufferings of Christ?" You know the word "Christ" in the Bible sometimes means the whole church with Christ, as in 1 Corinthians 12:12 and several other passages which I cannot just now remember. But you will call to mind a Scripture where it says, "I fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ, for His body's sake, which is the church." Now, as Christ, the Head, had a certain amount of suffering to endure, so the body must also have a certain weight laid upon it. Our afflictions are the sufferings of Christ mystical, the sufferings of Christ's body, the sufferings of Christ's church, for you know that if a man could be so tall as to have his head in

heaven and his feet at the bottom of the sea, it would be the same body and the head would feel the sufferings of the feet. So, though my Head is in heaven and I am on earth, my griefs are Christ's griefs. My trials are Christ's trials, my afflictions, He suffers—

> ***"I feel in My heart all your sighs and your groans,***
> ***For you are most near Me, My flesh and my bones.***
> ***In all your distresses, your Head feels the pain,***
> ***Yet all are most necessary, not one is in vain."***

The trials of a true Christian are as much the sufferings of Christ as the agonies of Calvary.

Still you say, "We want to discern whether our troubles are the trials of Christ." Well, they are the trials of Christ if you suffer for Christ's sake. If you are called to endure harshness for the sake of the truth, then those are the sufferings of Christ. If you suffer for your own sake, it may be a punishment for your own sins. But if you endure for Christ's sake, then they are the trials of Christ. "But," say some, "is there any persecution nowadays? Do any Christians have to suffer for Christ's sake now?" Suffer, sirs? Yes! I could unfold a tale this morning, if I pleased, of insufferable bigotry, of persecution well near as bad as that in the days of Jesus! Only our foes have not the power and the law on their side. I could tell you of some who, from the simple fact that they choose to come and hear this despised young man, this ranting fellow, are to be looked upon as the offscouring of all things! Many are the persons who come to me who have to lead a miserable and unhappy life simply because from my lips they heard the word of truth! Still, in spite of all that is said, they will hear it now. I have, I am sure, many before me, whose eyes would drop with tears if I were to tell their history—some who have privately sent me word of how they have to suffer for Christ's sake because they choose to hear whom they please. Why, is it not time that men should choose to do as they like? If I do not care to do just as other ministers do, have not I a right to preach as I please? If I haven't, I will—that is all. And have not other parties a right to hear me if they like, without asking the lords and governors of the present day whether the man is really clerical or not? Liberty! Liberty! Let persons do as they please. But liberty—where is it? You say it is in Britain. It is, in a measure, but not thoroughly. However, I rejoice that there are some who say, "Well, my soul is profited—and let men say what they will, I will hold hard and fast to the truth of God and to the place where I hear the Word to my soul's edification." So, dear Hearts, go on, go on—and if you suffer for Christ's sake, they are Christ's sufferings! If you came here simply because you gained

anything by it, then your sufferings would be your own. But since there is nothing to gain but the profit of your own souls, still hold on. And whatever is said, your persecution will but win you a brighter crown in Glory!

Ah, Christian, this ennobles us! My brethren, this makes us proud and happy to think that our trials are the trials of Jesus. Oh, I think it must have been some honor to the old soldier who stood by the Iron Duke in his battles, to be able to say, "We fight under the good old Duke, who has won so many battles—and when he wins, part of the honor will be ours." Christian, you fight side by side with Jesus! Christ is with you—every blow is a blow aimed at Christ. Every slander is a slander on Christ—the battle is the Lord's. The triumph is the Lord's. Therefore, still on to victory! I remember a story of a great commander who, having won many glorious victories, led his troops into a valley and when there, a large body of the enemy entirely surrounded him. He knew a battle was inevitable on the morning. He, therefore, went round to all the tents, to hear in what condition his soldier's minds were—whether they were dispirited or not. He came to one tent and as he listened, he heard a man say, "There is our general. He is very brave, but he is very unwise this time. He has led us into a place where we are sure to be beaten. There are so many of the enemy's cavalry, so many infantry." And then the man counted up all the troops on their own side and made them only so many. The commander, after he had heard the tale, gently drew aside a part of the tent and said, "How many do you count me for? You have counted the infantry and cavalry. But how many do you count me for—me, your mighty captain who has won so many victories." Now, Christian, I say, how many do you count Christ for? How many do you put Him down for? Have you put Him down for one? He is not one, nor a thousand—He is the "chief among ten thousand." But He is more than that! Oh, put Him down for a high figure. And when you count up your aids and auxiliaries, put down Christ for All-in-All, for in Him victory is certain—the triumph is secure!

III. Our third point is A PROPORTION TO BE EXPERIENCED. As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so the consolations of Christ abound. Here is a blessed proportion. God always keeps a pair of scales—in this side, He puts His people's trials, and in that He puts their consolations. When the scale of trial is nearly empty, you will always find the scale of consolation in nearly the same condition. And when the scale of trials is full, you will find the scale of consolation just as heavy. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, even so shall consolation abound by Christ. This is a matter of pure experience. Some of you do not know anything at all about it. You are not Christians, you are not born-again, you are not

converted, you are unregenerate and, therefore, you have never realized this wonderful proportion between the sufferings and the consolations of a child of God. Oh, it is mysterious that when the black clouds gather most, the light within us is always the brightest! When the night lowers and the tempest is coming on, the heavenly captain is always closest to His crew. It is a blessed thing, when we are most cast down, then it is that we are most lifted up by the consolations of Christ! Let me show you how.

The first reason is, because *trials make more room for consolation*. There is nothing that makes a man have a big heart like a great trial. I always find that little, miserable people, whose hearts are about the size of a grain of mustard seed, never have had much to try them. I have found that those people who have no sympathy for their fellows—who never weep for the sorrows of others—very seldom have had any woes of their own. Great hearts can only be made by great troubles. The spade of trouble digs the reservoir of comfort deeper and makes more room for consolation. God comes into our heart—He finds it full—He begins to break our comforts and to make it empty—then there is more room for grace! The humbler a man is, the more comfort he will always have. I recollect walking with a farmer one day—a man who was deeply taught, although he was a plowman and really, farmers would make a great deal better preachers than many college gentlemen—and he said to me, "Depend upon it, my good brother, if you or I ever get one inch above the ground, we shall get just that inch too high." I believe it is true. For the lower we lie, the nearer to the ground we are—the more our troubles humble us—the more fit we are to receive comfort! And God always gives us comfort when we are most fit for it. That is one reason why consolations increase in the same ratio as our trials.

Then again, *trouble exercises our graces* and the very exercise of our graces tends to make us more comfortable and happy. Where showers fall most, there the grass is greenest. I suppose the fogs and mists of Ireland make it "the Emerald Isle." And wherever you find great fogs of trouble and mists of sorrow, you always find emerald green hearts—full of the beautiful verdure of the comfort and love of God. O Christian, do not say, "Where are the swallows gone? They are gone—they are dead." They are not dead, they have skimmed the purple sea and gone to a far-off land. But they will be back again by-and-by! Child of God, say not the flowers are dead. Say not the winter has killed them and they are gone. Ah, no—though winter has coated them with the ermine of its snow, they will put up their heads again and will be alive very soon. Say not, child of God, that the sun is quenched because the cloud has hidden it. Ah, no—he is behind there, brewing summer for you. For when he comes out

again, he will have made the clouds fit to drop in April showers—all of them mothers of the sweet May flowers. And oh, above all, when your God hides His face, say not that He has forgotten you! He is but tarrying a little while to make you love Him more. And when He comes, you shall have joy in the Lord and shall rejoice with unspeakable joy! Waiting exercises our grace. Waiting, tries our faith—therefore wait on in hope. For though the promise tarry, it can never come too late!

Another reason why we are often most happy in our troubles is this—*then we have the closest dealings with God*. I speak from heart knowledge and real experience. We never have such close dealings with God as when we are in tribulation. When the barn is full, man can live without God. When the purse is bursting with gold, we somehow can do without so much prayer. But once your gourds are taken away, you need your God. Once cleanse away the idols out of the house; then you must go and honor Jehovah! Some of you do not pray half as much as you ought. If you are the children of God, you will have the whip and when you have that whip, you will run to your Father. It is a fine day and the child walks before its father. But there is a lion in the road—now he comes and takes his father's hand. He could run half-a-mile before him when all was fine and fair. But once bring the lion, and it is "Father! Father!" as close as he can be; it is even so with the Christian. Let all be well and he forgets God. Jeshurun waxes fat and be begins to kick against God. But take away his hopes, blast his joys, let the infant lie in the coffin, let the crops be blasted, let the herd be cut off from the stall. Let the husband's broad shoulders be in the grave, let the children be fatherless—then it is that God is a God, indeed! Oh, strip me naked! Take all I have from me! Make me poor, a beggar, penniless, helpless! Dash that cistern in pieces, crush that hope, quench the stars—put out the sun, shroud the moon in darkness and place me all alone in space, without a friend, without a helper—still, "Out of the depths will I cry unto You, O God." There is no cry so good as that which comes from the bottom of the mountains, no prayer half so hearty as that which comes up from the depths of the soul through deep trials and afflictions. Hence they bring us to God and we are happier. For that is the way to be happy—to live near to God. So that while troubles abound, they drive us to God and then consolations abound.

Some people call troubles weights. Verily they are so. A ship that has large sails and a fair wind, needs ballast. Troubles are the ballast of a believer. The eyes are the pumps which fetch out the bilge-water of his soul and keep him from sinking. But if trials are weights, I will tell you of a happy secret. There is such a thing as making a weight lift you. If I have a weight chained to me, it keeps me down. But give me pulleys and cer-

tain appliances and I can make it lift me up. Yes, there is such a thing as making troubles raise me towards heaven! A gentleman once asked a friend concerning a beautiful horse of his, feeding about in the pasture with a clog on its foot, "Why do you clog such a noble animal?" "Sir," he said, "I would a great deal sooner clog him than lose him—he is given to leap hedges." That is why God clogs His people. He would rather clog them than lose them, for if He did not clog them, they would leap the hedges and be gone. They need a tether to prevent their straying and their God binds them with afflictions to keep them near to Him—to preserve them—and have them in His Presence. Blessed fact—as our troubles abound, our consolations also abound!

IV. Now we close up with our last point. And may the Holy Spirit once more strengthen me to speak a word or two to you. THERE IS A PERSON TO BE HONORED. It is a fact that Christians can rejoice in deep distress. It is a truth—put them in prison and they will still sing. Like many birds, they sing best in their cages. It is true that when waves roll over them, their soul never sinks. It is true they have a buoyancy about them which keeps their heads always above the water and helps them to sing in the dark, dark night, "God is with me still." But to whom shall we give the honor? To whom shall the glory be given? Oh, to Jesus, to Jesus! For the text says it is all by Jesus. It is not because I am a Christian that I get joy in my trouble—not necessarily so. It is not always the fact that troubles bring their consolations. But it is *Christ* who comes to me. I am sick in my chamber. Christ comes up stairs, He sits by my bedside and He talks sweet words to me. I am dying. The chilly cold waters of Jordan have touched my feet. I feel my blood stagnate and freeze. I must die. Christ puts His arms around me and says, "Fear not, beloved. To die is to be blessed, the waters of death have their fountainhead in heaven, they are not bitter, they are sweet as nectar, for they flow from the throne of God." I wade in the stream, the billows gather around me. I feel that my heart and my flesh fail. But there is the same Voice in my ears, "Fear not. I am with you! Be not dismayed. I am your God." Now, I come to the borders of the infinite unknown—that country "from whose river no traveler returns." I stand almost afraid to enter the realm of shades. But a sweet voice says, "I will be with you wherever you go. If you should make your bed in Hades, I will be with you." And I still go on, content to die, for Jesus cheers me. He is my consolation and my hope! Ah, you who know not that matchless name, Jesus—you have lost the sweetest note which ever can give melody! Ah, you who have never been entranced by the precious sonnet contained in that one word, Jesus—you who know not that Jesus means, I-ES-U, ("I ease you"), you have lost the joy and comfort of your lives and you must live miserable and unhappy. But the Christian

can rejoice, since Christ will never forsake him, never leave him, but will be with him always!

A word or two to characters—first, I have a word with you who are *expecting troubles* and are very sad because you are looking forward to them. Take the advice of the common people and "never cross a bridge till you get to it." Follow my advice—never bring your troubles nearer than they are, for they will be sure to come down upon you soon enough. I know that many persons fret themselves about their trials before they come. What on earth is the good of it? If you will show me any benefit in it, I will say go on, but to me it seems quite enough for the father to lay the rod on the child without the child chastising itself. Why should you do so? You, who are afraid of trouble, why should you be so? The trial may never overtake you. And if it does come, strength will come with it. Therefore, up with you, Man! Why are you sitting down groaning because of forebodings?—

"Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less."

Up! Up! Why will you sit down and be frozen to death? When trouble comes, *then* fight it with manful heart and strong. Plunge into the stream, accoutered as you are and swim it through, but oh, do not fear it *before* it comes!

Then, Christian *in trouble*, I have a word to say to you. So my brethren, you are in trouble—you have come into the waves of affliction, have you? No strange thing, is it? You have been there many times before. "Ah," but you say, "This is the worst I ever had. I have come up here this morning with a millstone round my neck. I have a mine of lead in my heart—I am miserable, I am unhappy, I am exceedingly cast down." Well, but, as your troubles abound, so shall your consolation! Brethren, have you hung your harp upon the willows? I am glad you have not broken the harp altogether. Better to hang it on the willows than to break it. Be sure not to break it. Instead of being distressed about your trouble, *rejoice* in it. You will then honor God. You will glorify Christ. You will bring sinners to Jesus, if you will sing in the depths of trouble—for then they will say, "There must be something in religion, after all, otherwise the man would not be so happy."

Then one word with you who are almost driven to despair; I would stretch my hands out if I could this morning—for I believe a preacher ought to be a Briareus with a thousand hands to fetch out his hearers, one by one, and speak to them. There is a man here quite despairing—almost every hope gone. Brethren, shall I tell you what to do? You have fallen off the main deck, you are in the sea, the floods surround you, you seem to have no hope, you grab at straws. What shall you do now? Why,

lie upon the sea of trouble and *float* upon it! Be still and know that God is God and you will never perish. All your kicking and struggling will sink you deeper. But lie still—for behold the life boat comes. Christ is coming to your help. Soon He will deliver you and fetch you out of all your perplexities!

Lastly, some of you have no interest in this sermon at all. I never try to deceive my hearers by making them believe that all I say belongs to all who hear me. There are different characters in God's Word—it is yours to search your own hearts this day—and see whether you are God's people, or not. As the Lord lives before whom I stand, there are two classes here. I do not acknowledge the distinction of aristocratic and democratic. In my sight and in God's sight, every man is alike! We are made of one flesh and blood. We do not have china gentlemen and earthenware poor people. We are all made of the same mold of fashion. There is one distinction and only one. You are all either the children of God, or children of the devil! You are all either born-again, or dead in trespasses and sins! It is yours to let the question ring in your ears—"Where am I? Is yon black tyrant, with his fiery sword, my king? Or do I acknowledge Jehovah-Jesus as my strength, my shield, my Savior?" I shall not force you to answer it, I shall not say anything to you about it. Only answer it yourselves, let your hearts speak, let your souls speak. All I can do is to propose the question. God apply it to your souls! I beseech Him to send it home and make the arrow stick fast!—

"Is Jesus mine? I am now prepared
To meet with what I thought most hard.
Yes, let the winds of trouble blow
And comforts melt away like snow,
No blasted trees, nor failing crops
Can hinder my eternal hopes.
Though creatures change, the Lord's the same,
Then let me triumph in His name."

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THE VICTORY OF FAITH
NO. 14

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 18, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith."
1 John 5:4.

THE epistles of John are perfumed with love. The word is continually occurring while the Spirit enters into every sentence. Each letter is thoroughly soaked and impregnated with this heavenly honey. If he speaks of God, His name must be love. Are the brethren mentioned, he loves them. And even of the world itself, he writes, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." From the opening to the conclusion, love is the manner, love the matter, love the motive and love the aim! We stand, therefore, not a little astonished, to find such martial words in so peaceful a writing, for I hear a sound of war. It is not the voice of love, surely, that says, "He that is born of God overcomes the world." Lo, here are strife and battle! The word "overcomes" seems to have in it something of the sword and warfare—of strife and contention—of agony and wrestling. So unlike the love which is smooth and gentle, which has no harsh words within its lips—whose mouth is lined with velvet, whose words are softer than butter—whose utterances are more easily flowing than oil. Here we have war—war to the knife, for I read, "Whatever is born of God overcomes the world." Strife until death—battle throughout life—fighting with a certainty of victory. How is it that the same gospel which always speaks of peace, here proclaims a warfare? How can it be—simply because there is something in the world which is antagonistic to love. There are principles abroad which cannot bear light and, therefore, before light can come, it must chase the darkness. Before summer reigns, you know, it has to do battle with old winter and to send it howling away in the winds of March—then shedding its tears in April showers. So also, before any great or good thing can have the mastery of this world, it must do battle for it! Satan has seated himself on his blood-stained throne and who shall take him down, except by force? Darkness broods over the nations. Nor can the sun establish his empire of light until he has pierced night with the arrow sunbeams and made it flee away. Hence we read in the Bible that Christ did not come to send peace on earth but a sword—He came to set "the father against the son and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother;

the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." Not intentionally, mind you, but as a means to an end—because there must always be a struggle before truth and righteousness can reign! Alas, for that earth is the battlefield where good must combat with evil. Angels look on and hold their breath, burning to mingle in the conflict, but the troops of the captain of salvation may be none but the soldiers of the cross. And that slender band must fight alone and yet shall triumph gloriously! Enough shall they be for conquest and the slogan of their standard is ENOUGH; enough by the arm of the helping Trinity.

As God shall help me, I shall speak to you of three things to be found in the text. First, the text speaks of a *great victory*—it says, "This is the victory." Secondly, it mentions a *great birth*—"Whatever is *born* of God." And, thirdly, it extols a *great grace*, whereby we overcome the world, "even our faith."

I. First, the text speaks of a GREAT VICTORY—the victory of victories—the greatest of all. We know there have been great battles where nations have met in strife and one has overcome the other. But who has read of a victory that overcame the world? Some will say that Alexander was its conqueror. But I answer, no. He was himself the vanquished man, even when all things were in his possession. He fought for the world and won it—and then mark how it mastered its master, conquered its conqueror—and lashed the monarch who had been its scourge. See the royal youth weeping and stretching out his hands with idiotic cries, for another world which he might ravage. He seemed, in outward show, to have overcome old Earth—but, in reality, within his inmost soul the earth had conquered him! It had overwhelmed him, had wrapped him in the dream of ambition, girdled him with the chains of covetousness, so that when he had all, he was still dissatisfied. And like a poor slave, he was dragged on at the chariot wheels of the world, crying, moaning, lamenting, because he could not win another. Who is the man that ever overcame the world? Let him stand forward—he is a Triton among the minnows. He shall outshine Caesar. He shall outmatch even our own lately departed Wellington, if he can say he has overcome the world! It is so rare a thing, a victory so prodigious, a conquest so tremendous, that he who can claim to have won it may walk among his fellows, like Saul, with head and shoulders far above them! He shall command our respect. His very presence shall awe us into reverence. His speech shall persuade us to obedience and, yielding honor to whom honor is due, we'll say when we listen to his voice, "'Tis even as if an angel shook his wings!"

I shall now attempt to expand the idea I have suggested, showing you in what varied senses the Christian overcomes the world. A tough battle, sirs, I guarantee you—not one which carpet knights might win—no easy

skirmish that he might win, who dashed to battle on some sunshiny day, looked at the host, then turned his courser's rein and daintily dismounted at the door of his silken tent. Not one which he shall gain, who, but a raw recruit today, puts on his regimentals and foolishly imagines that one week of service will ensure a crown of glory! No, sirs, it is a life-long war—a fight needing the power of all the muscles—and a strong heart. It is a contest which shall need all our strength, if we are to be triumphant. And if we do come off more than conquerors, it shall be said of us, as Hart said of Jesus Christ—"He had strength enough and none to spare"; a battle at which the stoutest heart might quail; a fight at which the brave might shake if he did not remember that the Lord is on his side, and therefore whom shall he fear? Jesus Christ is the strength of his life—of whom shall he be afraid? This fight with the world is not one of main force, or physical might—if it were, we might soon win it. But it is all the more dangerous from the fact that it is a strife of *mind*, a contest of heart, a struggle of the spirit, a strife of the soul. When we overcome the world in one fashion, we have not half done our work. For the world is a Proteus, changing its shape continually. Like the chameleon, it has all the colors of the rainbow and when you have worsted the world in one shape, it will attack you in another! Until you die, you will always have fresh appearances of the world to wrestle with. Let me just mention some of the forms in which the Christian overcomes the world.

1. He overcomes the world when it sets up itself as a legislator, wishing to teach him customs. You know the world has its old massive law book of customs and he who does not choose to go according to the fashion of the world is under the ban of society. Most of you do just as everybody else does and that is enough for you. If you see so-and-so do a dishonest thing in business, it is sufficient for you that everybody does it. If you see that the majority of mankind have certain habits—you succumb, you yield. You think, I suppose, that to march to hell in crowds, will help to diminish the fierce heat of the burning of the bottomless pit, instead of remembering that the more fire wood the fiercer will be the flame! Men usually swim with the stream like a dead fish. It is only the living fish that goes against it. It is only the Christian who despises customs, who does not care for conventionalisms, who only asks himself the question, "Is it right or is it wrong? If it is right, I will be singular. If there is not another man in this world who will do it, I will do it. Should a universal hiss go up to heaven, I will still do it. Should the very stones of earth fly up and stone me to death, by God's grace, I will still do it. Though they bind me to the stake, yet I must do it. I will be singularly right.

"If the multitude will not follow me, I will go without them. I will be glad if they will all go and do right as well, but if not, I will despise their customs. I care not what others do. I shall not be weighed by other men.

To my own master I stand or fall. Thus I conquer and overcome the customs of the world." Fair world! She dresses herself in ermine, she puts on the robes of a judge and she solemnly tells you, "Man, you are wrong. Look at your fellows, see what they do? Behold my laws. For hundreds of years have not men done so? Who are you to set yourself up against *me?"* And she pulls out her worm-eaten law book and turning over the musty pages, says, "See, here is an act passed in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and here is another law enacted in the days of Pharaoh. These must be right, because antiquity has enrolled them among her standard authorities. Do you mean to set yourself up and stand against the opinions of the multitude?" Yes, we do! We take the law book of the world and we burn it, as the Ephesians did their magic rolls. We take her deeds and make them into waste paper. We rend her proclamation from the walls. We care not what others do—custom to us is a cobweb. We count it no folly to be singular. When to be singular is to be right, we count it the proudest wisdom. We overcome the world. We trample on her customs. We walk as a distinct people, a separate race, a chosen generation, a peculiar people. The Christian behaves in his dealings not as the laughing infidel insinuates, when he sneeringly describes Mawworm, as saying, "Boy, have you sanded the sugar?" "Yes, sir." "Have you put the sloe leaves in the tea?" "Yes, sir." "Have you put red lead in the pepper?" "Yes, sir." "Then come to prayers." Christians do not do so! They say, "We know better, we cannot conform to the customs of the world. If we pray, we will also act, or else we are hypocrites, confounded hypocrites. If we go to the House of God and profess to love Him, we love Him everywhere! We take our religion with us into the shop, behind the counter, into our offices—we must have it everywhere, or else God knows it is not religion at all." You must stand up, then, against the customs of mankind. Albeit, this may be a three-million peopled city, but you are to come out and be separate if you would overcome the world.

2. We rebel against the world's customs. And if we do so, what is the conduct of our enemy? She changes her aspect. "That man is a heretic. That man is a fanatic. He is a cant, he is a hypocrite," says the world, directly. She grasps her sword, she puts frowns upon her brow, she scowls like a demon, she girds tempests round about her and she says, "The man dares defy my government. He will not do as others do. Now I will persecute him. Slander! Come from the depths of hell and hiss at him. Envy! Sharpen up your tooth and bite him." She fetches up all false things and she persecutes the man if she can. She does it with the hand, if not by the tongue. She afflicts him wherever he is. She tries to ruin him in business; or if he stands forth as the champion of the truth, why then she laughs and mocks, and scorns. She lets no stone be unturned whereby she may injure him. What is then the behavior of the Lord's

warrior when he sees the world take up arms against him and when he sees all earth, like an army, coming to chase him and utterly destroy him? Does he yield? Does he yield? Does he bend? Does he cringe? Oh, no! Like Luther, he writes *"Cedo nulli"* on his banner—"I yield to none." And he goes to war against the world, if the world goes to war against him—

"Let earth be all in arms abroad,
He dwells in perfect peace."

Ah, some of you, if you had a word spoken against you, would at once give up what religion you have! But the true-born child of God cares little for man's opinion. "Ah," he says, "let my bread fail me, let me be doomed to wander penniless the wide world over. Yes, let me die—each drop of blood within these veins belongs to Christ and I am ready to shed it for His name's sake." He counts all things but loss, that he may win Christ—that he may be found in Him. And when the world's thunders roar, he smiles at the uproar, while he hums his pleasant tune—

"Jerusalem my happy home,
Name ever dear to me!
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy and peace and thee?"

When the world's sword comes out, he looks at it. "Ah," he says, "just as the lightning leaps from its thunder lair, splits the clouds and affrights the stars but is powerless against the rock-covered mountaineer who smiles at its grandeur, so now the world cannot hurt me. In the time of trouble my Father hides me in His pavilion. In the secret of His tabernacle does He hide me and set me up upon a rock." Thus, again, we conquer the world by not caring for its frowns!

3. "Well," says the world, "I will try another style," and this, believe me, is the most dangerous of all. A smiling world is worse than a frowning one. She says, "I cannot smite the man low with my repeated blows, so I will take off my mailed glove and show him a fair white hand. I'll bid him kiss it. I will tell him I love him—I will flatter him, I will speak good words to him." John Bunyan well describes this Madam Bubble. She has a winning way with her. She drops a smile at the end of each of her sentences. She talks much of fair things and tries to win and woo. Oh, believe me, Christians are not so much in danger when they are persecuted as when they are admired! When we stand upon the pinnacle of popularity we may well tremble and fear. It is not when we are hissed at and hooted that we have any cause to be alarmed. It is when we are dandled on the lap of fortune and nursed upon the knees of the people. It is when all men speak well of us that woe is unto us. It is not in the cold wintry wind that I take off my coat of righteousness and throw it away. It is when the sun comes, when the weather is warm and the air balmy that I unguardedly strip off my robes and become naked. Good God! How many

a man has been made naked by the love of this world! The world has flattered and applauded him. He has drunk the flattery. It was an intoxicating draught. He has staggered, he has reeled, he has sinned, he has lost his reputation. And as a comet that dashed across the sky wanders far into space and is lost in darkness, so does he. Great as he was, he falls. Mighty as he was, he wanders and is lost. But the true child of God is never so. He is as safe when the world smiles, as when it frowns. He cares as little for her praise as for her dispraise. If he is praised and it is true, he says, "My deeds deserve praise, but I refer all honor to my God." Great souls know what they merit from their critic. To them it is nothing more than the giving of their daily income. Some men cannot live without a large amount of praise. If they have no more than they deserve, let them have it. If they are children of God they will be kept steady, they will not be ruined or spoiled. But they will stand with feet like hinds' feet upon high places—"This is the victory that overcomes the world."

4. Sometimes again, the world turns jailer to a Christian. God sends affliction and sorrow until life is a prison, the world its jailer—and a wretched jailer, too. Have you ever been in trials and troubles, my friends? And has the world ever come to you and said, "Poor prisoner, I have a key that will let you out. You are in financial difficulties. I will tell you how you may get free. Put that Mr. Conscience away. He asks you whether it is a dishonest act. Never mind about him. Let him sleep—think about the honesty after you have got the money—and repent at your leisure." So says the world. But you say, "I cannot do the thing." "Well," says the world, "then groan and grumble—a good man like you locked up in this prison!" "No," says the Christian, "my Father sent me into want and in His own time He will fetch me out. But if I die here, I will not use wrong means to escape. My Father put me here for my good, I will not grumble. If my bones must lie here—if my coffin is to be under these stones—if my tombstone shall be in the wall of my dungeon—here will I die, rather than so much lift a finger to get out by unfair means." "Ah," says the world, "then you are fool." The scorner laughs and passes on, saying, "The man has no brain, he will not do a bold thing. He has no courage. He will not launch upon the sea. He wants to go in the old beaten track of morality." Yes, so he does. For thus he overcomes the world!

Oh, I might tell you of some battles that have been fought. There has been many a poor maiden who has worked, worked, worked, until her fingers were worn to the bone—just to earn a scanty living out of the things which we wear upon us, knowing not that oftentimes we wear the blood, bones and sinews of poor girls. That poor girl has been tempted a thousand times. The evil one has tried to seduce her, but she has fought a valiant battle. Stern in her integrity in the midst of poverty, she still stands upright. "Clear as the sun, fair as the moon and terrible as an

army with banners," a heroine unconquered by the temptations and enticements of vice! In other cases many a man has had the chance of being rich in an hour, affluent in a moment, if he would but clutch something which he dares not look at, because God within him said, "No." The world said, "Be rich, be rich." But the Holy Spirit said, "No! Be honest. Serve your God." Oh, the stern contest and the manly combat carried on within the heart! But he said, "No. Could I have the stars transmuted into worlds of gold, I would not, for those globes of wealth belie my principles and damage my soul." Thus he walks a conqueror. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith."

II. But my text speaks of a GREAT BIRTH. A very kind friend has told me that while I was preaching in Exeter Hall I ought to pay deference to the varied opinions of my hearers. He said that albeit I may be a Calvinist and a Baptist, I should remember that there are a variety of creeds here. Now, if I were to preach nothing but what would please the whole lot of you, what on earth would I do? I preach what I believe to be true! And if the omission of a single truth that I believe would make me King of England throughout eternity, I would not leave it out! Those who do not like what I say have the option of leaving. They come here, I suppose, to please themselves and if the truth does not please them, they can leave. I will never be afraid that an honest British audience will turn away from the man who does not stick, stutter and stammer in speaking the truth of God! Well, now, about this great birth. I am going to say, perhaps, a harsh thing, but I heard it said by Mr. Jay first of all. Some say a new birth takes place in an infant baptism, but I remember that venerable Patriarch saying, "Popery is a *lie*, Puseyism is a *lie*, and baptismal regeneration is a *lie*." So it is. It is a lie so palpable that I can scarcely imagine the preachers of it have any brains in their heads at all! It is so absurd upon the very face of it, that a man who believes it puts himself below the range of a commonsense man! Believe that every child by a drop of water is born-again? Then that man that you see in the ring as a prize-fighter is born-again because those sanctified drops once fell upon his infant forehead! Another man swears—behold him drunk and reeling about the streets. He is born-again! A pretty born-again that is! I think he wants to be born-again another time. Such a regeneration as that only fits him for the devil. And by its deluding effect, may even make him sevenfold more the child of hell! But the men who curse, swear, rob and steal and those poor wretches who are hanged, have all been born-again, according to the fiction of this beautiful Puseyite church. Out with it! Out with it! Ah, God sends something better than that into men's hearts when He sends them a new birth!

However, the text speaks of a great birth. "Whatever is born of God overcomes the world." This new birth is the mysterious point in all reli-

gion. If you preach anything else except the new birth, you will always get on well with your hearers. But if you insist that in order to enter heaven there must be a radical change—though this is the doctrine of the Scripture—it is so unpalatable to mankind in general that you will scarcely get them to listen! Ah, now you turn away as I begin to tell you, that "except you be born of water and of the Spirit, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." If I tell you that there must be a regenerating influence exerted upon your minds by the power of the Holy Spirit, then I know you will say "it is enthusiasm." Ah, but it is the enthusiasm of the Bible! There I stand. By this I will be judged. If the Bible does not say we must be born-again, then I give it up. But if it does, then, sirs, do not distrust that truth on which your salvation hangs!

What is it to be born-again? Very briefly, to be born-again is to undergo a change so mysterious that human words cannot speak of it. As we cannot describe our first birth, so it is impossible for us to describe the second. "The wind blows where it lists and you hear the sound thereof. But you cannot tell from where it comes or where it goes. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit." But while it is so mysterious, it is a change which is *known and felt*. People are not born-again when they are in bed and asleep so that they do not know it. They feel it! They experience it! Galvanism, or the power of electricity, may be mysterious. But it produces a feeling—a sensation. So does the new birth. At the time of the new birth, the soul is in great agony—often drowned in seas of tears. Sometimes it drinks bitters, now and then mingled with sweet drops of hope. While we are passing from death unto life there is an experience which none but the child of God can really understand. It is a mysterious change, but, at the same time, it is a positive one. It is as much a change as if this heart were taken out of me and the black drops of blood wrung from it, then washed and cleansed and put into my soul again! It is "a new heart and a right spirit"—a mysterious but yet an actual and real change!

Let me tell you, moreover, that this change is a *supernatural* one. It is not one that a man performs upon himself. It is not leaving off drinking and becoming sober. It is not turning from a Roman Catholic to a Protestant. It is not veering round from a Dissenter to a Churchman, or a Churchman to a Dissenter. It is vast deal more than that. It is a new principle infused which works in the heart, enters the very soul and moves the entire man. It is not a change of my name, but a renewal of my nature so that I am not the man I used to be, but a new man in Christ Jesus. It is a *supernatural* change—something which man cannot do and which only God can effect—which the Bible itself cannot accomplish without the attendant Spirit of God. It is something which no minister's eloquence can bring about—something so mighty and wondrous

that it must be confessed to be the work of God and God, alone. Here is the place to observe that this new birth is an *enduring change*. Arminians tell us that people are born-again, then fall into sin, pick themselves up again and become Christians again—fall into sin, lose the grace of God, then come back again—fall into sin a hundred times in their lives and so keep on losing grace and recovering it. Well, I suppose it is a new version of the Scripture where you read of that. But I read in *my* Bible that if true Christians could fall away it would be impossible to renew them again unto repentance. I read, moreover, that wherever God has begun a good work, He will carry it on even to the end. And that whom He once loves, He loves to the end.

If I have simply been reformed, I may be a drunkard yet, or you may see me acting on the stage. But if I am really born-again, with that real *supernatural* change, I shall never fall away. I may fall into a sin, but I shall not fall finally. I shall stand while life shall last, constantly secure. And when I die it shall be said—

"Servant of God, well done!
Rest from your blest employ.
The battle's fought, the victory's won,
Enter your rest of joy."

Do not deceive yourselves, my beloved. If you imagine that you have been regenerated and having gone away from God, will be once more born-again, you do not know anything about the matter. For "he that is born of God sins not." That is, he does not sin so much as to fall away from grace—"for he keeps himself—that the evil one touches him not." Happy is the man who is really and actually regenerate and passed from death unto life!

III. To conclude. There IS A GREAT GRACE. Persons who are born-again really do overcome the world. How is this brought about? The text says, "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our *faith*." Christians do not triumph over the world by reason. Not at all; reason is a very good thing and nobody should find fault with it. Reason is a candle—but faith is a sun! Well, I prefer the sun, though I do not put out the candle. I use my reason as a Christian. I exercise it constantly—but when I come to real warfare, reason is a wooden sword. It breaks, it snaps—while faith, that sword of true Jerusalem metal, cuts to the dividing of soul and body.

My text says, "This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith." Who are the men that do anything in the world? Are they not always men of faith? Take it even as natural faith. Who wins the battle? Why, the man who knows he will win it and vows that he will be the victor! Who never gets on in the world? The man who is always afraid to do a thing for fear he cannot accomplish it. Who climbs to the top of the

Alps? The man who says, "I will do it, or I will die." Let such a man make up his mind that he can do a thing and he will do it—if it is within the range of possibility. Who have been the men who have lifted the standard and grasping it with firm hand, have upheld it in the midst of stormy strife and battle? Why, men of faith. Who have done great things? Not men of fear and trembling, men who are afraid. But men of faith, who had bold fronts and foreheads made of brass—men who never shook and never trembled, but believing in God, lifted their eyes to the hills, from where comes their strength.

"Never was a marvel done upon the earth, but it had sprung of faith. Nothing noble, generous, or great, but faith was the root of the achievement. Nothing comely, nothing famous, but its praise is faith. Leonidas fought in human faith as Joshua in divine. Xenophon trusted to his skill and the sons of Matthias to their cause. Faith is mightiest of the mighty. It is the monarch of the realms of the mind. There is no being superior to its strength, no creature which will not bow to its divine prowess. The lack of faith makes a man despicable, it shrivels him up so small that he might live in a nutshell. Give him faith and he is a leviathan that can dive into the depths of the sea. He is a war horse that cries, aha! aha! in the battle. He is a giant who takes nations and crumbles them in his hand, who encounters hosts and at a sword they vanish. He binds up sheaves of scepters and gathers up all the crowns as his own. There is nothing like faith, sirs. Faith makes you almost as omnipotent as God, by the borrowed might of its divinity! Give us faith and we can do all things!

I want to tell you how it is that faith helps Christians to overcome the world. It always does it homeopathically. You say, "That is a singular idea." So it may be. The principle is that, "like cures like." So does faith overcome the world by curing like with like. How does faith trample upon the *fear* of the world? By the fear of God. "Now," says the world, "if you do not do this, I will take away your life. If you do not bow down before my false god, you shall be put in yon burning fiery furnace." "But," says the man of faith, "I fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell. True, I may dread you, but I have a greater fear than that. I fear lest I should displease God. I tremble lest I should offend my Sovereign." So the one fear counterbalances the other. How does faith overthrow the world's hopes? "There," says the world, "I will give you this, I will give you that, if you will be my disciple. There is a hope for you. You shall be rich, you shall be great." But, faith says, "I have a hope laid up in heaven. A hope which fades not away, eternal, incorrupt, eternally beautiful hope, a golden hope, a crown of life." And the hope of glory overcomes all the hopes of the world. "Ah," says the world, "Why not follow the *example* of your fellows?" "Because," says faith, "I will follow the example of Christ."

If the world puts one example before us, faith puts another. "Oh, follow the example of such an one, he is wise, great and good," says the world. Says faith, "I will follow Christ; He is the wisest, the greatest, and the best." It overcomes example by example. "Well," says the world, "since you will not be conquered by all this, come, I will *love* you. You shall be my friend." Faith says, "He that is the friend of this world, cannot be the friend of God. God loves me." So he puts love against love; fear against fear; hope against hope; dread against dread. And so faith overcomes the world by like curing like!

In closing my discourse, brethren, I am but a child. I have spoken to you as I could this morning. Another time, perhaps, I might be able to launch more thunders and to proclaim better the word of God. But this I am sure of—I tell you all I know and speak right on. I am no orator—I just tell you what springs up from my heart. But before I have done, O that I may have a word with your souls; how many are there here who are born-again? Some turn a deaf ear and say, "It is all nonsense. We go to our place of worship regularly. We put our hymn books and Bibles under our arm and we are a very religious sort of people." Ah, soul! if I meet you at the bar of judgment, remember I said—and said God's Word—"Except you be born-again, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." Others of you say, "We cannot believe that being born-again is such a change as you speak of. I am a great deal better than I used to be. I do not swear, now, and I am very much reformed." Sirs, I tell you it is no little change. It is not mending the pitcher but it is breaking it up and having a new one! It is not patching the heart, it is having a new heart and a right spirit. There is nothing but death unto sin, and life unto righteousness, that will save your souls!

I am preaching no new doctrine. Turn to the articles of the Church of England and read it there. Church people come to me sometimes to unite with our church. I show them our doctrines in their prayer book and they have said they never knew they were there! My dear hearers, why do you not read your own articles of faith? Why, without a doubt, you do not know what is in your own prayer book! Men, nowadays do not read their Bibles, and they have for the most part, no religion! They have a religion, which is all outside show, but they do not think of searching to see what its meaning really is! Sirs, it is not the *cloak* of religion that will do for you, it is a *vital godliness* you need. It is not a religious Sunday, it is a religious Monday. It is not a pious church, it is a pious closet! It is not a sacred place to kneel in; it is a holy place to stand in all day long! There must be a change of heart—real, radical, vital, and entire! And now, what do you say? Has your faith overcome the world? Can you live above it? Or do you love the world and the things thereof? If so, sirs, you must go on your way and perish—each one of you—unless you turn from that

and give your hearts to Christ! Oh, what do you say, is Jesus worthy of your love? Are the things of eternity and heaven worth the things of time? Is it so sweet to be a worldling that for that you can lie down in torment? Is it so good to be a sinner that for this you can risk your soul's eternal welfare? O, my friends, is it worth your while to run the risk of an eternity of woe for an hour of pleasure? Is a dance worth dancing in hell with howling fiends forever? Is one dream, with a horrid waking, worth enjoying, when there are the glories of heaven for those who follow God? Oh, if my lips would let me speak to you, my heart would run over at my eyes and I would weep myself away until you had pity on your own poor souls! I know I am, in a measure, accountable for your souls. If the watchmen warn them not, they shall perish—but their blood shall be required at the watchman's hands. "Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel?" thus says the Lord. Besotted, filled with your evil wills, inclined to evil—still the Holy Spirit speaks by me this morning, "If you turn unto the Lord, with full purpose of heart, He will have mercy upon you. And to our God, He will abundantly pardon."

I cannot bring you. I cannot fetch you. My words are powerless, my thoughts are weak! Old Adam is too strong for this young child to draw or drag, but may God speak to you, dear hearts. May God send the truth home, and then we shall rejoice together, both he that sows, and he that reaps, because God has given us the increase. God bless you. May you all be born-again and have "that faith that overcomes the world!"

Have I that faith which looks to Christ,
Overcomes the world and sin—
Receives Him Prophet, Priest and King,
And makes the conscience clean?
If I this precious grace possess,
All praise is due to Thee!
If not, I seek it from Your hands;
Now grant it, Lord, to me."

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THE BIBLE
NO. 15

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, MARCH 18, 1855, *BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,* AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

"I have written to him the great things of My law, but they were counted as a strange thing."
Hosea 8:12.

THIS is God's complaint against Ephraim. It is no mean proof of His goodness, that He stoops to rebuke His erring creatures. It is a great argument of His gracious disposition that He bows His head to notice terrestrial affairs. He might, if He pleased, wrap Himself with night as with a garment. He might put the stars around His wrist for bracelets and bind the suns around His brow for a coronet. He might dwell alone, far, far above this world, up in the seventh heaven and look down with calm and silent indifference upon all the doings of His creatures. He might do as the heathens supposed their Jove did, sit in perpetual silence, sometimes nodding his awful head to make the fates move as he pleased. But Jove never thought of the little things of earth, disposing of them as beneath his notice, engrossed within his own being, swallowed up within himself. He lived alone and retired. And I, as one of Jove's creatures might stand by night upon a mountaintop and look upon the silent stars and say, "You are the eyes of god, but you look not down on me. Your light is the gift of his omnipotence, but your rays are not smiles of love to me. God, the mighty Creator, has forgotten me, I am a despicable drop in the ocean of creation, a dry leaf in the forest of beings, an atom in the mountain of existence. He knows me not. I am alone, alone, alone!" But it is not so, beloved. *Our* God is of another order. He notices every one of us! There is not a sparrow or a worm but is found in His decrees. There is not a person upon whom His eyes are not fixed. Our most secret acts are known to Him. Whatever we do, or bear, or suffer, the eyes of God still rest upon us and we are beneath His smile—for we are His people. Or beneath His frown—for we have erred from Him.

Oh, how ten-thousand-fold merciful is God, that, looking down upon the race of man, He does not smile it out of existence! We see from our text that God looks upon man, for He says of Ephraim, "I have written to him the great things of My law, but they were counted as a strange thing." But see how when He observes the sin of man, He does not dash him away and spurn him with His foot? He does not shake him by the neck over the gulf of hell, until his brain does reel and then drop him forever. But rather, He comes down from heaven to plead with His crea-

tures! He argues with them, He puts Himself, as it were, upon a level with the sinner, states His grievances and pleads His claim. "O Ephraim, I have written unto you the great things of My law, but they have been unto you as a strange thing!" I come here tonight in God's stead, my friends, to plead with you as God's ambassador, to charge many of you with a sin; to lay it to your hearts by the power of the Spirit, so that you may be convinced of sin, of righteousness and of a judgment to come. The crime I charge you with is the sin of the text. God has written to you the great things of His law, but they have been unto you as a strange thing! It is concerning this blessed Book, the Bible, that I mean to speak tonight. Here lies my text—this word of God. Here is the theme of my discourse, a theme which demands more eloquence than I possess; a subject upon which a thousand orators might speak at once. A mighty, vast, incomprehensive theme which might engross all eloquence throughout eternity and still it would remain unexhausted!

Concerning the Bible, I have three things to say tonight and they are all in my text. First, its Author, "I have written." Secondly, its subjects—the great things of God's law. And thirdly, its common treatment—It has been accounted by most men a strange thing.

1. First, then, concerning this book, who is THE AUTHOR? The text says that it is God. "I have written to him the great things of My law." Here lies my Bible—who wrote it? I open it and I find it consists of a series of tracts. The first five tracts were written by a man called Moses. I turn on and I find others. Sometimes I see David is the penman, at other times, Solomon. Here I read Micah, then Amos, then Hosea. As I turn further on, to the more luminous pages of the New Testament, I see Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Paul, Peter, James and others, but when I shut up the book, I ask myself who is the Author of it? Do these men jointly claim the authorship? Are they the compositors of this massive volume? Do they, between themselves, divide the honor? Our holy religion answers, No! This volume is the writing of the living God—each letter was penned with an Almighty finger. Each word in it dropped from the everlasting lips, each sentence was dictated by the Holy Spirit. Albeit that Moses was employed to write his histories with his fiery pen, God guided that pen. It may be that David touched his harp and let sweet Psalms of melody drop from his fingers, but God moved his hands over the living strings of his golden harp. It may be that Solomon sang Canticles of love, or gave forth words of consummate wisdom, but God directed his lips and made the Preacher eloquent. If I follow the thundering Nahum when his horses plow the waters, or Habakkuk when he sees the tents of Cushan in affliction; if I read Malachi, when the earth is burning like an oven; if I turn to the smooth page of John, who tells of love, or the rugged fiery chapters of Peter who speaks of the fire devouring God's enemies; if I turn to Jude, who launches forth anathemas upon the foes of God—everywhere I find God speaking—it is God's voice, not man's! The

words are God's words, the words of the Eternal, the Invisible, the Almighty, the Jehovah of this earth! This Bible is God's Bible. And when I see it, I seem to hear a voice springing up from it, saying, "I am the Book of God—Man, read me. I am God's writing—open my leaf, for I was penned by God. Read it, for He is my Author and you will see Him visible and manifest everywhere." "I have written to him the great things of My law."

How do you know that God wrote the book? That is just what I shall not try to prove to you. I could, if I pleased, to a demonstration—for there are arguments enough, there are reasons enough—did I care to occupy your time tonight in bringing them before you—but I shall do no such thing. I might tell you, if I pleased, that the grandeur of the style is above that of any mortal writing and that all the poets who have ever existed, could not, with all their works united, give us such sublime poetry and such mighty language as is to be found in the Scriptures! I might insist upon it, that the subjects of which it treats are beyond the human intellect. That man could never have invented the grand doctrines of a Trinity in the Godhead. Man could not have told us anything of the creation of the universe. He could never have been the author of the majestic idea of providence; that all things are ordered according to the will of one great Supreme Being and work together for good. I might enlarge upon its honesty, since it tells the faults of its writers. Its unity, since it never belies itself. Its master simplicity that he who runs may read it. And I might mention a hundred more things which would all prove to a demonstration, that the book is of God! But I come not here to prove it. I am a Christian minister and you are Christians, or profess to be so and there is never any necessity for Christian ministers to make a point of bringing forth infidel arguments in order to answer them. It is the greatest folly in the world. Infidels, poor creatures, do not know their own arguments till we tell them and then they glean their blunted shafts to shoot them at the shield of truth again. It is folly to bring forward these firebrands of hell, even if we are well prepared to quench them. Let men of the world learn error of themselves—do not let us be propagators of their lies!

True, there are some preachers who are short of stock and want them to fill up! But God's own chosen men need not do that. They are taught of God and God supplies them with matter, with language and with power. There may be someone here, tonight, who has come without faith, a man of reason, a freethinker. With him I have no argument at all. I profess not to stand here as a controversialist, but as a preacher of things that I know and feel. But I, too, have been like he. There was an evil hour when once I slipped the anchor of my faith, I cut the cable of my belief. I no longer moored myself hard by the coasts of Revelation. I allowed my vessel to drift before the wind. I said to reason, "Be you my captain." I said to my own brain, "Be you my rudder." And I started on my mad voyage. Thank God it is all over, now, but I will tell you its brief history. It

was one hurried sailing over the tempestuous ocean of free thought. I went on and as I went, the skies began to darken. But to make up for that deficiency, the waters were brilliant with flashes of light. I saw sparks flying upwards that pleased me and I thought, "If this is free thought, it is a happy thing." My thoughts seemed gems and I scattered stars with both my hands. But soon, instead of these flashes of glory, I saw grim fiends, fierce and horrible start up from the waters. And as I dashed on, they gnashed their teeth and grinned upon me. They seized the prow of my ship and dragged me on, while I, in part, gloried at the rapidity of my motion, but yet shuddered at the terrific rate with which I passed the old landmarks of my faith. As I hurried forward with an awful speed, I began to doubt my very existence. I doubted if there were a world, I doubted if there were such a thing as myself! I went to the very verge of the dreary realms of unbelief. I went to the very bottom of the sea of infidelity. I doubted everything. But here the devil foiled himself, for the very extravagance of the doubt proved its absurdity. Just when I saw the bottom of that sea, there came a voice which said, "And can this doubt be true?" At this very thought I awoke. I started from that death-dream, which, God knows might have damned my soul and ruined this, my body, if I had not awakened. When I arose faith took the helm. From that moment I doubted not. Faith steered me back. Faith cried, "Away, away!" I cast my anchor on Calvary. I lifted my eyes to God—and here I am alive and out of hell. Therefore I speak what I know. I have sailed that perilous voyage. I have come safe to land. Ask me again to be an infidel! No, I have tried it, it was sweet at first, but bitter afterwards. Now, lashed to God's gospel more firmly than ever, standing as on a rock of adamant, I defy the arguments of hell to move me, for "I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." But I shall neither plead nor argue this night. You profess to be Christian men and women, or else you would not be here. Your profession may be lies. What you *say* you are may be the very opposite of what you *really* are, but still, I suppose you all admit that this is the word of God. A thought or two, then, upon it. "I have written to him the great things of My law."

First, my friends, stand over this volume and *admire its authority.* This is no Solomon book. It is not the sayings of the sages of Greece. Here are not the utterances of philosophers of past ages. If these words were written by man, we might reject them, but oh, let me think the solemn thought—that this book is God's handwriting—that these words are God's. Let me look at its date—it is dated from the hills of heaven. Let me look at its letters—they flash glory on my eyes. Let me read the chapters—they are big with meaning and mysteries unknown. Let me turn over the prophecies—they are pregnant with unthought-of orders. Oh, Book of books! And were you written by my God? Then will I bow before you. Book of vast authority, you are a proclamation from the Emperor of

heaven! Far be it from me to exercise my reason in contradicting you. Reason! Your place is to stand and find out what this volume means, not to tell what this Book *ought* to say. Come my reason, my intellect, sit down and listen, for these words are the words of God. I do not know how to enlarge on this thought. Oh, if you could ever remember that this Bible was actually and really written by God! Oh, if you had been let into the secret chambers of heaven, if you had beheld God grasping His pen and writing down these letters, then surely you would respect them. But they are just as much God's handwriting as if you had seen God write them. This Bible is a book of authority; it is an authorized book, for God has written it. Oh, tremble, tremble, lest any of you despise it. Mark its authority, for it is the word of God!

Then, since God wrote it, mark its *truthfulness.* If I had written it there would be worms of critics who would at once swarm on it and would cover it with their evil spawn. Had I written it, there would be men who would pull it to pieces at once and perhaps quite right, too. But this is the word of God. Come, search, you critics and find a flaw! Examine it from its Genesis to its Revelations and find an error. This is a vein of pure gold, unalloyed by quartz or any earthy substance. This is a star without a speck, a sun without a blot; a light without darkness; a moon without its paleness; a glory without a dimness. O Bible! It cannot be said of any other book that it is perfect and pure, but of you we can declare all wisdom is gathered up in you, without a particle of folly! This is the judge that ends the strife where wit and reason fail. This is the book untainted by any error—it is pure, unalloyed, perfect truth. Why? Because God wrote it. Ah, charge God with error if you please. Tell Him that His book is not what it ought to be. I have heard men with prudish and mock-modesty, who would like to alter the Bible. And (I almost blush to say it) I have heard minister's alter God's Bible because they were afraid of it. Have you ever heard a man say, "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved. But He that believes not,"—what does the Bible say?—"Shall be *damned.*" But that does not happen to be polite enough, so they say, "Shall be *condemned."*

Gentlemen! Pull the velvet out of your mouths. Speak God's word. We want none of your alterations. I have heard men in prayer, instead of saying, "Make your calling and *election* sure," say "Make your calling and *salvation* sure." Pity they were not born when God lived, far-far back, that they might have taught God how to write! Oh, impudence beyond all bounds! Oh, full-blown self-conceit! To attempt to dictate to the All-Wise—to teach the Omniscient and instruct the Eternal! Strange that there should be men so vile as to use the penknife of Jehoiachin to cut passages of the word because they are unpalatable; oh you who dislike certain portions of the Holy Writ rest assured that your taste is corrupt and that God will not stay for your little opinion. Your dislike is the very reason why God wrote it, because you ought not to be suited. You have

no right to be pleased. God wrote what you do not like. He wrote the truth. Oh, let us bend in reverence before it, for God inspired it. It is pure truth. Here from this fountain gushes *aqua vitae*—"the water of life," without a single particle of earth. Here from this sun there comes forth rays of radiance, without the mixture of darkness. Blessed Bible, you are all truth!

Yet once more, before we leave this point let us stop and consider *the merciful nature of God*, in having written us a Bible at all. Ah, He might have left us without it, to grope our dark way, as blind men seek the wall. He might have allowed us to wander on with the star of reason as our only guide. I recollect a story of Mr. Hume, who so constantly affirmed that the light of reason is abundantly sufficient. Being at a good minister's house one evening, he had been discussing the question and declaring his firm belief in the sufficiency of the light of nature. On leaving, the minister offered to hold him a candle, to light him down the steps. He said, "No, the light of nature would be enough, the moon would do." It so happened that the moon was covered with a cloud and he fell down the steps. "Ah," said the minister, "you had better have had a little light from above, after all, Mr. Hume." So, supposing the light of nature to be sufficient, we had better have a little light from above, too, and then we shall be sure to be right! Better have two lights than only one. The light of creation is a bright light. God may be seen in the stars, His name is written in gilt letters on the brow of night. You may discover His glory in the ocean waves, yes, in the trees of the field. But it is better to read it in two books than in one. You will find it here more clearly revealed, for He has written this Book, Himself, and He has given you the key to understand it, if you have the Holy Spirit. Ah, beloved, let us thank God for this Bible. Let us love it. Let us count it more precious than much fine gold!

But let me say one thing before I pass on to the second point. If this is the word of God, what will become of some of you who have not read it for the last month? "Month, sir! I have not read it for this year!" Yes, there are some of you who have not read it at all. Most people treat the Bible very politely. They have a small pocket volume, neatly bound—they put a white pocket handkerchief around it—and carry it to their places of worship. When they get home, they lay it up in a drawer till next Sunday morning. Then it comes out again for a little bit of a treat and goes to chapel. That is all the poor Bible gets in the way of an airing! That is your style of entertaining this heavenly messenger. There is dust enough on some of your Bibles to write "damnation" with your fingers. There are some of you who have not turned over your Bibles for a long, long, long while and what do you think? I tell you blunt words, but true words. What will God say at last? When you shall come before Him, He shall say, "Did you read My Bible?" "*No*." "I wrote you a letter of mercy. Did you read it?" "*No*." "Rebel! I have sent you a letter inviting you to Me—did

you ever read it?" "*Lord I never broke the seal. I kept it shut up.*" "Wretch!" says God, "then you deserve hell. If I sent you a loving epistle and you would not even break the seal—what shall I do with you?" Oh, let it not be so with you. Be Bible readers. Be Bible searchers.

II. Our second point is, THE SUBJECTS ON WHICH THE BIBLE TREATS. The words of the text are these—"I have written to him the great things of My law." The Bible treats of great things and of great things, only. There is nothing in this Bible which is unimportant. Every verse in it has a solemn meaning and if we have not found it out yet, we hope yet to do it. You have seen mummies wrapped round and round with folds of linen. Well, God's Bible is like that. It is a vast roll of white linen, woven in the loom of truth. You will have to continue unwinding it, roll after roll, before you get the real meaning of it from the very depth! And when you have found, as you think, a part of the meaning, you will still need to keep on unwinding, unwinding and all eternity you will be unwinding the words of this wondrous volume! Yet there is nothing in the Bible but great things. Let me divide, so as to be briefer. First, all things in this Bible are great—but secondly, some things are the greatest of all.

All things in the Bible are great. Some people think it does not matter what doctrines you believe—that it is immaterial what Church you attend—that all denominations are alike. Well, I dislike Mrs. Bigotry above almost all people in the world and I never give her any compliment or praise—but there is another woman I hate equally as much and that is Mrs. Latitudinarianism, a well-known character, who has made the discovery that all of us are alike. Now I believe that a man may be *saved* in any church. Some have been saved in the Church of Rome—a few blessed men, whose names I could mention here. I know, blessed be God, that multitudes are saved in the Church of England—she has a host of pious, praying men in her midst. I think that all sections of Protestant Christians have a remnant according to the election of grace and they had need to have, some of them, a little salt, for otherwise they would go to corruption. But when I say that, do you imagine that I think them all on a level? Are they all alike truthful? One set says infant baptism is right, another says it is wrong, yet you say they are both right? I cannot see that. One teaches we are saved by free grace, another says that we are not, but are saved by free will. And yet you believe they are both right? I do not understand that. One says that God loves His people and never leaves off loving them. Another says that He did not love His people before they loved Him—that He often loves them and then ceases to love them and turns them away! They may be both right in the main. But can they be both right when one says "Yes," and the other says "No"? I must have a pair of spectacles to enable me to look backwards and forwards at the same time, before I can see that! It cannot be, sirs, that they are both right! But some say they differ upon non-essentials. This text says, "I have written to him the *great* things of My law." There is nothing in God's

Bible which is not great. Did any of you ever sit down to see which was the purest religion? "Oh," you say, "we never took the trouble. We went just where our father and mother went." Ah, that is a profound reason, indeed! You went where your father and mother did. I thought you were sensible people. I didn't think you went where other people pulled you, but went of your own selves. I love my parents above all that breathe and the very thought that they believed a thing to be true, helps me to think it is correct. But I have not followed them—I belong to a different denomination—and I thank God I do. I can receive them as Christian Brothers and Sisters, but I never thought that because they happened to be one thing, I was to be the same. No such thing. God gave me brains and I will use them. And if you have any intellect, use it too. Never say it doesn't matter. It *does* matter. Whatever God has put here is of eminent importance—He would not have written a thing that was indifferent. Whatever is here is of some value, therefore search all questions, try all by the word of God. I am not afraid to have what I preach tried by this Bible. Only give me a fair field and no favor and this Bible. If I say anything contrary to it, I will withdraw it the next Sunday. By this I stand, by this I fall. Search and see but don't say, "It does not matter." If God says a thing, it must always be of importance.

But while all things in God's word are important, *all are not equally important.* There are certain fundamental and vital truths which must be believed, or otherwise no man would be saved. If you want to know what you must believe if you would be saved, you will find the great things of God's law between these two covers—they are all contained here. As a sort of digest or summary of the great things of the law, I remember an old friend of mine once saying, "Ah, you preach the three R's and God will always bless you." I said, "What are the three R's?" And He answered, "Ruin, redemption, and regeneration." They contain the sum and substance of divinity and of ruin. We were all ruined in the Fall. We were all lost when Adam sinned and we are all ruined by our own transgressions. We are all ruined by our own evil hearts and our own wicked wills. And we all shall be ruined unless grace saves us. Then there is a second R for redemption. We are ransomed by the blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish and without spot. We are rescued by His power. We are ransomed by His merits. We are redeemed by His strength. Then there is R for regeneration. If we have been pardoned, we must also be regenerated, for no man can partake of redemption unless he is regenerate. Let him be as good as he pleases; let him serve God as he imagines, as much as he likes—unless he is regenerate and has a new heart, a new birth, he will still be in the first R, that is ruin! These things contain an epitome of the gospel. I believe there is a better epitome in the five points of Calvinism—election according to the foreknowledge of God; the natural depravity and sinfulness of man; particular redemption by the blood of Christ; effectual calling [irresistible grace] by the power of the Spirit—and ultimate perse-

verance of the saints by the efforts of God's might. I think all those need to be believed in order to salvation. But I should not like to write a creed like the Athanasian, beginning with, "Whoever should be saved, before all things it is necessary that he should deny the Catholic faith, which faith is this"—when I got that far, I would stop, because I would not know what to write. I hold the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible, but it is not for me to draw up creeds. But I ask you to search the Scriptures, for this is the word of life.

God says, "I have written to him the great things of My law." Do you doubt their greatness? Do you think they are not worth your attention? Reflect a moment, man. Where are you standing now?

"Lo, on a narrow neck of land
'Twixt two unbounded seas I stand!
An inch of time, a moment's space
May lodge me in yon heavenly place—
Or shut me up in hell."

I recollect standing on a seashore once, upon a narrow neck of land, thoughtless that the tide might come up. The tide kept continually washing up on either side. But wrapped in thoughts I still stood there until at last there was the greatest difficulty in getting on shore. The waves had washed between me and the shore. You and I stand each day on a narrow neck and there is one wave coming up there. See how near it is to your feet! Lo, another throws at every tick of the clock—"our hearts, like muffled drums, are beating funeral marches to the tomb." We are always tending downwards to the grave each moment that we live. *This Bible* tells me that if I am converted, when I die there is a heaven of joy and love to receive me. It tells me that angels' pinions shall be stretched and I, borne by strong cherubic wings, shall out-soar the lightning and mount beyond the stars, up to the Throne of God, to dwell forever—

"Far from a world of grief and sin
With God eternally shut in."

Oh, it makes the hot tears start from my eyes! It makes my heart too big for this, my body and my brain whine at the thought of—

"Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me."

Oh, that sweet scene beyond the clouds. Sweet fields arrayed in living green and rivers of delight. Are not these great things? But then, poor unregenerate soul! The Bible says if you are lost, you are lost forever. It tells you that if you die without Christ, without God, there is no hope for you, that there is a place without a gleam of hope where you shall read in burning letters, "you knew your duty, but you did it not." It tells you that you shall be driven from His presence with a, "depart you cursed." Are not these great things? Yes, sirs, as heaven is desirable, as hell is terrible, as time is short, as eternity is infinite, as the soul is precious, as pains are to be shunned, as heaven is to be sought, as God is eternal

and as His words are sure—these are great things—things you ought to listen to.

III. Our last point is THE TREATMENT WHICH THE POOR BIBLE RECEIVES IN THIS WORLD. It is accounted a strange thing. What does that mean—the Bible accounted a strange thing? In the first place, it means that it is very strange to some people, because *they never read it.* I remember reading, on one occasion, the sacred story of David and Goliath and there was a person present, positively grown up to years of maturity, who said to me, "Dear me! What an interesting story! What book is that in?" And I remember a person once coming to me in private—I spoke to her about her soul—she told me how deeply she felt, how she had a desire to serve God. But she found another law in her members. I turned to a passage in Romans and read to her, "The good that I would I do not, and the evil which I would not, that I do!" She said, "Is that in the Bible? I did not know it." I did not blame her because she had no interest in the Bible till then. But I did wonder that there could be found persons who knew nothing about such a passage! Ah, you know more about your ledgers than your Bible. You know more about your day-books than what God has written. Many of you will read a novel from beginning to end and what have you got? A mouthful of froth when you have done! But you cannot read the Bible—that solid, lasting, substantial and satisfying food goes uneaten, locked up in the cupboard of neglect—while anything that man writes—as a catch of the day, is greedily devoured. "I have written unto him the great things of My law, *but* they were counted as a strange thing."

You have never read it. I bring the broad charge against you. Perhaps you say I ought not to charge you with any such thing. I always think it better to have a worse opinion of you than too good a one. I charge you with this—you do not read your Bibles. Some of you never have read it through. I know I speak what your heart must say, is honest truth. You are not Bible readers. You say you have the Bible in your houses—do I think you are such heathens as not to have a Bible? But when did you last read it? How do you know that your spectacles, which you have lost, have not been there for the last three years? Many people have not turned over its pages for a long time and God might say unto them, "I have written unto you the great things of My law, but they have been accounted unto you a strange thing."

There are others who read the Bible, but when they read it, *they say it is so horribly dry.* That young man over there says it is a "bore." That is the word he uses. He says, "My mother said to me when you go up to town, read a chapter every day. Well, I thought I would please her and I said I would. I am sure I wish I had not. I did not read a chapter yesterday or the day before. We were so busy. I could not help it." You do not love the Bible, do you? "No, there is nothing in it which is interesting." Ah, I thought so. But a little while ago *I* could not see anything in it. Do

you know why? Blind men cannot see, can they? But when the Spirit touches the scales of the eyes they fall off. And when He puts eye-salve on, then the Bible becomes precious. I remember a minister who went to see an old lady and he thought he would give her some precious promises out of the word of God. Turning to one he saw written in the margin, "P," and he asked, "What does this mean?" "That means *precious*, sir." Further down He saw "T and P," and he asked what the letters meant. "That," she said, "means *tried and proved,* for I have tried and proved it." If you have tried God's word and proved it; if it is precious to your souls, then you are Christians. But those persons who despise the Bible have "neither part nor lot in the matter." If it is dry to you, you will be dry at last in hell. If you do not esteem it as better than your necessary food, there is no hope for you, for you lack the greatest evidence of your Christianity.

Alas, Alas, The worst case is to come. *There are some people who hate the Bible*, as well as despise it. Is there such a one stepped in here? Some of you said, "Let us go and hear what the young preacher has to say to us." This is what he has to say to you—"Behold you despisers and wonder and perish." This is what he has to say to you—"The wicked shall be turned into hell and all that forget God." And this, again, he has to say to you—"Behold there shall come in the last days, mockers like yourselves, walking after your own lusts." But more—he tells you tonight that if you are not saved, you must find salvation here. Therefore, despise not the Bible, but search it, read it and come unto it. Rest you well assured, O scorner, that your laughs cannot alter the truth of God, your jests cannot avert your inevitable doom! Though in your hardihood you should make a league with death and sign a covenant with hell—yet swift justice shall overtake you and strong vengeance strike you low. In vain do you jeer and mock, for eternal verities are mightier than your sophistries—nor can your smart sayings alter the divine truth of a single word of this volume of Revelation! Oh, why do you quarrel with your best friend and ill-treat your only refuge? There yet remains hope even for the scorner. Hope in a Savior's veins; hope in the Father's mercy; Hope in the Holy Spirit's omnipotent agency!

I have done when I have said one word. My friend, the philosopher says it may be very well for me to urge people to read the Bible. But he thinks there are a great many sciences far more interesting and useful than theology! I am e*xtremely obliged to you for your opinion, sir.* What science do you mean? The science of dissecting beetles and arranging butterflies? "No," you say, "certainly not." The science, then, of arranging stones and telling us of the strata of the earth? "No, not exactly that." Which science then? "Oh, all sciences," you say, "are better than the science of the Bible." Ah, sir, that is your opinion, and it is because you are far from God that you say so! But the science of Jesus Christ is the most excellent of sciences! Let no one turn away from the Bible because it is

not a book of learning and wisdom. It is! Would you know astronomy? It is here—it tells you of the Sun of Righteousness, and the Star of Bethlehem. Would you know botany? It is here—it tells you of the plant of renown—the Lily of the Valley, and the Rose of Sharon. Would you know geology and mineralogy? You shall learn it here—for you may read of the Rock of Ages, and the White Stone with a name engraved thereon, which no man knows. Would you study history? Here is the most ancient of all the records of the history of the human race. Whatever your science is, come and bend over this Book; for your science is here! Come and drink out of this fair fount of knowledge and wisdom, and you shall find yourselves made wise unto salvation! Wise and foolish, babes and men, gray-headed sires, youths and maidens—I speak to you, I plead with you, I beg of you, respect your Bibles. and search them—for in them you think you have eternal life, and these are they which testify of Christ!

I have done. Let us go home and practice what we have heard. I have heard of a woman, who, when she was asked what she remembered of the minister's sermon, said, "I don't recollect anything of it. It was about short weights and bad measures and I didn't recollect anything but to go home and burn the bushel." So if you will remember to go home and burn the bushel, if you will recollect to go home and read your Bibles, I shall have said enough! And may God, in His infinite mercy, when you read your Bibles, pour into your soul the illuminating rays of the Sun of Righteousness by the agency of the ever-adorable Spirit. Then you will, by God's grace, read to your profit and to your soul's salvation.

We may say of THE BIBLE—

"God's cabinet of revealed counsel 'tis!
Where weal and woe, are ordered so
That every man may know which shall be his.
Unless his own mistake, false application make
It is the index to eternity!
He cannot miss of endless bliss
Who takes this chart to steer by.
Nor can he be mistook, that speaks by this Book;
It is the Book of God!
What if I should say, God of books? Let him who looks
Angry at that expression, as too bold,
His thoughts in silence smother, till he find such another."

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PAUL'S FIRST PRAYER
NO. 16

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 25, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"For behold, he is praying."
Acts 9:11.

GOD has many methods of quenching persecution. He will not allow His church to be injured by its enemies, or overwhelmed by its foes. And He is not short of means for turning aside the way of the wicked, or of turning it upside down. In two ways He usually accomplishes His end—sometimes by the confusion of the persecutor and at others in a more blessed manner, by his conversion. Sometimes He confuses and confounds His enemies—He makes the diviner mad. He lets the man who comes against Him be utterly destroyed, allows him to drive on to his own destruction and then, at last, turns round in triumphant derision upon the man who hoped to have said aha! aha! to the church of God. But at other times, as in this case, He converts the persecutor. Thus, He transforms the foe into a friend. He makes the man who was a warrior *against* the gospel, a soldier *for* it. Out of darkness He brings forth light. Out of the eater He gets honey, yes, out of stony hearts He raises up children unto Abraham! Such was the case with Saul. A more furious bigot it is impossible to conceive. He had been splattered with the blood of Stephen when they stoned him to death—so officious was he in his cruelty, that the men left their clothes in the charge of a young man named Saul. Living at Jerusalem, in the college of Gamaliel, he constantly came in contact with the disciples of the Man of Nazareth. He laughed at them; he reviled them as they passed along the street; he procured enactments against them, and even put them to death! And now, as a crowning point, this werewolf, having tasted blood, becomes exceedingly mad. He determines to go to Damascus, that he may glut himself with the gore of men and women—that he may bind the Christians, and bring them to Jerusalem—there to suffer what he considered to be a just punishment for their heresy and departure from their ancient religion! But oh, how marvelous was the power of God! Jesus stays this man in his mad career—just as with his lance in rest he was dashing against Christ, Christ met him, unhorsed him, threw him on the ground and questioned him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" He then graciously removed his rebellious heart—gave him a new heart and a right spirit—turned his aim and object—led him to Damascus—laid him prostrate for three days and nights—spoke to him—made mystic sounds go murmuring through

his ears—set his whole soul on fire. And when at last he started up from that three day's trance, and began to pray, then it was that Jesus from heaven descended, came in a vision to Ananias and said—"Arise and go into the street which is called Straight and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he is praying."

First, our text was *an announcement*—"Behold, he is praying." Secondly, it was *an argument*—"*For behold*, he is praying." Then, to conclude, we will try to make an application of our text to your hearts. Though application is the work of God, alone, we will trust that He will be pleased to make that application while the word is preached this morning.

I. First, here was AN ANNOUNCEMENT—"Go inquire for Saul of Tarsus—for behold, he is praying." Without any preface, let me say that this was the announcement of a fact which was noticed in heaven, which was joyous to the angels, which was astonishing to Ananias and which was a novelty to Saul, himself!

It was the announcement of *a fact which was noticed in heaven.* Poor Saul had been led to cry for mercy, and the moment he began to pray, God began to hear! Do you not notice, in reading the chapter, what attention God paid to Saul? He knew the street where he lived—"Go to the street that is called *Straight."* He knew the house where he resided—"Inquire at the *house of Judas."* He knew his name. It was *Saul.* He knew the place where he came from—"inquire for Saul of *Tarsus."* And He knew that he had prayed. "Behold, *he is praying."* Oh, it is a glorious fact that prayers are noticed in heaven! The poor broken-hearted sinner climbing up to his chamber, bends his knees, but can only utter his wailing in the language of sighs and tears. Lo, that groan has made all the harps of heaven thrill with music! That tear has been caught by God and put into the vial of heaven, to be perpetually preserved. The suppliant, whose fears prevent his words, will be well understood by the Most High. He may only shed one hasty tear. But "prayer is the falling of a tear." Tears are the diamonds of heaven—sighs are a part of the music of Jehovah's throne. For though prayers are—

"The simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try";

they are likewise the—

"Most sublime strains that reach
The majesty on high."

Let me dilate on this thought a moment. Prayers are noticed in heaven. Oh, I know what many of you are thinking—you think, "If I turn to God, if I seek Him, surely I am so inconsiderable a being, so guilty and vile, that it cannot be imagined He would take any notice of me." My friends harbor no such heathenish ideas! Our God is no God who sits in one perpetual dream, nor does He clothe Himself in such thick darkness that He cannot see. He is not like Baal, who hears not. True, He may not regard battles. He cares not for the pomp and pageantry of kings. He lis-

tens not to the swell of martial music. He regards not the triumph and pride of man—but wherever there is a heart big with sorrow, wherever there is an eye suffused with tears, wherever there is a lip quivering with agony, wherever there is a deep groan, or a penitential sigh—the ears of Jehovah are wide open! He marks it down in the registry of His memory. He puts our prayers, like rose leaves, between the pages of His book of remembrance. And when the volume is opened at last, there shall be a precious fragrance springing up from there; oh, poor sinner of the blackest and vilest character, your prayers are heard, and even now God has said of *you,* "Behold, he is praying." Where was it—in a barn? Where was it—in the closet? Was it at your bedside this morning, or in this hall? Are you now glancing to heaven? Speak poor heart! Did I hear your lips just now mutter out, "God have mercy on me, a sinner"? I tell you, sinner, there is one thing which does outstrip the telegraph. You know we can now send a message and receive an answer in a few moments. But I read of something in the Bible swifter than the electric fluid—"Before they call I will answer, and while they are speaking I will hear." So then, poor sinner, you *are* noticed—yes, you are heard by Him that sits on the throne!

Again, this was the announcement of *a fact joyous to heaven.* Our text is prefaced with, "Behold," for, doubtless, our Savior, Himself, regarded it with joy. Once only do we read of a smile resting on the countenance of Jesus, when lifting up His eyes to heaven, He exclaimed, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes—even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." The Shepherd of our souls rejoices in the vision of His sheep securely folded. He triumphs in spirit when He brings a wanderer home! I conceive that when He spoke these words to Ananias, one of the smiles of paradise must have shone from His eyes. "Behold," I have won the heart of My enemy. I have saved My persecutor. Even now he is bending the knee at My footstool, "Behold, he is praying." Jesus Himself led the song, rejoicing over the new convert with singing! Jesus Christ was glad and rejoiced more over that lost sheep than over ninety and nine that went not astray. And angels rejoiced, too! Why, when one of God's elect is born, angels stand around his cradle. He grows up and runs into sin, angels follow him. Tracking him all his way, they gaze with sorrow upon his many wanderings. The fair Peri drops a tear whenever that loved one sins. Presently the man is brought under the sound of the gospel. The angel says, "Behold, he begins to *hear."* He waits a little while, the word sinks into his heart, a tear runs down his cheek and at last he cries from his inmost soul, "God have mercy upon me!" Look! The angel claps his wings! Up he flies to heaven and says, "Brethren angels, listen to me—'Behold, he is praying.'" Then they set heaven's bells ringing. They have a jubilee in glory! Again they shout with gladsome voices, for verily I tell you, "There is joy in heaven

among the angels of God over one sinner who repents." They watch us till we pray and when we pray, they say, "Behold, he is praying."

Moreover, my dear friends, there may be other spirits in heaven that rejoice, besides the angels. Those persons are our friends who have gone before us. I have not many relations in heaven, but I have one whom I dearly love, who, I doubt not, often prayed for me. For she nursed me when I was a child and brought me up during part of my infancy and now she sits before the throne in glory—suddenly snatched away. I fancy she looked upon her darling grandson and as she saw him in the ways of sin, of vice and folly, she could not look with sorrow for there are no tears in the eyes of glorified ones. She could not look with regret, because they cannot know such a feeling before the throne of God. But ah, that moment when by sovereign grace, I was compelled to pray, when all alone I bent my knee and wrestled—I think I see her as she said—"Behold, he is praying! Behold, he is praying!" Oh, I can picture her countenance! She seemed to have two heavens for a moment, a double bliss, a heaven in me as well as in herself—when she could say, "Behold, he is praying." Ah, young man, there is your mother walking the golden streets. She is looking down upon you this hour. She nursed you—on her breast you lay when but a child. And she consecrated you to Jesus Christ. From heaven, she has been watching you with that intense anxiety which is compatible with happiness. This morning she is looking upon you. What do you say, young man? Does Christ by His Spirit say in your heart, "Come unto Me"? Do you drop the tear of repentance? I think I see your mother as she cries, "Behold, he is praying!" Once more she bends before the throne of God and says, "I thank You, O You ever gracious one, that he who was my child on earth, has now become *Your* child in light."

But, if there is one in heaven who has more joy than another over the conversion of a sinner, it is a minister, one of God's true ministers. Oh, my hearers, you little think how God's true ministers do love your souls. Perhaps you think it is easy work to stand here and preach to you. God knows, if that were all—it would be easy work. But when we think that when we speak to you, your salvation or damnation in some measure depends upon what we say—when we reflect that if we are unfaithful watchmen, your blood will God require at our hands—oh, good God, when I reflect that I have preached to thousands in my lifetime, many thousands—and have perhaps said many things I ought not to have said, it startles me, it makes me shake and tremble! Luther said he could face his enemies but could not go up his pulpit stairs without his knees knocking together. Preaching is *not* child's play, it is not a thing to be done without labor and anxiety—it is solemn work—it is awful work if you view it in its relation to eternity. Ah, how God's minister prays for you! If you might have listened under the eaves of his chamber window,

you would have heard him groaning every Sunday night over his sermons because he had not spoken with more effect. You would have heard him pleading with God, "Who has believed our report? To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Ah, when he observes you, from his rest in heaven—when he sees you *praying*, how he will clap his hands and say, "Behold, the child You have given me! Behold, he is praying!" I am sure when we see one brought to know the Lord, we feel very much like one who has saved a fellow creature from being drowned. There is a poor man in the flood. He is going down, he is sinking. He must be drowned, but I spring in, grasp him firmly, lift him on the shore and lay him on the ground. The physician comes. He looks at him; he puts his hand upon him and says, "I am afraid he is dead." We apply all the means in our power; we do what we can to restore life. I feel I have been that man's deliverer and oh, how I stoop down and put my ear beside his mouth! At last I say, "He breathes! He breathes!" What pleasure there is in that thought! He breathes. There is still life. So when we find a man praying, we shout—he breathes! He is not dead! He is alive! For while a man prays he is not dead in trespasses and sins, but is brought to life, is quickened by the power of the Spirit. "Behold, he is praying." This was joyful news in heaven, as well as being noticed by God.

Then in the next place, this was *an event most astonishing to men.* Ananias lifted up both his hands in amazement. "O my Lord, I should have thought anybody would pray but that man. Is it possible?" I do not know how it is with other ministers but sometimes I look upon such-and-such individuals in the congregation and I say, "Well, they are very hopeful. I think I shall have them. I trust there is a work going on and hope soon to hear them tell what the Lord has done for their souls." Soon, perhaps, I see nothing of them and miss them altogether. But instead thereof, my good Master sends me one of whom I had no hope—an outcast, a drunk, a reprobate—to the praise of the glory of His grace! Then I lift up my hands in astonishment, thinking, "I should have thought of anybody rather than you." I remember a circumstance which occurred a little while ago. There was a poor man about 60 years old. He had been a rough sailor, one of the worst men in the village. It was his custom to drink and he seemed to be delighted when he was cursing and swearing. However he came into the chapel one Sunday, when one nearly related to me was preaching from the text concerning Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. And the poor man thought, "What? Did Jesus Christ ever weep over such a wretch as I am?" He thought he was too bad for Christ to care for him. At last he came to the minister and said, "Sir, 60 years have I been sailing under the colors of the devil. It is time I should have a new owner; I want to scuttle the old ship and sink her altogether. Then I shall have a new one and I shall sail under the colors of Prince Immanuel." Ever since that moment, that man has been a praying character, walking before God in

all sincerity. Yet he was the very last man you would have thought of! Somehow God does choose the last men—He does not care for the diamond, but He picks up the stones, for He is able, out of "stones, to raise up children unto Abraham." God is wiser than the chemist—He not only refines gold, but He transmutes base metal into precious jewels. He takes the filthiest and the vilest and fashions them into glorious beings, makes them saints, whereas they have been sinners and sanctifies them, whereas they have been unholy!

The conversion of Saul was a strange thing. But, beloved, was it stranger that you and I should have been Christians? Let me ask you if anybody had told you, a few years ago, that you would belong to a church and be numbered with the children of God, what would you have said? "Nonsense! I am not one of your canting Methodists! I am not going to have any religion; I love to think and do as I like." Did not you and I say so? And how on earth did we get *here?* When we look at the change that has passed over us, it appears like a dream! God has left many in our families who were better than we were and why has He chosen us? Oh, is it not strange? Might we not lift up our hands in astonishment, as Ananias did, and say, "Behold, behold, behold, it is a miracle on earth, a wonder in heaven"?

The last thing I have to say here is this—*this fact was a novelty to Saul himself*. "Behold, he is praying." What is there novel in that? Saul used to go up to the Temple twice a day at the hour of prayer. If you could have accompanied him, you would have heard him speak beautifully, in words like these—"Lord, I thank You I am not as other men are. I am not an extortioner, nor a publican. I fast twice in the week and give tithes of all I possess" and so on. Oh, you might have found him pouring out a fine oration before the throne of God! And yet it says—"Behold, he is praying." What? Had he never prayed before? No, never. All he had ever done before went for nothing—it was not prayer! I have heard of an old gentleman who was taught, when a child, to pray, "Pray God bless my father and mother," and he kept on praying the same thing for 70 years when his parents were both dead. After that it pleased God, in His infinite mercy, to touch his heart and he was led to see that, notwithstanding his constancy to his forms, he had not been praying at all. He often said his prayers, but never prayed. So it was with Saul. He had pronounced his lofty orations but they were all good for nothing! He had prayed his long prayers for a pretense. It had all been a failure. Now comes a true petition and it is said, "Behold, he is praying." Do you see that man trying to obtain a hearing from his Maker? How he stands! He speaks Latin and blank verse before the Almighty's throne. But God sits in calm indifference paying no attention. Then the man tries a different style—procures a book—and bending his knees again—this time he is praying in a delightful *form*, the best old prayer that could ever be put together. But the

Most High disregards his empty formalities. At last the poor creature throws the book away, forgets his blank verse and says, "O Lord, hear, for Christ's sake." "Hear him," says God, "I have heard him." There is the mercy you have sought. One hearty *prayer* is better than ten thousand *forms;* one prayer coming from the soul is better than a myriad cold *readings!* As for prayers that spring from the mouth and head only, God abhors them! He loves those that come deep from the heart. Perhaps I would be impudent if I were to say that there are hundreds here, this morning, who never prayed once in their lives. There are some of you who never did. There is one young man over there, who told his parents when he left them that he would always go through his form of prayer every morning and night. But he is ashamed and he has left it off. Well, young man, what will you do when you come to die? Will you have "the watchword at the gates of death"? Will you "enter heaven by prayer"? No, you will not. You will be driven from God's presence and be cast away!

II. Secondly, we have here AN ARGUMENT. *"For behold*, he is praying." It was an argument, first of all, for *Ananias' safety*. Poor Ananias was afraid to go to Saul. He thought it was very much like stepping into a lion's den. "If I go to his house," he thought, "the moment he sees me, he will take me to Jerusalem at once, for I am one of Christ's disciples. I dare not go." God says, "Behold, he is praying." "Well," says Ananias, "that is enough for me. If he is a praying man, he will not hurt me. If he is a man of real devotion, I am safe." Be sure you may always trust a praying man! I do not know why it is, but even ungodly men always pay reverence to a sincere Christian! A master likes to have a praying servant even if he does not regard religion himself. He likes to have a pious servant and he will trust him rather than any other. True, there are some of your professedly praying people who have not a bit of prayer in them! But whenever you find a really praying man, trust him with untold gold. For if he really prays, you need not be afraid of him. He who communes with God in secret may be trusted in public. I always feel safe with a man who is a visitor to the mercy seat. I have heard an anecdote of two gentlemen traveling together, somewhere in Switzerland. Presently they come into the midst of the forests and you know the gloomy tales the people tell about the inns there, how dangerous it is to lodge in them. One of them, an infidel, said to the other, who was a Christian, "I don't like stopping here at all, it is very dangerous indeed." "Well," said the other, "let us try." So they went into a house, but it looked so suspicious that neither of them liked it. And they thought they would prefer being at home in England. Presently the landlord said, "Gentlemen, I always read and pray with my family before going to bed. Will you allow me to do so tonight?" "Yes," they said "with the greatest pleasure." When they went upstairs, the infidel said, "I am not at all afraid, now." "Why?" asked the Christian; "Because our host has prayed!" "Oh," said the other, "then it

seems, after all, you think something of religion—because a man prays, you can go to sleep in his house." And it was marvelous how both of them did sleep. Sweet dreams they had, for they felt that where the house had been roofed by prayer and walled with devotion, there could not be found a man living that would commit an injury to them. This, then, was an argument to Ananias—that he might go with safety to Saul's house!

But more than this there was *an argument for Paul's sincerity.* Secret prayer is one of the best tests of sincere religion. If Jesus had said to Ananias, "Behold, he preaches," Ananias would have said, *"that* he may do and yet be a deceiver." If he had said, "He is gone to a meeting of the church," Ananias would have said, "He may enter there as a wolf in sheep's clothing." But when He said, "Behold, he is praying," that was argument enough! A young person comes and tells me about what he has felt and what he has been doing. At last I say, "Kneel down and pray." "I would much rather not." "Never mind, you shall." Down he falls on his knees, he has hardly a word to say—he begins groaning and crying, and there he kneels on his knees till at last he stammers out, "Lord have mercy upon me a sinner. I am the greatest of sinners. Have mercy upon me!" Then I am a little more satisfied and I say, "I did not mind all your talk, I wanted your prayers." But oh, if I could follow him home. If I could see him go and pray alone—then I would feel sure. For he who prays in private is a real Christian. The mere reading of a book of daily devotions will not prove you a child of God. If you pray in private, then you have a *sincere* religion. A little religion, if *sincere*, is better than mountains of pretense! Home piety is the best piety. Praying will make you leave off sinning, or sinning will make you leave off praying. Prayer in the heart proves the reality of conversion. A man may be sincere, but sincerely wrong. Paul was sincerely right. "Behold, he is praying," was the best argument that his religion was right. If anyone should ask me for an epitome of the Christian religion, I would say it is in that one word—"prayer." If I should be asked, "What will take in the whole of Christian experience?" I would answer, "prayer." A man must have been convinced of sin before he can pray. He must have had some hope that there was mercy for him before he can pray. In fact, all the Christian virtues are locked up in that word, *prayer*. Do but tell me you are a man of prayer and I will reply at once, "Sir, I have no doubt of the reality, as well as of the sincerity of your religion."

But one more thought and I will leave this subject. *It was a proof of this man's election*, for you read directly afterwards, "Behold, he is a chosen vessel." I often find people troubling themselves about the doctrine of election. Every now and then I get a letter from somebody or other taking me to task for preaching election. All the answer I can give is, "There it is in the Bible. Go and ask my Master why He put it there. I cannot help it.

I am only a serving man and I tell you the message from above. If I were a footman I should not alter my master's message at the door. I happen to be an ambassador of heaven, and I dare not alter the message I have received. If it is wrong, send up to headquarters. There it is, and I cannot alter it." This much let me say in explanation. Some say, "How can I discover whether I am God's elect? I am afraid I am not God's elect." Do you pray? If it can be said, "Behold, he is praying," it can also be said, "Behold, he is a chosen vessel." Have you faith? If so, you are elect. Those are the marks of election. If you have none of these you have no grounds for concluding that you belong to the peculiar people of God. Have you a *desire* to believe? Have you a *wish* to love Christ? Have you the millionth part of a *desire* to come to Christ? And is it a practical desire? Does it lead you to offer earnest, tearful supplication? If so, never be afraid of non-election, for whoever prays with sincerity was ordained of God before the foundation of the world that he should be holy and without blame before Christ in love!

III. Now for the APPLICATION. I have just a word or two with you my dear friends, before I send you away this morning. I regret that I cannot better enter into the subject, but my glorious Master requires of each of us according to what we *have,* not according to what we have *not*. I am deeply conscious that I fail in urging home the truth as solemnly as I ought. Nevertheless, "my work is with God, and my judgment with my God," and the last day shall reveal that my error lay in judgment, but not in sincere affection for souls.

First, allow me to address the children of God. Do you not see, my dear brethren, that the best mark of our being sons of God to be found is in our *devotion?* "Behold, he is praying." Well then, does it not follow, as a natural consequence, that the more we are found in prayer, the brighter will our evidences be? Perhaps you have lost your evidence this morning. You do not know whether you are a child of God or not. I will tell you where you lost your confidence—you lost it in your closet. Whenever a Christian backslides, his wandering commences in his closet. I speak what I have felt. I have often gone back from God—never so as to fall, finally, I know—but I have often lost that sweet savor of His love which I once enjoyed. I have had to cry—

"Those peaceful hours I once enjoyed.
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void!
The world can never fill."

I have gone up to God's house to preach without either fire or energy. I have read the Bible and there has been no light upon it. I have tried to have communion with God, but all has been a failure. Shall I tell where that commenced? It commenced in my closet. I had ceased, in a measure, to pray. Here I stand and confess my faults. I acknowledge that whenever I depart from God it is there it begins. Oh Christians, would

you be happy? Be much in prayer! Would you be victorious? Be much in prayer!—

"Restraining prayer, we cease to fight.
Prayer makes the Christian's armor bright."

Mrs. Berry used to say, "I would not be hired out of my closet for a thousand worlds." Mr. Jay said, "If the 12 Apostles were living near you, and you had access to them—if this communion drew you from the closet—they would prove a real injury to your souls." Prayer is the ship which brings home the richest freight. It is the soil which yields the most abundant harvest. Brethren, when you rise in the morning, your business so presses you that with a hurried word or two of prayer, down you go into the world! And at night, jaded and tired, you give God the last end of the day. The consequence is that you have no communion with Him. The reason we have not more true religion now is because we have not more prayer. Sirs, I have no opinion of the churches of the present day that do not pray. I go from chapel to chapel in this metropolis, and I see pretty good congregations. But I go to their prayer meetings on a week evening and I see a dozen persons. Can God bless us? Can He pour out His Spirit upon us while such things as these exist? He could, but it would not be according to the order of His dispensation, for He says, "When Zion travails, she brings forth children." Go to your churches and chapels with this thought—that you need more prayer. Many of you have no business here this morning. You ought to be in your own places of worship. I do not want to steal away the people from other chapels. There are enough to hear me without them. But though you have sinned this morning, hear while you are here, as much to your profit as possible. Go home and say to your minister, "Sir, we must have more prayer." Urge the people to more prayer. Have a prayer meeting, even if you have it all to yourself. And if you are asked how many were present, you can say "Four." "Four? How so?" "Why, there was myself and God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—and we have had a rich and real communion together." We must have an outpouring of real devotion or else what is to become of many of our churches? Oh, may God awaken us all, and stir us up to pray, for when we pray, we shall be victorious! I would like to take you, this morning, as Samson did the foxes—tie the firebrands of prayer to you—and send you in among the shocks of corn till you burn the whole field up! I would like to make a conflagration by my words and set all the churches on fire till the whole has smoked like a sacrifice to God's throne. If you *pray*, you have proof that you are a Christian! The less you pray, the less reason have you to believe your Christianity. And if you have neglected to pray altogether, then you have ceased to breathe, and you may be afraid that you never did breathe at all.

And now my last word is to the ungodly. Oh, Sirs! I could gladly wish myself anywhere but here. For if it is solemn work to address the godly—how much more when I come to deal with you? We fear lest on the one

hand we should so speak to you as to make you trust in your own strength. While on the other hand, we tremble lest we should lull you into the sleep of sloth and security. I believe most of us feel some difficulty as to the most fit manner to preach to you—not that we doubt but that the gospel is to be preached—but our desire is so to do it that we may win your souls. I feel like a watchman, who, while guarding a city, is oppressed with sleep. How earnestly does he strive to awaken himself, while infirmity would overcome him. The remembrance of his responsibility bestirs him. His is not lack of *will*, but of power! And so I hope all the watchmen of the Lord are anxious to be faithful, while at the same time they know their imperfection. Truly the minister of Christ will feel like the old keeper of Eddystone lighthouse. Life was failing fast but summoning all his strength, he crept round once more to trim the lights before he died. O may the Holy Spirit enable us to keep the beacon fire blazing, to warn you of the rocks, shoals and quicksand which surround you! And may we always guide you to Jesus and not to free will or creature merit. If my friends knew how anxiously I have sought divine direction in the important matter of preaching to sinners, they would not feel as some of them do—when they fancy I address them wrongly. I want to do as God bids me and if He tells me to speak to the dry bones and they shall live, I must do it, even if it does not please others, for if I don't, I would be condemned in my own conscience and condemned of God. Now with all the solemnity that none can summon, let me say that a prayerless soul is a Christless soul. As the Lord lives, you who never prayed are without God, without hope and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel! You who never know what a groan is, or a falling tear, are destitute of vital godliness. Let me ask you, sirs, whether you have ever thought in what an awful state you are? You are far from God and therefore God is angry with you, for "God is angry with the wicked every day." Oh, sinner! Lift your eyes and behold the frowning countenance of God, for He is angry with you! And I beseech you, as you love yourselves, just for one moment contemplate what will become of you, if living as you are, you should at last die without prayer. Don't think that one prayer on your deathbed will save you. Deathbed prayer is a deathbed farce, generally, and passes for nothing. It is a coin that will not ring in heaven but is stamped by hypocrisy and made of base metal. Take heed, sirs. Let me ask you, if you have never prayed, what will you do? It would be a good thing for you if death were an eternal *sleep*. But it is not. If you find yourself in hell, oh, the racks and pains!

But I will not harrow up your feelings by attempting to describe them. May God grant you never feel the torments of the lost. Only conceive that poor wretch in the flames who is saying, "Oh for one drop of water to cool my parched tongue!" See how his tongue hangs from between his blistered lips! How it tears off the skin and burns the roof of his mouth, as if

it were a firebrand. Behold him crying for a drop of water! I will not picture the scene. Suffice it for me to close up by saying what the hell of hells will be to you, poor sinner—the thought that it is to be *forever.* You will look up there on the throne of God and it shall be written "Forever!" When the damned jingle the burning irons of their torments, they shall cry, "Forever!" When they howl, their echo cries, "Forever!"—

"'Forever' is written on their racks,
'Forever' on their chains!
'Forever' burns in the fire
'Forever' always reigns!"

Doleful thought! "If I could but get out, then I should be happy. If there were a hope of deliverance, then I might be peaceful, but I am here forever!" Sirs, if you would escape eternal torments, if you would be found among the numbers of the blessed, the road to heaven can only be found by *prayer*—by prayer to Jesus—by prayer for the Spirit—by supplication at His mercy seat. "Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel? As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live." "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion." Let us go to Him and say, "He shall heal our backslidings, He shall love us freely and forgive us graciously, for His Son's name's sake." Oh, if I may but win one soul today, I will go home contented. If I may but gain twenty, then I will rejoice. The more I have, the more crowns I shall wear. Wear? No, I will take them all at once, and cast them at Jesus' feet, and say, "Not unto me, but unto Your name be all the glory, forever."—

"Prayer was appointed to convey
The blessings God designs to give.
Long as they live, should Christians pray,
For only while they pray they live.
And will you still in silence lie,
When Christ stands waiting for your prayer?
My soul, you have a friend on high,
Arise and try your interest there.
'Tis prayer supports the soul that's weak,
Though thought is broken, language lame
Pray, if you can, or cannot speak,
But pray with faith in Jesus' name."

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JOSEPH ATTACKED BY THE ARCHERS
NO. 17

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 1, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

The archers have sorely grieved him, Shot at him and hated him. But his bow remained in strength, And the arms of his hands were made strong By the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel).”
Genesis 49:23, 24 (NKJV)

IT MUST have been a fine sight to see the hoary-headed Jacob sitting up in his bed while he bestowed his parting benediction upon his 12 sons. He had been noble in many instances during his life—at the sleeping place of Bethel, the brook of Jabbok and the halting of Peniel. He had been a glorious old man, one before whom we might bow down with reverence, and truly say, “There were giants in those days.” But his closing scene was the best. I think if he ever stood out more illustrious than at any other time, if his head were at any one season more than another, encircled with a halo of glory, it was when he came to die! Like the sun at setting, he seemed then to be the greater in brilliance, tinging the clouds of his weakness with the glory of Grace within. Like good wine which runs clear to the very bottom, unalloyed by dregs, so did Jacob, till His dying hour, continue to sing of love, of mercy and of goodness, past and future. Like the swan, which (as old writers say) sings not all its life until it comes to die, so the old Patriarch remained silent as a songster for many years. But when he stretched himself on his last couch of rest, he stayed himself up in his bed, turned his burning eyes from one to another and although with a hoarse and faltering voice, he sang a sonnet upon each of his offspring such as earthly poets, uninspired, cannot attempt to imitate! Looking upon his son Reuben, a tear was in his eye, for he recollected Reuben’s sin. He passed over Simeon and Levi, giving some slight rebuke. Upon the others he sung a verse of praise as his eyes saw into the future history of the tribes. By-and-by his voice failed him, and the good old man, with long drawn breath, with eyes pregnant with celestial fire, and heart big with heaven, lifted his voice to God and said, “I have waited for Your salvation, O God.” He rested a moment on his pillow and then, again, sitting up, recommenced the strain, passing briefly by the names of each. But oh, when he came to Joseph, his youngest son but one—when he looked on him—I picture that old man as the tears ran

down his cheeks. There stood Joseph, with his mother Rachel in his eyes—that dearly loved wife of his—there he stood, the boy for whom that mother had prayed with all the eagerness of an eastern wife. For a long 20 years she had tarried a barren woman and kept no house but then she was a joyful mother and she called her son "increase." Oh, how she loved the boy! And for that mother's sake, though she had been buried for some years and hidden under the cold sod, old Jacob loved him, too. But more than that, he loved him for his troubles. He was parted from him to be sold into Egypt. His father recollected Joseph's trials in the round house and the dungeon and remembered his royal dignity as prince of Egypt. And now with a full burst of harmony—as if the music of heaven had united with his own, as when the widened river meets the sea and the tide coming up does amalgamate with the stream that comes down and swells into a broad expanse—so did the glory of heaven meet the rapture of his earthly feelings! Giving vent to his soul, he sung, "Joseph is a fruitful bough even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him, shot at him and hated him: But his bow remained in strength, And the arms of his hands were made strong By the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel): By the God of your father who will help you, And by the Almighty who Will bless you with blessings of heaven above, Blessings of the deep that lies beneath, Blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father Have prevailed above the blessings of my ancestors, Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers" (Gen 49:22-26 – NKJV). What a splendid stanza with which to close! He has only one more blessing to give. But surely this was the richest which he conferred on Joseph.

Joseph is dead, but the Lord has His Josephs now. There are still some who understand by experience—and that is the best kind of understanding—the meaning of this passage, "The archers have sorely grieved him, shot at him and hated him: But his bow remained in strength, And the arms of his hands were made strong By the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob"

There are four things for us to consider this morning—first of all, *the cruel attack*—"The archers have sorely grieved him, shot at him and hated him." Secondly, the *shielded warrior*—"but his bow remained in strength." Thirdly, *his secret strength*—"the arms of his hands were made strong By the mighty power of the God of Jacob." And fourthly, *the glorious parallel* drawn between Joseph and Christ—"from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel."

I. First, then, we commence with THE CRUEL ATTACK. "The archers have sorely grieved him." Joseph's enemies were archers. The original has it, "masters of the arrows," that is, men who were well skilled in the use of the arrow. Though all weapons are alike approved by the warrior in his thirst for blood, there seems something more cowardly in the attack of the archer than in that of the swordsman. The swordsman plants himself near you, foot to foot, and lets you defend yourself and deal your blows against him. But the archer stands at a distance, hides in ambush, and without your knowing it, the arrow comes whizzing through the air and perhaps penetrates your heart. Just so are the enemies of God's people. They very seldom come foot to foot with us. They will not show their faces before us. They hate the light, they love darkness. They dare not come and openly accuse us to our face, for then we could reply. But they shoot the bow from a distance, so that we cannot answer them. Cowardly and dastardly as they are, they forge their arrowheads and aim them, winged with hell bird's feathers, at the hearts of God's people. The archers sorely grieved poor Joseph.

Let us consider who are the archers who so cruelly shot at him; first, there were the archers of *envy;* secondly, the archers of *temptation;* and thirdly, the archers of *slander.*

1. First, *Joseph had to endure the archers of* ENVY. When He was a boy, his father loved him. The youth was fair and beautiful. In person, he was to be admired. Moreover, he had a mind that was gigantic and an intellect that was lofty. But best of all in him dwelt the Spirit of the living God! He was one who talked with God; a youth of piety and prayerfulness, beloved of God, even more than he was of his earthly father. Oh, how his father loved him! In his fond affection, he made him a princely coat of many colors and treated him better than the others—a natural but foolish way of showing his fondness. Therefore, his brothers hated him. Full often did they jeer at the youthful Joseph when retired to his prayers. When he was with them at a distance from his father's house, he was their drudge, their slave. The taunt, the jeer, did often wound his heart and the young child endured much secret sorrow. On an ill day, as it happened, he was with them at a distance from home and they thought to slay him. But upon the entreaty of Reuben, they put him into a pit, until, as providence would have it, the Ishmaelites did pass that way. They then sold him for the price of a slave, stripped him of his coat and sent him away naked. They knew not and they cared not where, so long as he might be out of their way and no longer provoke their envy and their anger. Oh, the agonies he felt—parted from his father, losing his brothers. Without a friend he was dragged away by cruel man-sellers, chained upon a camel, it may be, with fetters upon his hands. Those who

have borne the shackles and fetters, those who have felt that they were not free men, that they had not liberty, might tell how sorely the archers grieved him when they shot at him the arrows of their envy. He became a slave, sold from his country, dragged from all he loved. Farewell to home and all its pleasures—farewell to a father's smiles and tender cares!

He must now be a slave and toil where the slaves' taskmaster takes him. He must be exposed in the market; he must be stripped in the streets; he must be beaten, he must be scourged, he must be reduced from man to an animal and from the free man to the slave! Truly the archers sorely shot at him! And, my brethren, do you hope, if you are the Lord's Josephs, that you shall escape envy? I tell you, no—that green-eyed monster, envy, lives in London as well as elsewhere and he creeps into God's church. Oh, it is hardest of all to be envied by one's own brothers and sisters. If the devil hates us, we can bear it. If the foes of God's truth speak ill of us, we buckle up our harness and say, "Away, away to the conflict." But when the friends within the house slander us; when brethren who should uphold us turn into our foes—and when they try to tread down their younger brethren—then, sirs, there is some meaning in the passage, "The archers have sorely grieved him, shot at him and hated him." But blessed be God's name, it is sweet to be informed that, "His bow remained in strength." None of you can be the people of God without provoking envy, And the better you are, the more you will be hated! The ripest fruit is most pecked by the birds and the blossoms that have been longest on the tree are the most easily blown down by the wind. But fear not. You have nothing to do with what man shall say of you. If God loves you, man will hate you. If God honors you, man will dishonor you. But remember, should you wear chains for Christ's sake, you will wear the chains of gold in heaven! Should you have rings of burning iron round your waists, you will have your brow rimmed with gold in glory—for blessed are you when men shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for Christ's name sake. For so persecuted they the prophets that were before you. The first archers were the archers of envy.

2. But a worse trial than this was to overtake him. *The archers of* TEMPTATION shot at him. Here I know not how to express myself. I would that someone more qualified to speak was here, that he might tell you the tale of Joseph's trial and Joseph's triumph. Sold to a master who soon discovered his value, Joseph was made the bailiff of the house and the manager of the household. His wanton mistress fixed her adulterous love on him and he, being continually in her presence, was perpetually, day by day, solicited by her to evil deeds. Constantly did he refuse, still enduring martyrdom at the slow fire of her enticements. On one eventful

day she grasped him, seeking to compel him to crime. But he, like a true hero, as he was, said to her, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Like a wise warrior, he knew that in such a case fleeing was the better part of valor. He heard a voice in his ears, "Fly, Joseph, fly! There remains no way of victory but flight." And out he fled, leaving his garment with his adulterous mistress. Oh, I say in all the annals of heroism there is not one that shall surpass this! You know it is *opportunity* that makes a man a criminal and he had abundant opportunity. But *importunity* will drive most men astray. To be haunted day after day by solicitations of the softest kind—to be tempted hour by hour—oh, it needs a strength super angelic, a might more than human, a strength which only God can grant for a young man thus to cleanse his way and take heed thereto according to God's word! He might have reasoned within himself, "Should I submit and yield, there lies before me a life of ease and pleasure. I shall be exalted, I shall be rich. She shall prevail over her husband to cover me with honors. But should I still adhere to my integrity, I shall be cast into prison; I shall be thrown into the dungeon. There awaits me nothing but shame and disgrace." Oh, there was a power indeed within that heart of his! There was an inconceivable might which made him turn away with unutterable disgust, with fear and trembling, while he said, "How can I? How can I—God's Joseph—how can I—other men might, but how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Truly the archers sorely grieved him and shot at him. But his bow remained in strength.

3. Then another host of archers assailed Him—*these were the archers of* MALICIOUS SLANDER. Seeing that he would not yield to temptation, his mistress falsely accused him to her husband and his lord, believing the voice of his wife, cast him into prison. It was a marvelous providence that he did not put him to death, for Potiphar, his master, was the chief of the executioners! He had only to call in a soldier who would have cut him in pieces on the spot. But he cast him into prison. There was poor Joseph. His character ruined in the eyes of man and very likely looked upon with scorn even in the prison. Base criminals went away from him as if they thought him viler than themselves, as if they were angels in comparison with him! Oh, it is no easy thing to feel your character gone, to think that you are slandered, that things are said of you that are untrue. Many a man's heart has been broken by this, when nothing else could make him yield. The archers sorely grieved him when he was so maligned—so slandered. O child of God, do you expect to escape these archers? Will you never be slandered? Shall you never be slandered? It is the lot of God's servants, in proportion to their zeal, to be evilly spoken of!

Remember the noble Whitefield, how he stood and was the butt of all the jeers and scoffs of half an age, while his only answer was a blameless life?—

"And he who forged, and he who threw the dart,
Had each a brother's interest in his heart."

They reviled him and imputed to him crimes that Sodom never knew. So shall it be always with those who preach God's truth—and all the followers of Christ—they must all expect it. But blessed be God, they have not said worse things of us than they said of our Master. What have they laid to our charge? They may have said, "He is a drunk and a winebibber." But they have not said, "He has a devil." They have accused us of being mad—so was it said of Paul. Oh, holy infatuation, heavenly furor, would that we could bite others until they had the same madness! We think if to go to heaven is mad we will not choose to be wise. We see no wisdom in preferring hell. We can see no great prudence in despising and hating God's truth. If to serve God is vile, we purpose to be still viler. Ah, friends, some now present know this verse by heart, "The archers have sorely grieved him, shot at him and hated him." Expect it—do not think it a strange thing—all God's people must have it. There are no royal roads to heaven—they are paths of trial and trouble—the archers will shoot at you as long as you are on this side the flood!

II. We have seen these archers shoot their flights of arrows. We will now go up the hill a little, behind a rock, to look at the SHIELDED WARRIOR and see how his courage is while the archers have sorely grieved him. What is he doing? "His bow remains in strength." Let us picture God's favorite. The archers are down below. There is a parapet of rock before him. Now and then he looks over it to see what the archers are about, but generally he keeps behind. In heavenly security he is set upon a rock, careless of all below. Let us follow the track of the wild goat. And behold the warrior in his fastness.

First, we notice that he has a bow, himself, for we read that, "*his bow remained* in strength." He could have retaliated if he pleased, but he was very quiet and would not combat with them. Had he pleased, he might have drawn his bow with all his strength and sent his weapon to their hearts with far greater precision than they had ever done to him. But mark the warrior's quietness! There he rests, stretching his mighty limbs—his bow remained in strength. He seemed to say, "Rage on, yes, let your arrows spend themselves, empty your quivers on me, let your bowstrings be worn out and let the wood be broken with its constant bending—here am I, stretching myself in safe repose. "My bow remains in strength. I have other work to do besides shooting at you. My arrows are against yon foes of God, the enemies of the Most High. I cannot waste an arrow on such pitiful sparrows as you are. You are birds beneath my no-

ble shot. I would not waste an arrow on you." Thus he remains behind the rock and despises them all. His bow remains in strength. Mark well *his quietness.* His bow "remains." It is not rattling, it is not always moving, but it remains, it is quite still. He takes no notice of the attack. The archers sorely grieved Joseph but his bow was not turned against them—it abode in strength. He turned not his bow on them. He rested while they raged. Does the moon stay to lecture to every dog that barks at her? Does the lion turn aside to rend each cur that barks at him? Do the stars cease to shine because the nightingales reprove them for their dimness? Does the sun stop in its course because of the officious cloud which veils it? Or does the river stay because the willow dips its leaves into its waters? Ah, no! God's universe moves on and if men will oppose it, it heeds them not. It is as God has made it. It is working together for good and it shall not be stayed by the censure, nor moved on by the praise of man. Let your bows, my brethren, remain. Do not be in a hurry to set yourselves right. God will take care of you. Leave yourselves alone. Only be very valiant for the Lord God of Israel—be steadfast in the truth of Jesus, and your bow shall remain.

But we must not forget the next word. "His bow remained IN STRENGTH." Though his bow was quiet, it was not because it was broken. Joseph's bow was like that of William the Conqueror—no man could bend it but Joseph, himself. It abode "in strength." I see the warrior bending his bow—how with his mighty arms he pulls it down and draws the string to make it ready. His bow remained in strength. It did not snap, it did not start aside. His chastity was his bow and he did not lose that—his faith was his bow and that did not yield, it did not break. His courage was his bow and that did not fail him. His character, his honesty was his bow. Nor did he cast it away. Some men are so very particular about reputation. They think, "Surely, surely, surely they shall lose their characters." Well, well, if we do not lose them through our own fault, we never need care about anybody else! You know there is not a man that stands at all prominent but what any fool in the world can set afloat some bad tale against him. It is a great deal easier to set a story afloat than to stop it. If you want truth to go round the world you must hire an express train to pull it. But if you want a lie to go round the world, it will fly. It is as light as a feather and a breath will carry it! It is well said in the old proverb, "A lie will go round the world while truth is pulling its boots on." Nevertheless, it does not injure us. For if light as a feather it travels so fast, its effect is just about as tremendous as the effect of down when it is blown against the walls of a castle—it produces no damage whatever, on account of its lightness and littleness! Fear not, Christian! Let slander fly, let envy send forth its forked tongue, let it hiss at you—

your bow shall remain in strength! Oh, shielded warrior, remain quiet, fear no ill. But, like the eagle in its lofty nest, look down upon the fowlers in the plain—turn your bold eyes upon them and say—"Shoot you may, but your shots will not reach half way to the pinnacle where I stand. Waste your powder upon me if you will; I am beyond your reach." Then clap your wings, mount to heaven and there laugh them to scorn, for you have made your refuge God—and shall find a most secure abode!

III. The third thing in our text is the SECRET STRENGTH. "The arms of his hands were made strong By the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob." First, notice concerning his strength, that it was *real* strength. It says, "The arms of his hands," not his hands only. You know some people can do a great deal with their hands, but then it is often fictitious power—there is no might in the arm—there are no muscles. But of Joseph it is said, "The arms of his hands were made strong." It was real potency, true muscle, real sinew, real nerve. It was not simply slight of hand—the power of moving his fingers very swiftly—but the *arms* of his hands were made strong. Now, that strength which God gives to His Josephs is real strength; it is not a boasted valor, a fiction, a thing of which men talk, an airy dream, an insubstantial unreality, but it is real strength. I would not like to have a combat with one of God's Josephs. I should think their blows very heavy. I fear a Christian's strokes more than any other man's, for he has bone and sinew and smites hard. Let the foes of the church expect a hard struggle if they attack an heir of life. Mightier than giants are men of the race of heaven! Should they once arouse themselves to battle, they could laugh at the spear and the coat of mail. But they are a patient generation, enduring ills without resenting them, suffering scorn without reviling the scoffer. Their triumph is to come when their enemies shall receive the vengeance due. Then shall it be seen by an assembled world that the "little flock" were men of high estate and the "offscouring of all things" were verily men of real strength and dignity!

Even though the world perceive it not, the favored Joseph has real strength, not in his hands only, but in his arms—real might, real power. O you foes of God, you think God's people are despicable and powerless, but know that they have true strength from the Omnipotence of their Father, a might substantial and divine! Your own shall melt away and droop and die, like the snow upon the low mountain's top, when the sun shines upon it, it melts into water. But our vigor shall remain like the snow on the summit of the Alps, undiminished for ages. It is real strength!

Then observe that the strength of God's Joseph is *divine strength.* His arms were made strong By God. Why does one of God's ministers preach

the Gospel powerfully? Because God gives him assistance. Why does Joseph stand against temptation? Because God gives him aid. The strength of a Christian is divine strength! My brethren, I am more and more persuaded every day that the sinner has no power in himself except that which is given him from above. I know that if I were to stand with my foot upon the golden threshold of heaven's portal, if I could put this thumb upon the latch—I could not open that door, after having gone so far towards heaven—unless I still had supernatural power communicated to me in that moment!

If I had a stone to lift, to work my own salvation—without God's help to do that, I must be lost—even though it were so little. There is nothing that we can do without the power of God. All true strength is divine. As the light comes from the sun, as the shower from heaven, so does spiritual strength come from the Father of lights, with whom there is neither variableness nor shadow of a turning. Again—I would have you notice in the text in what a *blessedly familiar way* God gives this strength to Joseph. It says, "The arms of his hands were made strong By the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob." Thus it represents God as putting His hands on Joseph's hands—placing His arms on Joseph's arms. In old times, when every boy had to be trained up to archery, if his father were worth so many pounds a year, you might see the father putting his hands on his boy's hands and pulling the bow for him, saying, "There, my son, in this manner draw the bow." So the text represents God as putting His hand on the hand of Joseph and laying His broad arm along the arm of His chosen child that he might be made strong; like as a father teaches his children, so the Lord teaches them that fear Him. He puts His arms upon them. As Elijah laid with his mouth upon the child's mouth, with his hand upon the child's hand, with his foot upon the child's foot, so does God put His mouth to His children's mouth, His hand on His minister's hand, His foot to His people's foot—and so He makes us strong. Marvelous condescension! You stars of glory, have you ever witnessed such stoops of love? God Almighty, Eternal, Omnipotent, stoops from His throne and lays His hand upon the child's hand, stretching His arm upon the arm of Joseph, that he may be made strong!

One more thought, and I have done. This strength was *covenant strength*, for it is said, "The arms of his hands were made strong By the hands of the Mighty God *of Jacob.*" Now, wherever you read of the God of Jacob in the Bible, you may know that that respects God's covenant with Jacob. Ah, I love to talk about God's everlasting covenant. Some of the Arminians cannot bear it, but I love a covenant salvation—a covenant not made with my fathers, not between me and God—but between Christ and God! Christ made the covenant to pay a price and God made the cove-

nant that He should have the people. Christ has paid the price and ratified the covenant and I am quite sure that God will fulfill His part of it, by giving every elect vessel of mercy into the hands of Jesus. But, Beloved, all the power, all the grace, all the blessings, all the mercies, all the comforts, all the things we have, we have through the covenant! If there were no covenant—if we could tear the everlasting charter up—if the king of hell could cut it with his knife, as the king of Israel did the roll of Baruch, then we should fail, indeed—for we have no strength except that which is promised in the covenant. Covenant mercies, covenant grace, covenant promises, covenant blessings, covenant help, covenant everything—the Christian must receive if he would enter into heaven!

Now, Christian, the archers have sorely grieved *you*, shot at *you* and wounded *you*. But your bow remains in strength and the arms of your hands are made strong. And do you know, O Believer, that you are like your Master in this?

IV. That is our fourth point—A GLORIOUS PARALLEL. "From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel." Jesus Christ was treated just the same. The Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, passed through similar trials. He was shot at by the archers. He was grieved and wounded, but His bow remained in strength. His arms were made strong by the God of Jacob and now every blessing rests "upon the crown of the head of Him who was separate from His brethren." I shall not detain you long, but I have a few things to tell you—first about Christ as the Shepherd, and then about Christ the Stone. Christ came into the world as a shepherd. As soon as He made His appearance, the Scribes and Pharisees said, "Ah, we have been the shepherds until this hour—now we shall be driven from our honors, we shall lose all our dignity and our authority." Consequently they always shot at Him. As for the people, they were a fickle herd. I believe that many of them respected and admired Christ, though, doubtless, the vast majority hated Him. But wherever He went, He was a popular preacher; the multitude always thronged Him and crowded round Him, crying, "Hosanna." I think, if you had walked up to the top of that hill of Calvary and asked one of those men who cried out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," "What do you say that for? Is He a bad Man?" "No," he would have said, "He went about doing good." "Then why do you say, crucify Him?" "Because Rabbi Simeon gave me a shekel to help the clamor!" So the multitude were much won by the money and influence of the priests. But they were glad to hear Christ after all; it was the shepherds that hated Him, because He took away their traffic, because He turned the buyers and sellers out of the temple, diminished their dignity, and ignored their pretensions. Therefore, they could not endure Him. But the Shepherd of Israel mounted higher and higher. He gathered His sheep,

carried the lambs in His bosom. And He now stands acknowledged as the great Shepherd of the sheep who shall gather them into one flock and lead them to heaven. Rowland Hill tells a curious tale in his "Village Dialogues," about a certain Mr. Tiplash, a very fine intellectual preacher, who, in one of his flights of oratory, said, "O virtue, you are so fair and lovely, if you were to come down upon earth, all men would love you." He went on with a few prettier, beautiful things. Mr. Blunt, an honest preacher, who was in the neighborhood, was asked to preach in the afternoon, and he supplemented the worthy gentleman's remarks, by saying, "O Virtue, You *did* come on earth in all Your purity and loveliness, but, instead of being beloved and admired, the archers sorely shot at You and grieved You; they took You, Virtue, and hung Your quivering limbs upon a cross; when You did hang there dying they hissed at You, they mocked You, they scorned You, and when You did ask for water they gave You vinegar to drink, mingled with gall. Yes, when You died You had a tomb from charity, and that tomb, sealed by enmity and hatred." The Shepherd of Israel was despised, incarnate Virtue was hated and abhorred; therefore, fear not Christians, take courage, for if your Master passed through it, surely you must!

To conclude—the text calls Christ the Stone of Israel. I have heard a story—I cannot tell whether it is true or not—out of some of the Jewish rabbis. It is a tale concerning the text, "The stone which the builders refused, the same is become the headstone of the corner." It is said that when Solomon's temple was being built, all the stones were brought from the quarry ready cut and fashioned, and there were marked on all the blocks, the places where they were to be put. Among the stones was a very curious one; it seemed of no describable shape, it appeared unfit for any portion of the building. They tried it at this wall, but it would not fit. They tried it in another, but it could not be accommodated. So, vexed and angry, they threw it away! The temple was so many years building that this stone became covered with moss, and grass grew around it, and everybody passing by laughed at the stone. They said Solomon was wise and doubtless all the other stones were right, but as for that block, they might as well send it back to the quarry, because they were quite sure it was meant for nothing. Year after year rolled on, and the poor stone was still despised, and the builders constantly refused it. The eventful day came when the temple was to be finished and opened, and the multitude was assembled to see the grand sight. The builders said, "Where is the top stone? Where is the pinnacle?" They little thought where the crowning marble was, until someone said, "Perhaps that stone which the builders refused is meant to be the top stone." They then took it and hoisted it to the top of the temple, and as it reached the summit, they

found it well adapted to the place! Loud hosannas made the sky ring as the stone which the builders refused thus became the headstone of the corner! So is it with Christ Jesus. The builders cast Him away. He was a of the lower class; He was of poor extraction; He was a Man acquainted with sinners who walked in poverty and meanness—hence the worldly-wise despised Him. But when God shall gather together, in one, all things that are in heaven and that are in earth, then Christ shall be the glorious consummation of all things—

"Christ reigns in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise."

He shall be exalted; He shall be honored; His name shall endure as long as the sun, and all nations shall be blessed in Him, yes, all generations shall call Him blessed!

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THE TOMB OF JESUS
NO. 18

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING,
EASTER MORNING—APRIL 8, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay."
Matthew 28:6.

EVERY circumstance connected with the life of Christ is deeply interesting to the Christian mind. Wherever we behold our Savior, He is well worthy of our notice—

"His cross, His manger and His crown,
Are big with glories yet unknown."

All His weary pilgrimage, from Bethlehem's manger to Calvary's cross, is in my eyes, paved with glory. Each spot upon which He trod is to our souls consecrated at once, simply because there the foot of earth's Savior and our own Redeemer once was placed. When He comes to Calvary the interest thickens—then our best thoughts are centered on Him in the agonies of crucifixion! Nor does our deep affection permit us to leave Him, even when, the struggle being over, He yields up the ghost. His body, when it is taken down from the cross, still is lovely in our eyes—we fondly linger around the motionless clay. By faith we discern Joseph of Arimathea and the timid Nicodemus, assisted by those holy women, drawing out the nails and taking down the mangled body. We behold them wrapping Him in clean white linen, hastily girding Him round with belts of spices, then putting Him in His tomb and departing for the Sabbath rest. We shall on this occasion go where Mary went on the morning of the first day of the week, when waking from her couch before the dawn; she aroused herself to be early at the sepulcher of Jesus. We will try, if it is possible, by the help of God's Spirit, to go as she did—not in body, but in soul—we will stand at that tomb. We will examine it and we trust we shall hear some truth-speaking voice coming from its hollow bosom which will comfort and instruct us, so that we may say of the grave of Jesus when we go away, "It was none other than the gate of heaven"—a sacred place, deeply solemn and sanctified by the slain body of our precious Savior!

I. AN INVITATION GIVEN. I shall commence my remarks this morning by inviting all Christians to come with me to the tomb of Jesus. "Come,

see the place where the Lord lay." We will labor to render the place attractive. We will gently take your hand to guide you to it and may it please our Master to make our hearts burn within us while we talk by the way.

Away, you profane—you souls whose life is laughter, folly and mirth! Away, you sordid and carnal minds who have no taste for the spiritual, no delight in the celestial. We ask not your company. We speak to God's beloved, to the heirs of heaven, to the sanctified, the redeemed, the pure in heart—and we say to them—"Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Surely you need no argument to move your feet in the direction of the holy sepulcher. But still we will use the utmost power to draw your spirit there. Come then, for 'tis the *shrine of greatness*, 'tis the resting place of *the Man,* the Restorer of our race, the Conqueror of death and hell! Men will travel hundreds of miles to behold the place where a poet first breathed the air of earth. They will journey to the ancient tombs of mighty heroes, or the graves of men renowned by fame. But where shall the Christian go to find the grave of one so famous as was Jesus? Ask me the greatest man who ever lived—I tell you the Man, Christ Jesus, was "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows." If you seek a chamber honored as the resting place of genius, turn in here. If you would worship at the grave of holiness, come here. If you would see the hallowed spot where the choicest bones that ever were fashioned lay for a while, come with me, Christian, to that quiet garden, hard by the walls of Jerusalem!

Come with me, moreover, because it is the *tomb of your best friend.* The Jews said of Mary, "She goes unto His grave to weep there." You have lost your friends, some of you—you have planted flowers upon their graves—you go and sit at eventide upon the green sward, bedewing the grass with your tears, for there your mother lies and there your father, or your wife. Oh, in pensive sorrow come with me to this dark garden of our Savior's burial. Come to the grave of your best friend—your brother—yes, one who "sticks closer than a brother." Come, then, to the grave of your dearest relative, O Christian, for Jesus is your Husband, "your maker is your Husband, the Lord of Hosts is His name." Does not affection draw you? Do not the sweet lips of love woo you? Is not the place sanctified where one so well-beloved slept, although but for a moment? Surely you need no eloquence. If it were needed I have none. I have but the power in simple, but earnest accents, to repeat the words, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." On this Easter morning pay a visit to His grave, for it is the grave of your best friend!

Yes, more, I will further urge you to this pious pilgrimage. *Come, for angels bid you.* Angels said, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." The Syrian version reads, "Come, see the place where *our* Lord lay." Yes, angels put themselves with those poor women and used one common pronoun—*our.* Jesus is the Lord of angels as well as of men! You feeble women—you have called Him, Lord, you have washed His feet, you have provided for His needs, you have hung upon His lips to catch His honeyed sentences, you have sat entranced beneath His mighty eloquence. You call Him Master and Lord, and you do well, "But," said the seraph, "He is my Lord too." Bowing his head, he sweetly said, "Come, see the place where *our* Lord lay." Do not fear, then, Christian, to step into that tomb! Do not dread to enter there, when the angel points with his finger and says, "Come, we will go together—angels and men—and see the royal bedchamber." You know that angels did go into His tomb, for they sat one at His head and the other at His foot in holy meditation. I picture to myself those bright cherubs sitting there talking to one another. One of them said, "It was there His feet lay." And the other replied, "And there His hands, and there His head." And in celestial language did they talk concerning the deep things of God. Then they stooped and kissed the rocky floor, made sacred to the angels themselves, not because there they were redeemed, but because there their Master and their Monarch, whose high behests they were obeying, did, for a while, become the slave of death and the captive of destruction! Come, then, Christian, for angels are the porters to unbar the door. Come, for a cherub is your messenger to usher you to the death-place of death himself. No, start not from the entrance! Let not the darkness frighten you—the vault is not damp with the vapors of death, nor does the air contain anything of contagion. Come, for *it is a pure and healthy place*. Fear not to enter that tomb! I will admit that catacombs are not the places where we, who are full of joy, would love to go. There is something gloomy and noisome about a vault. There are noxious smells of corruption. Oftentimes pestilence is born where a dead body has lain. But fear it not, Christian, for Christ was not left in hell—in hades—neither did His body see corruption!

Come, there is no scent—yes, rather a perfume. Step in here and if you did ever breathe the gales of Ceylon, or winds from the groves of Araby, you shall find them far excelled by that sweet holy fragrance left by the blessed body of Jesus, that alabaster vase which once held divinity and was rendered sweet and precious thereby. Think not you shall find anything obnoxious to your senses. Jesus never saw corruption. No worms ever devoured His flesh. No rottenness ever entered into His bones. He saw no corruption. Three days He slumbered, but not long

enough to putrefy. He soon arose, perfect as when He entered. Uninjured as when His limbs were composed for their slumber. Come then, Christian, summon up your thoughts, gather all your powers—here is a sweet invitation—let me press it again. Let me lead you by the hand of meditation, my brother. Let me take you by the arm of your fancy, and let me again say to you, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

There is yet one reason more why I would have you visit this Royal sepulcher—*because it is a quiet spot.* Oh, I have longed for rest, for I have heard this world's rumors in my ears so long, that I have begged for—

"A lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade"

where I might hide myself forever! I am sick of this tiring and trying life. My frame is weary, my soul is mad to repose herself awhile. I wish I could lie myself down a little by the edge of some pebbly brook, with no companion save the fair flowers or the nodding willows. I would I could recline in stillness, where the air brings balm to the tormented brain, where there is no murmur save the hum of the summer bee—no whisper except that of the zephyrs and no song except the caroling of the lark. I wish I could be at ease for a moment. I have become a man of the world—my brain is racked, my soul is tired. Oh, would you be quiet, Christian? Merchant, would you rest from your toils? Would you be calm for once? Then come here! It is in a pleasant garden, far from the hum of Jerusalem. The noise and din of business will not reach you here. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." It is a sweet resting spot, a withdrawing room for your soul where you may brush your garments from the dust of earth and muse awhile in peace.

II. ATTENTION REQUESTED. Thus I have pressed the invitation—now we will enter the tomb. Let us examine it with deep attention, noticing every circumstance connected with it.

And first, mark that it is a *costly tomb.* It is no common grave. It is not an excavation dug out by the spade for a pauper in which to hide the last remains of his miserable and over-wearied bones. It is a princely tomb. It was made of marble, cut in the side of a hill. Stand here, believer, and ask why Jesus had such a costly sepulcher. He had no elegant garments. He wore a coat without seam, woven from the top throughout, without an atom of embroidery. He owned no sumptuous palace, for He had not where to lay His head. His sandals were not rich with gold, or studded with brilliants. He was poor. Why, then, does He lie in a noble grave? We answer, for this reason—Christ was unhonored till He had finished His sufferings. Christ's body suffered contumely, shame, spitting, buffeting and reproach until He had completed His great work. He was trampled

under foot, He was "despised and rejected of men. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." But the moment He had finished His undertaking, God said, "No more shall that body be disgraced. If it is to sleep, let it slumber in an honorable grave. If it is to rest, let nobles bury it. Let Joseph, the councilor and Nicodemus, the man of Sanhedrin, be present at the funeral. "Let the body be embalmed with precious spices, let it have honor. It has had enough of contumely, shame, reproach and buffeting. Let it now be treated with respect." Christian, do you discern the meaning? Jesus, after He had finished His work, slept in a costly grave—for now His Father loved and honored Him since His work was done!

But though it is a costly grave, *it is a borrowed one.* I see over the top of it, "Sacred to the memory of the family of Joseph of Arimathea." Yet Jesus slept there. Yes, He was buried in another's sepulcher. He who had no house of His own, and rested in the habitation of other men; He who had no table, but lived upon the hospitality of His disciples; He who borrowed boats in which to preach, and had not anything in the wide world, was obliged to have a tomb from charity! Oh, should not the poor take courage? They dread to be buried at the expense of their neighbors, but if their poverty is unavoidable, why should they blush, since Jesus Christ Himself was interred in another's grave? Ah, I wish I might have had Joseph's grave, to let Jesus be buried in it. Good Joseph thought he had cut it out for himself. He thought that he would lay his bones there. He had it excavated as a family vault and lo, the Son of David makes it one of the tombs of the kings! But he did not lose it by lending it to the Lord—rather, he had it back with precious interest. He only lent it three days—then Christ resigned it—He had not injured but perfumed and sanctified it and made it far more holy! So that it would be an honor in future to be buried there. It was a borrowed tomb—and why? I take it not to dishonor Christ, but in order to show that as His sins were borrowed sins so His burial was in a borrowed grave. Christ had no transgressions of His own. He took ours upon His head. He never committed a wrong but He took all my sin—and all yours—if you are believers. Concerning all His people, it is true, He bore their griefs and carried their sorrows in His own body on the tree. Therefore, as they were others' sins, so He rested in another's grave. As they were sins imputed, so that grave was only imputably His. It was not His sepulcher—it was the tomb of Joseph.

Let us not weary in this pious investigation, but with fixed attention observe everything connected with this holy spot. The grave, we observe, *was cut in a rock.* Why was this? The Rock of Ages was buried in a rock—a Rock within a rock. But why? Most persons suggest that it was so ordained that it might be clear that there was no covert way by which the

disciples or others could enter and steal the body away. Very possibly it was the reason, but oh, my soul, can you not find a *spiritual* reason? Christ's sepulcher was cut in a rock. It was not cut in mold that might be worn away by water, or might crumble and fall into decay.

The sepulcher stands, I believe, entire to this day. If it does not naturally, it does spiritually. The same sepulcher which took the sins of Paul shall take my iniquities into its bosom, for if I ever lose my guilt, it must roll off my shoulders into the sepulcher. It was cut in a rock so that if a sinner were saved a thousand years ago, I, too, can be delivered, for it is a rocky sepulcher where sin was buried. It was a rocky sepulcher of marble where my crimes were laid forever—buried never to have a resurrection. You will mark, moreover, that tomb was one *wherein no other man had ever lain.* Christopher Ness says, "When Christ was born, He lay in a virgin's womb, and when He died He was placed in a virgin tomb. He slept where never man had slept before." The reason was that none might say that another person rose, for there never had been any other body there, thus a mistake of persons was impossible. Nor could it be said that some old Prophet was interred in the place and that Christ rose because He had touched his bones. You remember when Elisha was buried and as they were burying a man, behold he touched the Prophet's bones and arose. Christ touched no Prophet's bones, for none had ever slept there. It was a new chamber, where the Monarch of the earth did take His rest for three days and three nights.

We have learned a little, then, with attention. But let us stoop down once more before we leave the grave and notice something else. We see the grave, but do you *notice the grave clothe*s, all folded neatly and laid in their places, the napkin being folded up by itself? Why are the grave clothes folded? The Jews said robbers had abstracted the body. But if so, surely they would have stolen the clothes! They would never have thought of folding them up and laying them down so carefully—they would be too much in haste to think of it. Why was it, then? To manifest to us that Christ did not come out in a hurried manner. He slept till the last moment. Then He awoke—He came not in haste. They shall not come out in haste—neither by flight—but at the appointed moment shall His people come to Him. So at the precise hour, the decreed instant, Jesus Christ leisurely awoke, took off His grave clothes, left them all behind Him and came forth in His pure and naked innocence, perhaps to show us that as clothes are the offspring of sin—when sin was atoned for by Christ, He left all raiment behind Him—for garments are the badges of guilt. If we had not been guilty we would never have needed them.

Then, the napkin, mark you, was laid by itself. The grave clothes were left behind for every departed Christian to wear. The bed of death is well sheeted with the garments of Jesus, but the napkin was laid by itself, because the Christian, when He dies, does not need that. It is used by the mourners and the mourners only. We shall all wear grave-clothes but we shall not need the napkin. When our friends die, the napkin is laid aside for us to use, but do our ascended brethren use it? No, the Lord God has wiped away all tears from their eyes! We stand and view the corpses of the dear departed, we moisten their faces with our tears, letting whole showers of grief fall on their heads, but do *they* weep? Oh, no. Could they speak to us from the upper spheres, they would say, "Weep not for me, for I am glorified; sorrow not for me; I have left a bad world behind me and have entered into a far better." They have no napkin—they weep not. Strange it is that those who endure death weep not. But those who see them die are weepers. When the child is born it weeps when others smile (say the Arabs) and when it dies, it smiles while others weep. It is so with the Christian. O blessed thing! The napkin is laid by itself, because Christians will never need to use it when they die.

III. EMOTION EXCITED, We have thus surveyed the grave with deep attention, and, I hope, with some profit to ourselves. But that is not all. I love a religion which consists, in a great measure, of emotion. Now, if I had power, like a master, I would touch the strings of your hearts, and fetch a glorious tune of solemn music from them, for this is a deeply solemn place, into which I have conducted you.

First, I would bid you stand and see the place where the Lord lay with *emotions of deep sorrow.* O come, my beloved brethren, your Jesus once lay there! He was a murdered man, my soul, and *you* the murderer—

"Ah, you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were!
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.
Alas, and did my Savior bleed?
And did my Sovereign die?"

I slew Him—this right hand struck the dagger to His heart! My deeds slew Christ. Alas, I slew my best beloved; I killed Him who loved me with an everlasting love; you eyes, why do you refuse to weep when you see Jesus' body mangled and torn? Oh, give rent to your sorrow, Christians, for you have good reason to do so. I believe in what Hart says, that there was a time in his experience when he could so sympathize with Christ that he felt more grief at the death of Christ than he did joy. It seemed so sad a thing that Christ should have to die and to me it often appears too great a price for Jesus Christ to purchase worms with His own blood. I

think I love Him so much that if I had seen Him about to suffer, I would have been as bad as Peter, and have said, "That be far from You, Lord." But then He would have said to me, "Get you behind Me, Satan," for He does not approve of that love which would stop Him from dying. "The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" But I think had I seen Him going up to His cross, I would gladly have pressed Him back and said, "Oh, Jesus, You shall not die. I cannot have it. Will You purchase my life with a price so dear?" It seems too costly for Him who is the prince of life and glory to let His fair limbs be tortured in agony. That the hands which carried mercies should be pierced with accursed nails. That the temples that were always clothed with love should have cruel thorns driven through them. It appears too much. Oh, weep, Christian, and let your sorrow rise! Is not the price all but too great, that your beloved should for you resign *Himself?* Oh, I should think if a person were saved from death by another, he would always feel deep grief if his deliverer lost his life in the attempt. I had a friend, who, standing by the side of a piece of frozen water saw a young lad in it and sprang upon the ice in order to save him. After clutching the boy he held him in his hands and cried out, "Here he is! Here he is! I have saved him." But just as they caught hold of the boy, he sank, himself, and his body was not found for some time afterwards. Oh, it is so with Jesus! My soul was drowning. From heaven's high portals He saw me sinking in the depths of hell. He plunged in—

"He sank beneath His heavy woes,
To raise me to a crown;
There's never a gift His hand bestows,
But cost His heart a groan."

Ah, we may, indeed, regret our sin, since it slew Jesus.

Now, Christian, change your note a moment. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," *with joy and gladness.* He does not lie there now. Weep, when you see the tomb of Christ, but rejoice because it is *empty*. Your sin slew Him, but His divinity raised Him up! Your guilt has murdered Him, but His righteousness has restored Him. Oh, He has burst the bonds of death! He has taken off the grave clothes of the tomb, and has come out more than conqueror, crushing death beneath His feet. Rejoice, O Christian, for He is not there—He is risen. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

One more thought and then I will speak a little concerning the doctrines we may learn from this grave. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay" *with solemn awe*, for you and I will have to lay there, too—

"Hark! From the tomb a doleful sound,
My ears, attend the cry.
You living men, come view the ground

Where you must shortly lie.
Princes, this clay must be your bed
In spite of all your powers!
The tall, the wise, the reverend head
Must lie as low as ours."

It is a fact we do not often think of—that we shall all be dead in a little while. I know that I am made of dust and not of iron. My bones are not brass, nor my sinews steel—in a little while my body must crumble back to its native elements. But do you ever try to picture yourself the moment of your dissolution? My friends, there are some of you who seldom realize how old you are, how near you are to death. One way of remembering our age is to see how much remains. Think how old 80 is and then see how few years there are before you will get there. We should remember our frailty. Sometimes I have tried to think of the time of my departure. I do not know whether I shall die a violent death or not, but I would to God that I might die suddenly, for sudden death is sudden glory! I would I might have such a blessed exit as Doctor Beaumont, and die in my pulpit laying down my body with my charge and ceasing at once to work and live! But it is not mine to choose. Suppose I lie lingering for weeks in the midst of pains and griefs and agonies? When that moment comes, that moment which is too solemn for my lips to speak of, when the spirit leaves the clay—let the physician put it off for weeks or years, as we say he does, though he does not—when that moment comes, oh, you lips, be dumb and profane not its solemnity! When death comes, how is the strong man bowed down! How does the mighty man fall! They may say they will not die, but there is no hope for them—they must yield—the arrow has gone home. I knew a man who was a wicked wretch and I remember seeing him pace the floor of his bedroom, saying, "O God, I will not die, I will not die." When I begged him to lie on his bed for he was dying, he said he could not die while he could walk and he would walk till he did die. Ah, he expired in the utmost torments, always shrieking, "O God, I will not die." Oh, that moment, that last moment! See how clammy is the sweat upon the brow, how dry the tongue, how parched the lips are? The man shuts his eyes and slumbers, then opens them again. And if he is a Christian, I can fancy he will say—

"Hark! They whisper—angels say
Sister spirit, come away.
What is this absorbs me quite—
Steals my senses—shuts my sight—
Drowns my spirit—draws my breath?
Tell me, my soul, can this be death?"

We know not when one will die. One gentle sigh and the spirit breaks away. We can scarcely say, "He is gone," before the ransomed spirit takes

its mansion near the Throne. Come to Christ's tomb then, for the silent vault must soon be *your* habitation. Come to Christ's grave, for you must slumber there. And even you, you Sinners, for one moment I will ask you to also come because you must die as well as the rest of us. Your sins cannot keep you from the jaws of death. I say, Sinner, I want you to look at Christ's sepulcher, too—for when you die it may have done you great good to think of it. You have heard of Queen Elizabeth crying out that she would give an empire for a single hour. Or, have you read the despairing cry of the gentleman on board the "Arctic," when it was going down, who shouted to the boat, "Come back! I will give you £30,000 if you will come and take me in." Ah, poor man, it were but little if he had thirty thousand *worlds,* if he could thereby prolong his life! "Skin for skin. Yes, all that a man has will he give for his life." Some of you who laugh this morning, who came to spend a merry hour in this hall, will be dying and then you will pray and crave for life and shriek for another Sunday. Oh, how the Sundays you have wasted will walk like ghosts before you! Oh, how they will shake their snaky hair in your eyes! How will you be made to sorrow and weep because you wasted precious hours, which, when they are gone, are gone too far ever to be recalled. May God save you from the pangs of remorse!

IV. INSTRUCTION IMPARTED. And now, Christian brethren, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," to learn a doctrine or two. What did you see when you visited "the place where the Lord lay?" "He is not here—for He is risen!" The first thing you perceive, if you stand by His empty tomb, is *His divinity.* The dead in Christ shall rise first at the resurrection, but He who rose first—their leader, rose in a different fashion. They rise by imparted power. He rose by His own. He could not slumber in the grave because He was God. Death had no dominion over Him. There is no better proof of Christ's divinity than that startling resurrection of His, when He rose from the grave, by the glory of the Father. O Christian, your Jesus is GOD. His broad shoulders that hold you up are, indeed, divine. And here you have the best proof of it—because He rose from the grave!

A second doctrine here taught well may charm you, if the Holy Spirit applies it with power. Behold this empty tomb, O true believer—it is a sign of *your acquittal* and your full discharge. If Jesus had not paid the debt, He would never had risen from the grave. He would have lain there till this moment if He had not cancelled the entire debt by satisfying eternal vengeance. Oh, beloved, is not that an overwhelming thought?—

"It is finished! It is finished!
Hear the rising Savior cry."

The heavenly turnkey came. A bright angel stepped from heaven and rolled away the stone—but he would not have done so if Christ had not done all. He would have kept Him there. He would have said, "No, no, you are the sinner now. You have the sins of all your elect upon your shoulder and I will not let you go free till you have paid the uttermost farthing." In His going free I see my own discharge—

"My Jesus' blood's my full discharge"

As a justified man, I have not a sin against me in God's book! If I were to turn over God's eternal book I should see every debt of mine receipted and cancelled—

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast,
And O, my soul, with wonder view—
For sins to come, here's pardon, too!
While through Your blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and blame."

One more doctrine we learn and with that we will conclude—*the doctrine of the resurrection.* Jesus rose and as the Lord our Savior rose, so all His followers must rise. Die I must—this body must be a carnival for worms, it must be eaten by those tiny cannibals—perhaps it shall be scattered from one portion of the earth to another. The constituent particles of this, my frame, will enter into plants, from plants pass into animals and thus be carried into far distant realms. But at the blast of the archangel's trumpet, every separate atom of my body shall find its fellow—like the bones lying in the valley of vision, though separated from one another—the moment God shall speak, the bone will creep to its bone, then the flesh shall come upon it. The four winds of heaven shall blow and the breath shall return! So, let me die, let beasts devour me, let fire turn this body into gas and vapor—all its particles shall yet again be restored! This very same, actual body shall start up from its grave, glorified and made like Christ's body, yet still the same body, for God has said it. Christ's same body rose—so shall mine! O my soul, do you now dread to die? You will lose your partner body a little while, but you will be married again in heaven—soul and body shall again be united before the Throne of God! The grave—what is it? It is the bath in which the Christian puts the clothes of his body to have them washed and cleansed. Death—what is it? It is the waiting room where we robe ourselves for immortality! It is the place where the body, like Esther, bathes itself in spices, that it may be fit for the embrace of its Lord. Death is the gate of *life*. I will not fear to die, then, but will say—

"Shudder not to pass the stream
Venture all your care on Him—Him,

Whose dying love and power
Stilled its tossing, hushed its roar.
Safe is the expanded wave,
Gentle as a summer's eve—
Not one object of His care
Ever suffered shipwreck there."

Come, view the place, then, with all-hallowed meditation, where the Lord lay! Spend this afternoon, my beloved brethren, in meditating upon it and very often go to Christ's grave both to weep and to rejoice. You timid ones—do not be afraid to approach, for 'tis no vain thing to remember that timidity buried Christ. Faith would not have given Him a funeral at all. Faith would have kept Him above ground and would never have let Him be buried, for it would have said it would be useless to bury Christ if He were to rise. Fear buried Him. Nicodemus, the night disciple and Joseph of Arimathea, secretly, for fear of the Jews, went and buried Him. Therefore, you timid ones, you may go, too. Ready-to-Halt, poor Fearing, and you, Mrs. Despondency, and Much-Afraid, often go there—it is your favorite haunt. There build a tabernacle, there abide. And often say to your heart, when you are in distress and sorrow, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

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DAVID'S DYING SONG
NO. 19

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 15, 1855, *BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,* AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

"Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although He makes it not to grow."
2 Samuel 23:5

THESE are the last words of David, so we read at the commencement of the chapter. Many have been the precious sentences which have fallen from his inspired lips. Seraphic has been the music which has dropped from his fingers when they flew along the strings of his harp. But now that sweet voice is to be hushed in death. And now the son of Jesse is to sleep with his fathers. Surely it were well to press around his bed to hear the dying monarch's last testimony. Yes, we can conceive that angels, themselves, would, for an instant, check their rapid flight that they might visit the chamber of the dying mighty one and listen to his last death song. It is always blessed to hear the words of departing saints. How many choice thoughts have we gained in the bedchamber of the righteous, beloved? I remember one sweet idea which I once won from a deathbed. A dying man desired to have one of the Psalms read to him and the 17th being chosen, he stopped at the 6th verse, "Incline your ear unto me and hear my speech." He faintly whispered, "Ah, Lord, I cannot speak, my voice fails me, incline Your ear, put it against my mouth, that You may hear me." None but a weak and dying man, whose life was ebbing fast could have conceived such a thought! It is well to hear saints' words when they are near heaven—when they stand upon the banks of Jordan. But here is a special case, for these are the last words of *David.* They are something more than human utterances, for we are told that the Spirit of the Lord spoke by him, and His word was on David's tongue. These were his closing accents. Ah, I think, lisping these words he rose from earth to join the chorus of the skies. He commenced the sentence upon earth and he finished it in heaven. He began, "Although my house is not so with God," and as he winged his flight to heaven, he still sang, "yet have You made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." And now, before the throne of God, he constantly hymns the same strain—"yet have You made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." I hope, my friends, there are many of us who can join in this verse this morning and who hope to close our earthly pilgrimage with this upon our tongue.

We shall notice first, that the Psalmist had *sorrow in his house*—"Although my house is not so with God." Secondly, he had confidence in

the covenant—"yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant." And thirdly, he had *satisfaction in his heart*, for he says—"this is all my salvation and all my desire."

I. The Psalmist says he had sorrow in his house—"Although my house is not so with God." What man is there of all our race, who, if he had to write his history, would not need to use a great many "althoughs"? If you read the biography of any man as recorded in the sacred word, you will always find a, "but," or an, "although," before you have finished. Naaman was a mighty man of valor and a great man with his master, *but* he was a leper. There is always a, "but," in every condition, a crook in every lot, some dark tint upon the marble pillar, some cloud in the summer sky, some discord in the music, some alloy in the gold. So David, though a man who had been raised from the sheepfold, a mighty warrior, a conqueror of giants, a king over a great nation—had his, "although," and the, "although" which he had, was one in his own *house*. Those are the worst troubles which we can have—in our own household. We are not an evil beast abroad, but we hate the lion most when it prowls upon our own estates, or crunches on the floor of our dwelling. The greatest trouble with the thorn is when it lies in our bed and we feel it in our pillow. Civil war is always the fiercest—those are foes, indeed, who are of our own household. I think, perhaps, David interceded when he said, "Although my house is not so with God," to speak partly of his *affairs*. If any other man had looked at David's affairs—the government of his country—he would have said, "David's government is the mirror of excellence." His house was so rightly ordered that few of his subjects could murmur at him. But David recollected that a greater and keener eye than that of *man* rested on him. And he says, speaking of his empire and his house—for you know the word, "house," in Scripture often means our business, our affairs, our transactions, ("Set your *house* in order, for you must die and not live")—he says, although before man my house may be well swept and garnished, yet it is not so with God as I can desire. Oh, beloved, there are some of us who can walk before our fellow men conscious of innocence. We dare defy the gaze of our fellow mortals. We can say, "Lord! You know I am not wicked." We are blameless before this perverse generation—we walk among them as lights in the world and God has helped us so that we are clean from the great transgression. We are not afraid of criticism of our character. We are not fearful of being inspected by the eyes of all men—for we feel that through God's grace we have been kept from committing ourselves. He has kept us and the evil one touches us not. But with all this conscious innocence—with all that dignity with which we stand before our fellows—when we go into God's sight, how changed we are! Ah, then, my friends, we say not, "Lord! You know I am not wicked!" But rather we fall prostrate and cry, "Unclean, unclean, unclean." And as the leper cools his heated brow with the water running in the cool sequestered brook, so do we bathe our body in Siloa's stream and strive to wash ourselves clean in the water and blood from

Christ's riven side. We feel that our house is "not so with God"—though in the person of Jesus we are free from sin and white as angels are—yet when we stand before God, in our own persons, we are obliged to confess that honest as we may be, upright as we have been just and holy before men, yet our house is "not so with God."

But I imagine that the principal meaning of these words of David refers to his family—*his children*. David had many trials in his children. It has often been the lot of good men to have great troubles from their sons and daughters. True, we know some households that are the very image of peace and happiness where the father and mother bend the knees, together in family prayer. And they look upon a numerous offspring or not, as it may be, and most of them devoting their hearts to God. I know a household which stands like a green oasis in the desert of this world. There are sons who preach God's gospel and daughters who are growing up to fear the Lord and to love Him! Such a household is, indeed, a pleasant resting place for a weary soul in its pilgrimage through this wilderness of life. Oh, happy is that family whom God has blessed! But there are other houses where you will find the children are the trials of the parents. "Although my house is not so with God," may many an anxious father say. And you pious mothers might lift your streaming eyes to heaven and say, "Although my house is not so with God." That first-born son of yours, who was your pride, has now turned out to be your disgrace. Oh, how have the arrows of his ingratitude pierced into your soul! And how do you keenly feel at this present moment that sooner would you have buried him in his infancy—sooner might he never have seen the light and perished in birth, than that he should live to have acted as he has done—to be the misery of your existence and the sorrow of your life! O sons who are ungodly, unruly and profligate—surely you do not know the tears of pious mothers—or you would stop your sin. I think, young man, you would not willingly allow your mother to shed tears, however dearly you may love sin. Will you not, then, stop at her entreaties? Can you trample upon your mother? Oh, though you are riding a steeplechase to hell, cannot her weeping supplications induce you to stop your mad career? Will you grieve her who gave you life and fondly cherished you at her breast? Surely you will long debate before you can resolve to bring her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave! Or has sin brutalized you? Are you worse than stones? Have natural feelings become extinct? Is the evil one entirely your master? Has he dried up all the tender sympathies of your heart? Stop, young prodigal and ponder!

But, Christians! You are not alone in this. If you have family troubles, there are others who have borne the same. Remember Ephraim! Though God had promised that Ephraim should abound as a tribe with tens of thousands, yet it is recorded in 1 Chronicles 7:20-22—"And the sons of Ephraim, Shuthelah, and Bered, his son, and Tahath his son, and Eladah his son and Tahath his son, and Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son, and Ezer and Elead, whom the men of Gath that were born in that

land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. And Ephraim their father mourned many days and his brethren came to comfort him." Abraham himself had his Ishmael and he cried to God on account thereof. Think of Eli, a man who served God as a High Priest and though he could rule the people, he could not rule his sons! And great was his grief thereat. Ah, some of you, my brethren in the gospel, may lift your hands to heaven and you may utter this morning these words with a deep and solemn emphasis—you may write, "Although," in capitals, for it is more than true with some of you—"Although my house is not so with God."Before we leave this point—what must I say to any of those who are thus tried and distressing in estate and family? First, let me say to you my brethren, *it is necessary that you should have an,* "*although,*" in your lot, because if you have not, you know what you would do? You would build a very downy nest on earth and there you would lie down in sleep. So God puts a thorn in your nest in order that you may sing. It is said by the old writers that the nightingale never sang so sweetly as when she sat among thorns, since, they say, the thorns prick her breast and remind her of her song. So it may be with you. You, like the larks, would sleep in your nest did not some trouble pass by and frighten you. Then you stretch your wings and caroling the mating song, rise to greet the sun. Trials are sent to wean you from the world. Bitters are put into your drink that you may learn to live upon the dew of heaven—the food of earth is mingled with gall that you may only seek for true bread in the manna which drops from the sky. Your soul, without trouble, would be as the sea if it were without tide or motion—it would become foul and obnoxious! As Coleridge describes the sea after a wondrous calm, so would the soul breed contagion and death.

But furthermore, remember this, O you who are tried in your children—that *prayer can remove your troubles*. There is not a pious father or mother here who is suffering in the family, but may have that trial yet taken away. Faith is as omnipotent as God, Himself, for it moves the arm which leads the stars along. Have you prayed long for your children without a result? And have you said, "I will cease to pray, for the more I wrestle, the worse they seem to grow and the more am I tried"? Oh, say not so, you weary watcher! Though the promise tarries, it will come! Still sow the seed and when you sow it, drop a tear with each grain you put into the earth. Oh, steep your seeds in the tears of anxiety and they cannot rot under the clods, if they have been baptized in so vivifying a mixture. And what if you did all this without seeing your sons the heirs of the Light of God? They shall be converted even after your death! And though your bones shall be put in the grave and your son may stand and curse your memory for an hour, he shall not forget it in the cooler moments of his recollection, when he shall, by God's grace, meditate alone. Then he shall think of your prayers, your tears, and your groans. He shall remember your advice. It shall rise up and if he lives in sin, still your words shall sound as one long voice from the realm of spirits and

either frighten him in the midst of his revelry, or charm him heavenward, like angel's whispers, saying, "Follow on to glory, where your parent is who once did pray for you." So the Christian may say, "Although my house is not so with God now, *it may be yet,*" therefore will I still wait, for there are mighty instances of conversion. Think of John Newton. He even became a slaver, yet was brought back. Hope on! Never despair! Faint Heart never wins the souls of men, but Firm Faith wins all things—therefore watch unto prayer. "What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch." There is your trouble, a small cup filled from the same sea of tribulation as was the Psalmist's when he sang, "Although my house is not so with God."

II. But secondly—David had *confidence in the covenant.* Oh, how sweet it is to look from the dullness of earth to the brilliance of heaven! How glorious it is to leap from the tempest-tossed ship of this world and stand upon the *terra firma* of the covenant! So did David. Having done with his, "Although," he then puts in a blessed, "yet." Oh, it is a, "yet," with jewels set—"He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure."

Now let us notice these words as they come. First, David rejoiced in the covenant, because it is *divine in its origin.* "Yet has HE made with me an everlasting covenant." O that great word, HE! Who is that? It is not my own father or my own mother who has made a covenant for me—none of that nonsense! It is not a covenant man has made for me, or with me—but yet has "HE made with me an everlasting covenant." It is divine in its origin, not human! The covenant on which the Christian rests is not the covenant of his infant sprinkling—he has altogether broken that scores of times—for he has not "renounced the pomps and vanities of this wicked world," as he should have done. Nor has he renounced "all the lusts of the flesh." Nor has he really become regenerate through those holy drops of water which a cassocked priest cast on his face. The covenant on which he rests and stands secure is that covenant which God has made with him. "Yet has HE made." Stop my soul. God, the everlasting Father, has positively made a covenant with you! Yes, that God who in the thickest darkness dwells and reigns forever in His majesty alone; that God who spoke the world into existence by a word, who holds it, like an Atlas, upon His shoulders; that God who poises the destiny of all creation upon His finger. That God, stooping from His majesty, takes hold of *your* hand and makes a covenant with *you.* Oh, is it not a deed, the stupendous condescension of which might ravish our hearts forever if we could really understand it? Oh, the depths! "HE has made with me a covenant." A king has not made a covenant with me—that were something for sure—an emperor has not entered into a compact with me, but the Prince of the kings of the earth, the Shaddai, the Lord of all flesh, the Jehovah of ages, and the everlasting Elohim! "He has made with me an everlasting covenant." O blessed thought! It is of divine origin.

But notice *its particular application.* "Yet has He made with ME an everlasting covenant." Here lies the sweetness of it to me, as an individual—

"Oh how sweet to view the flowing
Of Christ's soul-redeeming blood
With divine assurance knowing
That He made my peace with God."

It is nothing for me that He made peace for the world. I want to know whether He made peace for *me*—it is little that He has made a covenant, I want to know whether He has made a covenant with *me.* David could put His hand upon His heart and says, "Yet has He made a covenant with ME." I fear I shall not be wrong in condemning the fashionable religion of the day—for it is a religion which belongs to the crowd. It is not a *personal* one which is enjoyed by the individual. You will hear persons say, "Well, I believe the doctrine of justification. I think that men are justified through faith." Yes, but are *you* justified by faith? "I believe," says another "that we are sanctified by the Spirit." Yes, all very well, but are *you* sanctified by the Spirit? Mark you—if ever you talk about personal piety very much you will always be run down as extravagant. If you really say from your heart, "I know I am forgiven. I am certain that I am a pardoned sinner"—and every Christian will at times be able to say it and would always, were it not for his unbelief—if you say, "I know in whom I have believed, I am confident that I have not a sin now recorded in the black roll. That I am free from sin as if I had never transgressed, through the pardoning blood of Jesus"—men will say it is extravagant. Well, it is a delightful extravagance! It is the extravagance of God's word, and I would to God more of us could indulge in that holy, blessed extravagance! We may well be extravagant when we have an infinite sum to spend. We may well be lavish when we know we never can exhaust the treasure. Oh, how sweet it is to say, "Yet has He made with ME an everlasting covenant." It is nothing that you talk to me of my brother being saved. I am very glad that my friend should get to glory and I shall rejoice to meet you all. But after all, the thing is, "Shall I be there?"—

"Shall I among them stand
To see His smiling face?"

Now, Christian, you can apply this personally. The covenant is made with you. Man, open your eyes! There is *your* name in the covenant. What is it? It is some plain English name, perhaps. It never had an M.P. or an M.A. after it, or a "Sir" before it. Never mind, *your* name is in the covenant. If you could take down your father's family Bible in heaven you would find your name put in the register. O blessed thought! *My* name—positively mine! Not another's. So, then, these eyes shall see Him, and not another's for me. Rejoice, Christian. It is a PERSONAL covenant. "Yet has He made with *me* an everlasting covenant."

Furthermore, this covenant is not only divine in its origin but it is *everlasting in its duration.* I have had some very pretty letters sent me from anonymous writers who have listened to me and being great cowards

(whom I always abhor) they cannot sign their names. They may know what fate their letters receive—the deserved punishment I appoint to them. I cut them asunder and thrust them into the fire. I hope the authors will not have a similar fate. Some of them, however, quarrel with me because I preach the everlasting gospel. I dare not preach another, for I would not have another if it were offered to me. An everlasting gospel is the only one which I think worthy of an everlasting God! I am sure it is the only one which can give comfort to a soul that is to live throughout eternity. Now, you know what an "everlasting covenant" signifies. It means a covenant which had no beginning and which shall never, never end. Some do not believe in the everlasting nature of God's love to His people. They think that God begins to love His people when they begin to love Him. My Arminian friends, did you ever sing that verse in your meeting? Of course you have—

"O yes, I do love Jesus,
Because He first loved me."

That is a glorious Calvinistic hymn, though we know whose hymn book it is in. Well, then, if Jesus loved you before you loved Him, why cannot you believe that He always did love you? Besides, how stupid it is to talk so, when you know God does not change. There is no such thing as time with Him. There is no past with Him. If you say, "He loves me now," you have in fact said, "He loved me yesterday and He will love me forever." There is nothing but *now* with God. There is no such thing as past or future and to dispute about eternal election and so on, is of no avail. If God did choose His people at all—and we all admit that He chooses them now—I do not care about whether you say He did so ten thousand thousand years ago, because there is no such thing as the past with God. With Him it is all *now.* He sees things, past and future, as present in His eyes. Only tell me that He loves me *now*. That word, "now," in God's dictionary, means everlasting! Tell me that God has *now* pardoned my sins. It means that He always has, for His acts are eternal acts. Oh how sweet to know an everlasting covenant! I would not barter my gospel for fifty thousand other gospels. I love a certain salvation. And when I first heard it preached—that if I believed, God's grace would keep me all my life long and would never let me fall into hell, but that I should preserve my character unblemished and walk among my fellow creatures pure and holy—then I said, "That is the gospel for me, an *everlasting* gospel." As for that sandy gospel which lets you fall away and then come back again—it is the most wicked falsehood on earth. If I believed it, I would preach the gospel and be holy on Sunday and fall away on Monday and be a Christian again on Tuesday. And I should say, "I have fallen from grace and have got up again." But now, as a true Calvinistic Christian, I desire to have in myself—and see in others—a life of constant consistency. Nor can I think it possible to fall away and then return after the many passages which assert the impossibility of such a thing. That is the greatest safeguard on earth that I have something within me that never can be

quenched—that I put on the regimentals of a service which I never must leave—which I cannot leave without having proved that I never was enlisted at all. Oh, that keeps me near my God! But once make me doubt that—then you will see me the vilest character living under the sun! Take from me the everlastingness of the gospel and you have taken all. Dear old Watts Wilkinson once said to Joseph Irons, when he said, "I love to hear you preach the everlasting covenant nature of God's love." "Ah," said the old saint, "What is there else in the gospel if you do not preach it?" Brethren, what is there else? If we do not preach an everlasting gospel, the gospel is not worth two pence! You may get anything uncertain anywhere else. It is in the Bible alone that we get everlasting things—

"I to the end shall endure
As sure as the earnest is given!
More happy, but not more secure,
Are the glorified spirits in heaven."

But notice the next word, for it is a sweet one and we must not let one portion go, "It is *ordered in all things*." "Order is heaven's first law," and God has not a disorderly covenant. It is an orderly one. When He planned it, before the world began, it was in all things ordered well. He so arranged it that justice should be fully satisfied and yet mercy should be limed hand-in-hand with it. He so planned it that vengeance should have its utmost jot and tittle and yet mercy should save the sinner. Jesus Christ came to confirm it and by His atonement, He ordered it in all things. He paid every drop of His blood. He did not leave one farthing of the ransom money for His dear people. But He ordered it in all things. And the Holy Spirit, when He sweetly applies it, always applies it in order. He orders it in all things. He makes us sometimes understand this order, but if we do not, be sure of this, that the covenant is a well-ordered covenant. I have heard of a man who bought a piece of land and when the covenant was being made, he thought he knew more about it than the lawyer. But you know it is said that when a man is his own lawyer he has a fool for his client. In this case the man had a fool for his client. And he drew up the covenant so badly that in a few years it was discovered to be good for nothing and he lost his property! But our Father's covenant is drawn up according to the strictest rules of justice. And so is ordered in all things. If hell itself should search it—if it were passed round among a conclave of demons they could not find a single fault with it. There are the technical terms of heaven's court. There is the great seal at the bottom and there is the signature of Jesus—written in His own blood. So it is "ordered in all things."

That word, *things,* is not in the original and we may read it, *persons*, as well as things. It is ordered in all persons—all the persons whose names are in the covenant. It is ordered for them and they shall come according to the promise—"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me. And him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." O my beloved Christian! Stop at this promise a moment, for it is a sweet well of pre-

cious water to slake your thirst and refresh your weariness. It is "ordered in all things." What do you need more than this? Do you need constraining grace? It is "ordered in *all things*." Do you require more of the spirit of prayer? It is "ordered in *all things*." Do you desire more faith? It is "ordered in *all things*." Are you afraid lest you should not hold out to the end? It is "ordered in *all things*." There is converting grace in it, pardoning grace in it, justifying grace, sanctifying grace and persevering grace. For it is "ordered in all things and sure." Nothing is left out, so that whenever we come, we find all things there stored up in heavenly order. Galen, the celebrated physician, says of the human body that its bones are so well put together, all the parts being so beautifully ordered, that we could not change one portion of it without spoiling its harmony and beauty. And if we should attempt to draw a model man, we could not, with all our ingenuity, fashion a being more wondrous in workmanship than man as he is. It is so with regard to the covenant. If we might alter it, we could not change it for the better—all its portions are beautifully agreed. I always feel, when I am preaching the gospel covenant, that I am secure. If I preach any other gospel, I am vulnerable and I am open to attack. But standing upon the firm ground of God's covenant I feel I am in a tower of strength. And so, as long as I hold all the truths of God, I am not afraid that even the devils of hell can storm my castle. So secure is the man who believes the everlasting gospel no logic can stand against it. Only let our preachers give the everlasting gospel to the people and they will drink it as the ox drinks water. You will find they love God's truth. But so long as God's gospel is smothered and the candle is put under a bushel, we cannot expect men's souls will be brought to love it. I pray God that the candle may burn the bushel up and that the light may be manifest.

But now, to wind up our description of this covenant, it is *sure.* If I were a rich man there would be but one thing I would want to make my riches all I desire—and that would be to have them *sure*—for riches often make to themselves wings and fly away. Health is a great blessing and we need but to write one word on it to make it the greatest blessing, that is the adjective "sure." We have relatives and we love them—ah, if we could but write "sure" on them, what a blessed thing it would be. We cannot call anything, "sure," on earth. The only place where we can write that word is on the everlasting covenant, which is "ordered in all things and *sure*." Now, there is some poor brother here, this morning, who has lost his covenant, as he thinks. Ah, brother, you once had peaceful hours and sweet enjoyment in the presence of God. But now you are in gloom and doubt. You have lost your roll. Well, let me tell you, though you have lost your roll, the covenant is not lost, for all that. You never had the real covenant in your hands—you only had a copy of it. You thought you read your title clear but you never read the title-deeds, themselves. You only held a copy of the lease and you have lost it. The covenant itself; where is it? It is under the throne of God. It is in the archives of heaven, in the

ark of the covenant. It is in Jesus' Breast. It is on His hands, on His heart—it is there! Oh, if God were to put my salvation in my hands, I should be lost in ten minutes. But my salvation is not there—it is in Christ's hands. You have read of the celebrated dream of John Newton, which I will tell you to the best of my recollection. He thought he was out at sea, on board a vessel, when some bright angel flew down and presented him with a ring, saying, "As long as you wear this ring you shall be happy and your soul shall be safe." He put the ring on his finger and he felt happy to have it in his own possession. Then there came a spirit from the vast deep and said to him, "That ring is nothing but folly." And by cajolery and flattery the spirit at last persuaded him to slip the ring from off his finger and he dropped it in the sea. Then there came fierce things from the deep. The mountains bellowed and hurled upward their volcanic lava—all the earth was on fire and his soul in the greatest trouble. By-and-by a spirit came and diving below, fetched up the ring and showing it to him, said, "Now you are safe, for I have saved the ring." Now might John Newton have said, "Let me put it on my finger again." "No, no, you cannot take care of it yourself," and up the angel flew, carrying the ring away with him, so that then he felt himself secure, since no cajolery of hell could get it from him again, for it was up in heaven.

My life is "hid with Christ in God." If I had my spiritual life in my own possession, I would be a suicide very soon, but it is not with me. And as I cannot save myself, *as a Christian* I cannot destroy myself, for my life is wrapped up in the everlasting covenant—it is with Christ in heaven. Oh, glorious and precious covenant!

III. Now to close our meditation. The Psalmist had a *satisfaction in his heart*. "This is," he said, "all my salvation and all my desire." I should not like the task of riding till I found a satisfied worldly man. I suspect there is not a horse that would not be worn off its legs before I found him. I think I should myself grow gray with age before I had discovered the happy individual except I went to one place—that is, the heart of a man who has a covenant made with him, "ordered in all things and sure." Go to the palace. There is not satisfaction there. Go to the cottage—though the poet talks about sweet retirement and blest contentment—there is not satisfaction there. The only solid satisfaction satisfying the mouth with good things is to be found in the true Believer who is satisfied from himself, satisfied with the covenant! Behold David—he says, "As for my salvation, I am secure; as for my desire, I am gratified—for this is all my salvation and all my desire." *He is satisfied with his salvation.* Bring up the moralist. He has been toiling and working in order to earn salvation. Are you confident that if you died you would enter into heaven? "Well, I have been as good as other people and, I dare say, I shall be more religious before I die." But he *cannot* answer our question. Bring up the religious man—I mean the merely *outwardly* religious man. Are you sure that if you were to die you would go to heaven? "Well, I regularly attend church or chapel. But I cannot say that I make any pretensions to be

able to say, 'He has made with me an everlasting covenant.'" So I might introduce a score of men and there is not one of them who can say, "This is all my salvation." They always want a little supplement and most of you intend making that supplement a little while before you die. An old Jewish Rabbi says that every man ought to repent at least one day before his last day—and as we do not know when our last day shall be, we ought to repent today. How many wish they knew when they were going to die, for then, they fancy they would be sure to repent and be converted a little while before. Why, if you had it revealed to you that you would die at twenty minutes past twelve next Sunday, you would go on in sin up till twelve o'clock and then you would say, "There are twenty minutes more—time enough yet." And so until the twenty minutes past had come, then your soul would sink into eternal flames! Such is procrastination. It is the thief of time, it steals away our life and did we know the hour of our dissolution, we should be no more prepared for it than we are now. You cannot say, can you, that you have all your salvation? But a Christian can. He can walk through the cholera and the pestilence and feel that should the arrow smite him, death would be to him the entrance of life. He can lie down and grieve but little at the approach of death, for he has all his salvation. His jewels are in his breast, gems which shall shine in heaven. Then, the Psalmist says, he has *all his desire.* There is nothing that can fill the heart of man except the Trinity. God has made man's heart a triangle. Men have been for centuries trying to make the globe fill the triangle but they cannot do it. It is the Trinity, alone, that can fill a triangle. As old Quarles well says, there is no way of getting satisfaction but by gaining Christ, getting heaven, winning glory, getting the covenant, for the word, "covenant," comprises all the other things. "All my desire," says the Psalmist—

"I need nothing on earth, above,
Happy in my Savior's love."

I have not a desire, I have nothing to do but to live and be happy all my life in the company of Christ, and then to ascend to heaven, to be in His immediate presence, where—

"Millions of years these wondering eyes
Shall over my Savior's beauties rove,
And endless ages I'll adore
The wonders of His love."

Just one word with my friends who do not agree with me in doctrine: I am sure, my dear friends that I wish not to anathematize any of those whose creed is the reverse of mine. But they must allow me to differ from them and to speak freely and if they do not *allow* me to, they know very well that I shall! But I have this much to say to those dear friends who cannot bear the thought of an everlasting covenant. Now, you cannot alter it can you? If you do not like it, there it is. "God has made with me an everlasting covenant." And you must confess, when you read the Bible, that there are some very knotty passages for you. You might, perhaps, remove them out of your Bible, but then you cannot erase them out of

divine truths. You know it is true, that God is immutable, do you not? He never changes—you must know that—for the Bible says so. It declares that when He has begun a good work, He will carry it through. Do not get reading frothy commentators any longer. Take the Bible as it stands and if you do not see everlasting love there, there is some fault in your eyes and it is a case, rather, for the optometrist, than for me. If you cannot see everlasting, eternal security and blood-bought righteousness there, I am hopeless altogether of your conversion to the truth, while you read it with your present prejudices! It has been my privilege to give more prominence in the religious world to those old doctrines of the gospel. I have delighted in the musty old folios which many of my brothers have kept bound in sheepskins and goatskins, on their library shelves. As for new books, I leave them to others. Oh, if we might but go back to those days when the best of men were our pastors—the days of the Puritans. Oh, for a puritan gospel again! Then we would not have the sleepy hearers, the empty chapels, the drowsy preachers—the velvet-mouthed men who cannot speak the truth—but we would have "glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good-will towards men." Do go home and search. I have told you what I believe to be true. If it is not true, detect the error by reading your Bibles for yourselves and searching out the matter.

As for you, you ungodly, who up to now have had neither portion nor lot in this matter, remember that God's word speaks to you as well as to the Christian and says, "Turn you, turn you! Why will you die, O house of Israel?" God's word graciously promises that whoever comes to Christ, He will in no wise cast out. It is a free gospel, free as the air and he who has but life to breathe it may breathe it. Every poor soul here who is quickened and has a sense of his guilt, may come to Christ—

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream."

All the evidence you require is to feel your need of Christ. And remember, if you only once come, if you do but believe, you will be safe through all eternity! And amidst the wreck of matter, the crash of worlds, the conflagration of the universe, and the destruction of all terrestrial things, your soul will still be eternally secure in the covenant of God's free grace!

God enable you now to become His adopted children by faith in Jesus Christ!

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THE CARNAL MIND ENMITY AGAINST GOD
NO. 20

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 22, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"The carnal mind is enmity against God."
Romans 8:7.

THIS is a very solemn indictment which the apostle Paul here speaks against the carnal mind. He declares it to be enmity against God. When we consider what man once was, only second to the angels, the companion of God, who walked with Him in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day. When we think of him as being made in the very image of his creator, pure, spotless and unblemished, we cannot but feel bitterly grieved to find such an accusation as this declared against us as a race. We may well hang our harps upon the willows while we listen to the voice of Jehovah, solemnly speaking to His rebellious creature—"How are you fallen from heaven, you son of the morning!" "You seal up the sun, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You have been in Eden, the Garden of God. Every precious stone was your covering—the workmanship of your tabrets and of your pipes was prepared in you in the day that you were created. You are the anointed cherub that covers and I have set you so—you were upon the holy mountain of God. You have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, till iniquity was found in you and you sinned. Therefore I will cast you as profane out of the mountain of God—and will destroy you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire."

There is much to sadden us in a view of the ruins of our race. As the Carthaginian who might tread the desolate site of his much-loved city would shed many tears when he saw it laid in heaps by the Romans. Or as the Jew, wandering through the deserted streets of Jerusalem, would lament that the plowshare had marred the beauty and the glory of that city which was the joy of the whole earth. So ought we to mourn for ourselves and our race when we behold the ruins of that goodly structure which God has made—that creature, matchless in symmetry, second only to angelic intellect; that mighty being, man—when we behold how he is "fallen, fallen, fallen from his high estate" and lies in a mass of destruction. A few years ago a star was seen blazing out with considerable brilliance but soon disappeared. It has since been affirmed that it was a world on fire, thousands of millions of miles from us and yet the rays of the conflagration reached us. The noiseless messenger of light gave to the distant dwellers on this globe the alarm of, "A world on fire!" But what is

the conflagration of a distant planet, what is the destruction of the mere material of the most ponderous orb compared with this fall of humanity, this wreck of all that is holy and sacred in ourselves? To us, indeed, the things are scarcely comparable, since we are deeply interested in one, though not in the other. The fall of Adam was OUR fall. We fell in and with him. We were equal sufferers. It is the ruin of our own house that we lament. It is the destruction of our own city that we bemoan when we stand and see written in lines too plain for us to mistake their meaning, "The carnal mind"—that very same mind which was once holiness and has now become carnal—"is enmity against God." May God help me this morning to solemnly speak this indictment against you all! Oh, that the Holy Spirit may so convince us of sin that we may unanimously plead "guilty" before God!

There is no difficulty in understanding my text—it needs scarcely any explanation. We all know that the word, "carnal," here signifies, fleshly. The old translators rendered the passage thus—"The mind of the flesh is enmity against God." That is to say, the natural mind—that soul which we inherit from our fathers—that which was born within us when our bodies were fashioned by God; the fleshly mind, the *phronema sarkos*, the lusts, the passions of the soul. It is this which has gone astray from God and become enmity against Him!

But before we enter upon a discussion of the doctrine of the text, observe how strongly the apostle expresses it. "The carnal mind," he says, "it is ENMITY against God." He uses a noun and not an adjective. He does not say it is merely opposed to God, but it is positive enmity! It is not black, but blackness. It is not *at* enmity, but *enmity* itself. It is not corrupt, but corruption. It is not rebellious, it is rebellion—it is not wicked, it is wickedness itself. The heart, though it is deceitful, is positively deceit. It is evil in the concrete, sin in the essence. It is the distillation, the quintessence of all things that are vile. It is not envious against God, it is *envy*. It is not *at* enmity, it is *actual enmity*.

Nor need we say a word to explain that it is "enmity *against* God." It does not charge manhood with an aversion merely to the dominion, laws, or doctrines of Jehovah. It strikes a deeper and surer blow. It does not strike man upon the head but it penetrates into his heart. It lays the axe at the root of the tree, and pronounces man, "enmity *against* God"; against the person of the Godhead, against the Deity, against the mighty Maker of this world—not at enmity against His Bible or against His gospel—though that is true, but against God, Himself, against His essence, His existence, and His person. Let us, then, weigh the words of the text, for they are solemn words. They are well put together by that master of eloquence, Paul. They were, moreover, dictated by the Holy Spirit, who tells man how to speak aright. May He help us to expound, as He has already given us the passage to explain.

We shall be called upon to notice, this morning, first, *the truthfulness of this assertion.* Secondly, *the universality of the evil here complained of.* Thirdly, we will still further enter into the depths of the subject and press it to your hearts, by showing *the enormity of the evil.* And after that, should we have time, we will deduce one or two doctrines from the general fact.

I. First, we are called upon to speak of *the truthfulness of this great statement*, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." It needs no proof, for since it is written in God's word, we, as Christian men and women are bound to bow before it. The words of the Scriptures are words of infinite wisdom and if reason cannot see the ground of a statement of revelation, it is bound, most reverently, to believe it, since we are well-assured even should it be above our reason that it cannot be contrary to it! Here I find it written in the Scriptures, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." And that of itself is enough for me. But did I need witnesses; I would conjure up the nations of antiquity. I would unroll the volume of ancient history, I would tell you of the awful deeds of mankind. It may be I might move your souls to detestation if I spoke of the cruelty of this race to itself, if I showed you how it made the world an Aceldama by its wars and deluged it with blood by its fights and murders! If I should recite the black list of vices in which whole nations have indulged or even bring before you the characters of some of the most eminent philosophers, I would blush to speak of them and you would refuse to hear. Yes, it would be impossible for you, as refined inhabitants of a civilized country, to endure the mention of the crimes that were committed by those very men who nowadays are held up as being paragons of perfection! I fear if all the truth were written, we should rise up from reading the lives of earth's mighty heroes and proudest sages and would say at once of all of them, "They are clean gone mad! They are altogether become unprofitable. There is none that does good, no, not one!"

And did not that suffice; I would point you to the delusions of the heathen. I would tell you of their priestcraft by which their souls have been enthralled in superstition. I would drag their gods before you. I would let you witness the horrid obscenities, the diabolical rites which are to these besotted men most sacred things! Then, after you had heard what the natural *religion* of man is, I would ask what must his *irreligion* be? If this is his devotion, what must be his impiety? If this is his ardent love of the Godhead, what must his hatred thereof be? You would, I am sure, at once confess, did you know what the race is, that the indictment is proven and that the world must unreservedly and truthfully exclaim, "Guilty."

A further argument I might find in the fact that the best of men have been always the most ready to confess their depravity. The holiest men, the most free from impurity, have always felt it most. He whose garments are the whitest will best perceive the spots upon them. He whose crown shines the brightest will know when he has lost a jewel. He who gives the

most light to the world will always be able to discover his own darkness. The angels of heaven veil their faces. And the angels of God on earth, His chosen people, must always veil their faces with humility when they think of what they were! Hear David—he was none of those who boast of a holy nature and a pure disposition. He says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity. And in sin did my mother conceive me." Hear all those holy men who have written in the inspired volume and you shall find them all confessing that they were not clean, no, not one. Yes, one of them even exclaimed, "O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

And more—I will summon one other witness to the truthfulness of this act who shall decide the question. It shall be your conscience. Conscience, I will put you in the witness box and cross-examine you this morning! Conscience, answer truly! Be not drugged with the opium of self-security! Speak the truth! Did you ever hear the heart say, "I wish there were no God?" Have not all men, at times, wished that our religion were not true? Though they could not entirely rid their souls of the idea of the Godhead, did they not wish that there might not be God? Have they not had the desire that it might turn out that all these divine realities were a delusion, a farce? "Yes," says every man, "that has crossed my mind sometimes. I have wished I might indulge in folly. I have wished there were no laws to restrain me. I have wished, as the fool, that there were no God." That passage in the Psalms, "The fool has said in his heart, there is no God," is wrongly translated. It should be, "The fool has said in his heart, *no God*." The fool does not say in his heart *there is* no God, for he knows there is a God. Rather he says, "No God—I don't want any, I wish there were none." And who among us has not been so foolish as to desire that there were no God? Now, conscience, answer another question! You have confessed that you have at times wished there were no God. Now, suppose a man wished another dead, would not that show that he hated him? Yes, it would. And so, my friends, the wish that there were no God proves that we dislike God! When I wish such a man dead and rotting in his grave, when I desire that he were *non est*, I must hate that man—otherwise I would not wish him to be extinct; so that wish—and I do not think there has been a man in this world who has not had it—proves that "The carnal mind is enmity against God."

But, conscience, I have another question. Has not your heart ever desired, since there *is* a God, that He were a little less holy, a little less pure—so that those things which are now great crimes might be regarded as venial offenses, as peccadilloes? Has your heart ever said, "Would to God these sins were not forbidden. Would that He would be merciful and pass them by without an atonement! Would that He were not so severe, so rigorously just, so sternly strict to His integrity." Have you never said that, my heart? Conscience must reply, "You have." Well, that wish to *change* God proves that you are not in love with the God that now is, the

God of heaven and earth! And though you may talk of natural religion and boast that you do reverence to the God of the green fields, the grassy meads, the swelling flood, the rolling thunder, the azure sky, the starry night and the great universe—though you love the poetic ideal of Deity, it is not the God of Scripture—for you have wished to change His nature and in that you have proved that you are at enmity with Him! So where do we go from here? You can bear faithful witness if you would speak the truth that each person here has so transgressed against God, so continually broken His laws, violated His Sabbath, trampled on His statutes, despised His gospel, that it is true, yes, most true, that "The carnal mind is enmity against God."

II. Now, secondly, we are called upon to notice the *universality of this evil.* What a broad assertion it is! It is not a single carnal mind, or a certain class of characters, but "The carnal mind." It is an unqualified statement, including every individual. Whatever mind may properly be called carnal, not having been spiritualized by the power of God's Holy Spirit, is "enmity against God."

Observe then, first of all, the universality of this as to *all persons.* Every carnal mind in the world is at enmity against God! This does not exclude even infants at the mother's breast. We call them innocent and so they are of actual transgression, but as the poet says, "Within the youngest breast there lies a stone." There is in the carnal mind of an infant, enmity against God. It is not developed, but it lies there. Some say that children learn sin by imitation. But no—take a child away, place it under the most pious influences, let the very air it breathes be purified by piety—let it constantly drink in draughts of holiness. Let it hear nothing but the voice of prayer and praise. Let its ears be always kept in tune by notes of sacred song—and that child, notwithstanding, may still become one of the grossest of transgressors! And though placed apparently on the very road to heaven, it shall, if not directed by divine grace, march downwards to the pit of hell! Oh, how true it is that some who have had the best of parents have been the worst of children—that many who have been trained up under the most holy auspices, in the midst of most favorable scenes of piety—have, nevertheless, become loose and wanton! So it is not by imitation but it is by *nature* that the child is evil! Grant me that the child is carnal, and my text says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." The young crocodile, I have heard, when broken from the shell, will in a moment begin to put itself in a posture of attack, opening its mouth as if it had been taught and trained. We know that young lions, when tamed and domesticated, will still have the wild nature of their fellows of the forest, and were liberty given them, would prey as fiercely as others, and so with the child. You may bind him with the green withes of education, you may do what you will with him—but you cannot change his heart! That carnal mind shall still be at enmity against God. And notwithstanding intellect, talent and all you may give to boot, it shall

be of the same sinful complexion as every other child, if not as apparently evil, for, "The carnal mind is enmity against God."

And if this applies to children, equally does it include every class of men. There are some men who are born into this world master spirits. They walk about it as giants, wrapped in mantles of light and glory. I refer to the poets—men who stand aloft like Colossi—mightier than we, seeming to be descended from celestial spheres. There are others of acute intellect, who, searching into mysteries of science, discover things that have been hidden from the creation of the world! Men of keen research and mighty erudition—and yet of each of these—poet, philosopher, metaphysician and great discoverer—it can be said, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." You may train him up; you may make his intellect almost angelic, you may strengthen his soul until he shall take what are riddles to us and unravel them with his fingers in a moment. You may make him so mighty that he can grasp the iron secrets of the eternal hills and grind them to atoms in his fist. You may give him an eye so keen that he can penetrate the deep secrets of rocks and mountains. You may add a soul so potent that he may slay the giant Sphinx that had, for ages, troubled the mightiest men of learning. Yet when you have done all this, his mind shall be a depraved one and his carnal heart shall still be in opposition to God. Yes, more, you may bring him to the house of prayer. You may make him sit constantly under the clearest preaching of the word of God where he shall hear the doctrines of grace in all their purity, attended by a holy unction. But if that holy unction does not *rest upon him*, all shall be vain—he shall attend most regularly, but like the pious door of the chapel that turns in and out, he shall still be the same—having an outside superficial religion and his carnal mind shall still be at enmity against God. Now, this is not my assertion, it is the declaration of God's word and you must leave it, if you do not believe it! But quarrel not with me, it is my Master's message and it is true of every one of you—men, women and children and myself, too—that if we have not been regenerated and converted, if we have not experienced a change of heart, our carnal mind is still at enmity against God!

Again, notice the universality of this at *all times;* the carnal mind is at *all times* enmity against God. "Oh," say some, "it may be true that we are at times opposed to God, but surely we are not *always* so." "There are moments," says one, "when I feel rebellious. At times my passions lead me astray. But surely there are other favorable seasons when I really am friendly to God and offer true devotion. I have (continues the objector) stood upon the mountaintop, until my whole soul has kindled with the scene below and my lips have uttered the song of praise—

"These are Your glorious works, parent of good,
Almighty, Yours this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair—Yourself how wondrous then!"

Yes, but mark—what is true one day is not false another, "The carnal mind is enmity against God" at all times! The wolf may sleep, but it is still a wolf. The snake with its azure hues may slumber amid the flowers and the child may stroke its slimy back, but it is still a serpent. It does not change its nature, though it is dormant. The sea is the house of storms even when it is glassy as a lake. The thunder is still the mighty rolling thunder when it is so much aloft that we hear it not. And the heart, when we perceive not its boiling, when it belches not forth its lava and sends not forth the hot stones of its corruption, is still the same dread volcano! At all times, at all hours, at every moment, (I speak this as God speaks it) if you are carnal, you are each one of you enmity against God!

Another thought concerning the universality of this statement. *The whole of the mind* is enmity against God. The text says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God," that is, the entire man, every part of him—every power, every passion. It is a question often asked, "What part of man was injured by the fall?" Some think that the fall was only felt by the affections and that the intellect was unimpaired. This they argue from the wisdom of man and the mighty discoveries he has made, such as the law of gravity, the steam engine and the sciences. Now I consider these things as being a very mean display of wisdom, compared with what is to come in the next hundred years—and very small compared with what might have been, if man's intellect had continued in its pristine condition. I believe the fall crushed man entirely! Albeit, when it rolled like an avalanche upon the mighty temple of human nature, some shafts were still left undestroyed and amidst the ruins you find here and there a flute, a pedestal, a cornice, a column not quite broken—yet the entire structure fell and its most glorious relics are fallen ones, leveled in the dust. The whole of man is defaced. Look at *our memory*—is it not true that the memory is fallen? I can recollect evil things far better than those which savor of piety. I hear a ribald song—that same music of hell shall jar in my ear when gray hairs shall be upon my head! I hear a note of holy praise—alas, it is forgotten! Memory grasps with an iron hand ill things, but the good she holds with feeble fingers. She allows the glorious timbers from the forest of Lebanon to swim down the stream of oblivion, but she stops all the dross that floats from the foul city of Sodom! She will retain evil, she will lose good. Memory is fallen. So are the *affections.* We love everything earthly better than we ought. We soon fix our heart upon a creature, but very seldom upon the creator. And when the heart is given to Jesus it is prone to wander. Look at the *imagination,* too. Oh, how can the imagination revel when the body is in an ill condition! Only give man something that shall well near intoxicate him. Drug him with opium and how his imagination will dance with joy! Like a bird uncaged, how will it mount with more than eagles' wings! He sees things he had not dreamed of even in the shades of night. Why did not his imagination

work when his body was in a normal state—when it was healthy? Simply because it is depraved! And until he had entered a foul element—until the body had begun to quiver with a kind of intoxication—the fancy would not hold its carnival. We have some splendid specimens of what men could write when they have been under the accursed influence of ardent spirits. It is because the mind is so depraved that it loves something which puts the body into an abnormal condition. And here we have proof that the imagination, itself, has gone astray. So with the *judgment*—I might prove how ill it decides. So might I accuse the *conscience* and tell you how blind it is and how it winks at the greatest follies. I might review all our powers and write upon the brow of each one, "Traitor against heaven, and traitor against God!" The whole "carnal mind is enmity against God."

Now, my hearers, "the Bible, alone, is the religion of Protestants"—but whenever I find a certain book much held in reverence by our episcopalian brethren, entirely on my side, I always feel the greatest delight in quoting from it. Do you know I am one of the best Churchmen in the world, the very best, if you will judge me by the Articles and the very worst if you measure me in any other way? Measure me by the Articles of the Church of England, and I will not stand second to any man under heaven's blue sky in preaching the gospel contained in them, for if there is an excellent epitome of the gospel, it is to be found in the Articles of the Church of England! Let me show you that you have not been hearing strange doctrine. Here is the 9th Article, upon Original or Birth Sin. "Original Sin stands not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk) but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of *every man* that is naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam. Whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusts always contrary to the spirit, and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserves God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature does remain, yes, in them that are regenerated, whereby the lust of the flesh, called in the Greek, *phronema sarkos* which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire, of the flesh, is not subject to the law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized, yet the Apostle does confess that concupiscence and lust has of itself the nature of sin." I need nothing more! Will anyone who believes in the Prayer Book dissent from the doctrine that "The carnal mind is enmity against God"?

III. I have said that I would endeavor, in the third place, to show the great *enormity of this guilt.* I do fear, my brethren, that very often when we consider our state, we think not so much of the guilt as of the misery. I have sometimes read sermons upon the inclination of the sinner to evil, in which it has been very powerfully proved and certainly the pride of human nature has been well humbled and brought low. But one thing

always strikes me, if it is left out, as being a very great omission—the doctrine that man is *guilty* in all these things! If his heart is against God, we ought to tell him it is *his sin*. And if he cannot repent we ought to show him that sin is the sole cause of his disability—that all his alienation from God is sin—that as long as he keeps from God it is sin! I fear many of us here must acknowledge that we do not charge the sin of it to our own consciences. Yes, we say, we have many corruptions. Oh, yes. But we sit down very contented. My brethren, we ought not to do so. The having those corruptions is our crime which should be confessed as an enormous evil. If I, as a minister of the gospel, do not press home the sin of the thing, I have missed what is the very virus of it. I have left out the very essence if I have not shown that it is a crime. Now, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." What a sin it is! This will appear in two ways. Consider the relation in which we stand to God and then remember what God is. And after I have spoken of these two things, I hope you will see, indeed, that it is a sin to be at enmity with God!

What is God to us? He is the creator of the heavens and the earth. He bears up the pillars of the universe, His breath perfumes the flowers. His brush paints them. He is the Author of this fair creation. "We are the sheep of His pasture, He has made us and not we ourselves." He stands to us in the relationship of a Maker and Creator—and from that fact He claims to be our King. He is our legislator, our law-maker, and then, to make our crime still worse and worse, He is the ruler of providence, for it is He who keeps us daily. He supplies our needs; He keeps the breath within our nostrils; He bids the blood still pursue its course through the veins; He holds us in life, and prevents us from death. He stands before us, our creator, our King, our sustainer, and our benefactor. And I ask, is it not a sin of enormous magnitude—is it not high treason against the emperor of heaven—is it not an awful sin, the depth of which we cannot fathom with the line of all our judgment—that we, His creatures, dependent upon Him, should be at enmity with Him?

But the crime may be seen to be worse when we think of *what God is*. Let me appeal personally to you in an interrogatory style, for this has weight with it. Sinner, why are you at enmity with God? God is the God of love. He is kind to His creatures. He regards you with His love of benevolence. This very day His sun has shone upon you. This day you have had food and raiment and you have come up here in health and strength. Do you hate God because He loves you? Is that the reason? Consider how many mercies you have received at His hands all your lives long! You are born with a body not deformed; you have had a tolerable share of health. You have been recovered many times from sickness. When lying at the gates of death, His arm has held back your soul from the last step to destruction. Do you hate God for all this? Do you hate Him because He spared your life by His tender mercy? Behold His goodness that He has spread before you! He might have sent you to hell, but you are here.

Now, do you hate God for sparing you? Oh, why are you at enmity with Him? My fellow creature, do you not know that God sent His Son from His bosom, hung Him on the tree and there allowed Him to die for sinners, the Just for the unjust? And do you hate God for that? Oh, sinner, is this the cause of your enmity? Are you so estranged that you give enmity for love? And when He surrounds you with favors, girds you with mercies, encircles you with loving-kindness, do you hate Him for this? He might say as Jesus did to the Jews—"For which of these works do you stone Me?" For which of these works do you hate God? If an earthly benefactor fed you, would you hate him? Did he clothe you, would you abuse him to his face? Did he give you talents, would you turn those powers against him? Oh, speak! Would you forge the iron and strike the dagger into the heart of your best friend? Do you hate your mother who nursed you on her knee? Do you curse your father who so wisely watched over you? No, you say, we have some little gratitude towards earthly relatives. Where are your hearts, then? Where are your hearts that you can still despise God and be at enmity with Him? Oh, diabolical crime! Oh, satanic enormity; oh, iniquity for which words fail in description! To hate the all-lovely—to despise the essentially good—to abhor the constantly merciful—to spurn the ever-beneficent—to scorn the kind, the gracious one! Above all, to hate the God who sent His Son to die for man! Ah, in that thought—"The carnal mind is enmity against God"—there is something which may make us shake, for it is a terrible sin to be at enmity with God. I wish I could speak more powerfully, but my Master alone can impress upon you the enormous evil of this horrid state of heart!

IV. But there are one or two doctrines which we will try to deduce from this. Is the carnal mind at "enmity against God?" Then *salvation cannot be by merit*, it must be by grace. If we are at enmity with God, what merit can we have? How can we deserve anything from the being we hate? Even if we were pure as Adam, we could not have any merit. For I do not think Adam had any desert before his creator. When he had kept all his Master's law, he was but an unprofitable servant. He had done no more than he ought to have done. He had no surplus—no balance. But since we have become enemies, how much less can we hope to be saved by works! Oh, no. The whole Bible tells us, from beginning to end, that salvation is not by the works of the law but by the deeds of grace. Martin Luther declared that he constantly preached justification by faith alone, "because," he said, "the people would forget it—so that I was obliged almost to knock my Bible against their heads, to send it into their hearts." So it is true we constantly forget that salvation is by grace alone. We always want to be putting in some little scrap of our own virtue. We want to be *doing* something. I remember a saying of old Matthew Wilkes—"Saved by your works? You might as well try to go to America in a paper boat! Saved by your works? It is impossible! Oh no! The poor legalist is like a blind horse going round and round the mill, or like the prisoner go-

ing up the treadmill and finding himself no higher after all he has done. He has no solid confidence, no firm ground to rest upon. He has not done enough; never enough." conscience always says, "This is not perfection. It ought to have been better." Salvation for enemies must be by an ambassador—by atonement—yes, by Christ.

Another doctrine we gather from this is *the necessity of an entire change of our nature.* It is true that by birth we are at enmity with God. How necessary, then, it is that our *nature* should be *changed*. There are few people who sincerely believe this. They think that if they cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me," when they lie a-dying, they shall go to heaven directly. Let me suppose an impossible case for a moment. Let me imagine a man entering heaven without a change of heart. He comes within the gates. He hears a sonnet. He starts! It is to the praise of his *enemy.* He sees a throne and on it sits one who is glorious. But it is his *enemy.* He walks streets of gold, but those streets belong to his *enemy*. He sees hosts of angels. But those hosts are the servants of his *enemy.* He is in his *enemy's* house. For he is at *enmity* with God! He could not join the song, for he would not know the tune. There he would stand—silent, motionless—till Christ should say, with a voice louder than ten thousand thunders, "What are *you* doing here: enemies at a marriage banquet; enemies in the children's house; enemies in heaven? Get you gone! Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in hell!" Oh, sirs, if the unregenerate man could enter heaven, I mention once more the oft-repeated saying of Whitefield, "He would be so unhappy in heaven that he would ask God to let him run down into hell for shelter." There must be a *change*, if you consider the future state, for how can enemies of God ever sit down at the banquet of the Lamb?

And to conclude, let me remind you—and it is in the text, after all—that *this change must be worked by a power beyond your own.* An enemy may possibly make himself a friend. But *enmity* cannot. If it is but an adjunct of his nature to be an enemy he may change himself into a friend. But if it is the very *essence* of his existence to be enmity, positive enmity, and enmity cannot change itself; no, there must be something done more than we can accomplish. This is just what is forgotten in these days. We must have more preaching of the Holy Spirit if we are to have more conversion work. I tell you, sirs, if you change yourselves and make yourselves better and better and better, a thousand times, you will never be good enough for heaven! Till God's Spirit has laid His hand upon you. Till He has renewed your heart—till He has purified your soul, till He has changed your entire spirit and made you a new man—there can be no entering heaven; how seriously then should each stand and think. Here am I, a creature of a day, a mortal born to die, but yet an immortal! At present I am at enmity with God. What shall I do? Is it not my duty, as well as my happiness, to ask whether there is a way to be reconciled to God?

Oh, weary slaves of sin, are not your ways the paths of folly? Is it wisdom, O my fellow creatures—is it wisdom to hate your creator? Is it wisdom to stand in opposition against Him? Is it prudent to despise the riches of His grace? If it is wisdom, it is hell's wisdom! If it is wisdom, it is a wisdom which is folly with God! Oh, may God grant that you may turn unto Jesus with full purpose of heart! He is the ambassador. He it is who can make peace through His blood. And though you came in here an enemy, it is possible you may go out through that door a friend yet—if you can but look to Jesus Christ, the brazen serpent which was lifted up!

And now, it may be, some of you are convinced of sin by the Holy Spirit. I will now proclaim to you the way of salvation. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up—that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Behold, O trembling penitent, the means of your deliverance! Turn your tearing eyes to yonder Mount of Calvary. I see the victim of justice—the sacrifice of atonement for your transgression! View the Savior in His agonies, with streams of blood purchasing your soul and with most intense agonies enduring your punishment. He died for *you*, if now you confess your guilt! O come, you condemned one, self-condemned—turn your eyes this way, for one look will save! Sinner, you are bitten. Look! It is nothing but, "Look!" It is simply, "Look!" If you can but look to Jesus you are safe! Hear the voice of the Redeemer—"Look unto Me and be you saved." Look! Look! Look! O guilty souls—

"Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude!
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good!"

May my blessed Master help you to come to Him and draw you to His Son, for Jesus' sake. Amen and Amen!

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CHRIST'S PEOPLE—IMITATORS OF HIM
NO. 21

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 29, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled. And they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Acts 4:13.

BEHOLD! What a change divine grace will work in a man and in how short a time! That same Peter, who so lately followed his Master *afar off* and with oaths and curses denied that he knew His name, is now to be found side by side with the loving John, boldly declaring that there is salvation in none other name save that of Jesus Christ! They are preaching the resurrection of the dead through the sacrifice of his dying Lord. The Scribes and Pharisees soon discover the reason of his boldness. Rightly did they guess that it rested not in his learning or his talents, for neither Peter nor John had been educated; they had been trained as fishermen, their education was a knowledge of the sea—of the fisherman's craft— they had none other. Their boldness could not therefore spring from the self-sufficiency of knowledge, but from the Spirit of the living God! Nor did they acquire their courage from their station, or rank will confer a sort of dignity upon a man and make him speak with a feigned authority even when he has no talent or genius, but these men were, as it says in the original text, *"idiotai*, private men who stood in no official capacity"—men without rank or station. When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and private individuals, they marveled and they came to a right conclusion as to the source of their power—they had been dwelling with Jesus! Their conversation with the Prince of light and glory, backed up, as they might also have known, by the influence of the Holy Spirit—without which even that eminently holy example would have been in vain—had made them bold for their Master's cause. Oh, my brethren, it would be well if this commendation, so forced from the lips of enemies, could also be compelled by our own example; if we could live like Peter and John; if our lives were "living epistles of God, known and read of all men." If, whenever we were seen, men would take knowledge of us, that we had been with Jesus, it would be a happy thing for this world and a blessed thing for us. It is concerning this I am to speak to you this morning. And as God gives me divine grace, I will endeavor to stir up your minds by way of remembrance and urge you so to imitate Jesus Christ, our heavenly pattern, that men may perceive that you are disciples of the holy Son of God!

First then, this morning, I will tell you *what a Christian should be;* secondly, I will tell you *when he should be so;* thirdly, *why he should be so,* and then, fourthly, *how he can be so.*

I. As God may help us then, first of all, we will speak of WHAT A BELIEVER SHOULD BE. A Christian should be a striking likeness of Jesus Christ. You have read lives of Christ beautifully and eloquently written—and you have admired the talent of the persons who could write so well. But the best life of Christ is His living biography, written out in the words and actions of His people. If we, my brethren, were what we profess to be—if the Spirit of the Lord were in the heart of all His children, as we could desire—and if, instead of having abundance of formal *professors*, we were all *possessors* of that vital grace, I will tell you not only what we ought to be but what we would be. We would be pictures of Christ. Yes, such striking likenesses of Him that the world would not have to hold us up and say, "Well, it seems somewhat of a likeness." Instead they would, when they once beheld us, exclaim, "He has been with Jesus! He has been taught of Him! He is like He is. He has caught the very idea of the holy man of Nazareth, and he expands it out into his very life and every day actions."

In enlarging upon this point, it will be necessary to premise that when we here affirm that men should be such-and-such a thing, we refer to the people of God. We do not wish to speak to them in any legal way. We are not under the law, but under grace. Christians hold themselves bound to keep all God's precepts—but the reason why they do so is not because the *law* is binding upon them, but because the *gospel* compels them. They believe that having been redeemed by divine blood—having been purchased by Jesus Christ—they are more bound to keep His commands than they would have been if they were under the law! They hold themselves to be ten thousand-fold more debtors to God than they could have been under the Mosaic dispensation. Not of force. Not of compulsion. Not through fear of the whip. Not through legal bondage, but through pure, selfless love and gratitude to God; they lay themselves out for His service seeking to be Israelites indeed in whom there is no guile! This much I have declared lest any man should think that I am preaching works as the way to salvation—I will yield to none in this! I will always maintain that by grace we are saved—and not by ourselves or our works! But equally must I testify that where the grace of God is, it will *produce* fitting works. To these I am always bound to exhort you—you are ever expected to have good works for necessary purposes. Again—I do not, when I say that a believer should be a striking likeness of Jesus, suppose that any one Christian will perfectly exhibit all the features of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Yet, my brethren, the fact that perfection is beyond our reach should not diminish the ardor of our desire after it. The artist, when he paints, knows right well that he shall not be able to excel Apelles. But that does not discourage him. He uses his brush with all the greater pains, that he may at least, in some humble measure, resemble

the great master. So, too, the sculptor—though persuaded that he will not rival Praxiteles—he will still hew out the marble, and seek to be as near the model as possible. Just so the Christian—though he feels he never can mount to the height of complete excellence, and perceives that he never can on earth become the exact image of Christ—he still holds it up before him and measures his own deficiencies by the distance between himself and Jesus. This he will do, forgetting all he has attained, and he will press forward, crying, *Excelsior!* He will go still upwards, desiring to be conformed more and more to the image of Christ Jesus!

First then, a Christian should be like Christ in His *boldness.* This is a virtue nowadays, called *impudence,* but the grace is equally valuable by whatever name it may be called. I suppose if the Scribes had given a definition of Peter and John, they would have called them impudent fellows.

Jesus Christ and His disciples were noted for their courage. "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." Jesus Christ never fawned upon the rich. He stooped not to the great and noble, He stood erect, a man before men—the prophet of the people, speaking out boldly and freely what He thought. Have you ever admired that mighty deed of His, when going to the city where He had lived and been brought up—knowing that a prophet had no honor in His own country—the opportunity was put into His hands. He had but then commenced His ministry. Yet without tremor He unrolled the sacred volume and what did He take for His text? Most men, coming to their own neighborhood would have chosen a subject adapted to the taste in order to earn fame. But what doctrine did Jesus preach that morning? One which in our age is scorned and hated—the doctrine of *election!* He opened the Scriptures and began to read thus—"Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land, but unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet. And none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." Then He began to tell how God saves whom He pleases and rescues whom He chooses. Ah, how they gnashed their teeth upon Him, dragged Him out, and would have cast Him from the brow of the hill! Do you not admire His intrepidity? He saw their teeth gnashing. He knew their hearts were hot with enmity while their mouths foamed with revenge and malice—still He stood like the angel who shut the lion's mouths. He feared them not. Faithfully He proclaimed what He knew to be the truth of God and still read on despite them all. So in His discourses, if He saw a Scribe or a Pharisee in the congregation, He did not keep back part of the price, but pointing His finger, He said, "Woe Unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." And when a lawyer came, saying, "Master, in speaking thus, you condemn us, also," He turned round and said, "Woe unto you, lawyers, for you bind heavy burdens upon men, while you will not touch them with so much as one of your fingers." He

dealt out honest truth—He never knew the fear of man. He trembled at none. He stood out as God's chosen whom He had anointed above His fellows, careless of man's esteem. My friends, be like Christ in this. Have none of the time-serving religion of the present day, which is merely exhibited in evangelical drawing rooms—a religion which only flourishes in a hotbed atmosphere, a religion which is only to be perceived in good company. No, if you are the servants of God, be like Jesus Christ, bold for your Master! Never blush to acknowledge your religion. Your profession will never disgrace you. Take care you never disgrace *that.* Your love to Christ will never dishonor you—it may bring some temporary slight from your friends, or slanders from your enemies—but live on and you shall live down their slanders. Live on and you shall stand among the glorified, honored even by those who hissed you when *He* shall come to be glorified by His angels and admired by them that love Him! Be like Jesus, very valiant for your God—so that when they shall see your boldness, they may say, "He has been with Jesus."

But no one feature will give a portrait of a man—so the one virtue of boldness will never make you like Christ. There have been some who have been noble men but have carried their courage to excess. They have thus been caricatures of Christ and not portraits of Him. We must amalgamate with our boldness the *loveliness* of Jesus' disposition. Let courage be the brass. Let love be the gold. Let us mix the two together that we might produce a rich Corinthian metal fit to be manufactured into the beautiful gate of the temple. Let your love and courage be mingled together! The man who is bold may indeed accomplish wonders. John Knox did much, but he might, perhaps, have done more if he had had a little love. Luther was a conqueror—peace to his ashes and honor to his name! Still, we who look upon him at a distance think that if he had sometimes mixed a little mildness with it—if while he had been *fortiter in re* he had been also *suaviter in modo* and spoken somewhat more gently, he might have done even more good than he did! So, brethren, while we, too, are bold, let us ever imitate the loving Jesus. The child comes to Him—He takes it on His knee, saying, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not." A widow has just lost her only son—He weeps at the bier and with a word restores life to the dead man. He sees a paralytic, a leper, or a man long confined to his bed. He speaks, they rise and are healed. He lived for others, not for Himself. His constant labors were without any motive except the good of those who lived in the world. And to crown all, you know the mighty sacrifice He made when He condescended to lay down His life for man—when on the tree, quivering with agony and hanging in the utmost extremity of suffering, He submitted to die for our sakes—that we might be saved. Behold in Christ, Love consolidated! He was one mighty pillar of benevolence. As God is Love, so Christ is Love. Oh, Christians, be loving also! Let your love and your beneficence beam out on all men. Say not, "Be you warmed and be you filled," but, "give a portion to seven and also to eight." If you cannot imi-

tate Him and unlock the prison doors—if you cannot visit the sad house of misery—yet each in your proper sphere speak kind words, do kind actions, live out Christ, again, in the kindness of your life! If there is one virtue which most commends Christians, it is that of kindness. It is to love the people of God, to love the church, to love the word, to love all. But how many have we in our churches, crab-tree Christians, who have mixed such a vast amount of vinegar and such a tremendous quantity of gall in their constitutions, that they can scarcely speak one good word to you? They imagine it impossible to defend religion except by passionate, boiling emotions. They cannot speak for their dishonored Master without being angry with their opponent. They are mad if anything is awry, whether it is in the house, the church, or anywhere else. They conceive it to be their duty to set their faces like a flint and to defy everybody! They are like isolated icebergs—no one cares to go near them. They float about on the Sea of Forgetfulness until at last they are melted and gone. And though good souls—we shall be happy enough to meet them in heaven—we are heartily glad to get rid of them from the earth. They were always so unamiable in disposition that we would rather live an eternity with them in heaven, than five minutes on earth. Be you not thus, my brethren. Imitate Christ in your loving spirits. Speak kindly, act kindly and do kindly—that men may say of you, "He has been with Jesus."

Another great feature in the life of Christ was His deep and *sincere humility*, in which let us, by God's grace, imitate Him. While we will not cringe or bow—far from it—we are the free men whom the truth makes free. We walk through this world equal to all, inferior to none—yet we would endeavor to be like Christ—continually humble! Oh, you proud Christian—for though it is a paradox, there must be some—I would not be so uncharitable as to say that there are not some such persons—if you are a Christian, I bid you look at your Master talking to the children! Look at Him bending from the majesty of His divinity to speak to mankind on earth, tabernacling with the peasants of Galilee and then—yes, depth of condescension unparalleled—washing His disciples' feet and wiping them with a towel after supper. This is your Master whom you profess to worship! This is your Lord whom you adore! And you, some of you who count yourselves Christians, cannot speak to a person who is not dressed in the same kind of clothing as yourselves, who has not exactly as much money per year as you have! In England it is true that a sovereign will not speak to a shilling, and a shilling will not notice a sixpence, and a sixpence will sneer at a penny, but it should not be so with Christians. We ought to forget caste, degree and rank when we come into Christ's church. Remember, Christian, who your Master was—a man of the poor! He lived with them. He ate with them. And will you walk with lofty heads and stiff necks, looking with insufferable contempt upon your meaner fellow worms? What are you? The meanest of all—because your trickeries and adornments make you proud! Pitiful, despicable souls you are! How small you look in God's sight! Christ was humble. He stooped to

do anything which might serve others. He had no pride. He was a humble man, a friend of publicans and sinners, living and walking with them. So, Christian, be like your Master—one who can stoop. Yes, be one who thinks it not stooping, but rather esteems others better than himself, counts it his honor to sit with the poorest of Christ's people, and says, "If my name may be but written in the obscurest part of the book of life, it is enough for me, so unworthy am I of His notice!" Be like Christ in His humility.

So might I continue, dear brethren, speaking of the various characteristics of Christ Jesus, but as you can think of them as well as I can, I shall not do so. It is easy for you to sit down and paint Jesus Christ, for you have Him drawn out here in His word. I find that time would fail me if I were to give you an entire likeness of Jesus. But let me say, imitate Him in His *holiness.* Was He zealous for His Father? So be you. Ever go about doing good? Let not time be wasted; it is too precious. Was He self-denying, never looking to His own interest? So be you! Was He devout? So be you fervent in your prayers. Had He deference to His Father's will? So submit yourselves to Him. Was He patient? So learn to endure. And best of all, as the highest portraiture of Jesus, try to forgive your enemies, as He did, and let those sublime words of your Master, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," always ring in your ears. When you are prompted to revenge, when hot anger starts, bridle the steed at once and let it not dash forward with you headlong. Remember, anger is temporary insanity. Forgive as you hope to be forgiven. Heap coals of fire on the head of your foe by your kindness to him. Good for evil, remember, is Godlike. Be Godlike then; and in all ways and by all means, so live that your enemies may say, "He has been with Jesus."

II. Now, WHEN SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE THUS? There is an idea in the world that persons ought to be very religious on Sunday, but it does not matter what they are on Monday. How many pious preachers are there on the Sunday who are very impious preachers during the rest of the week? How many are there who come up to the house of God with a solemn countenance, who join in the song and profess to pray, yet have neither part nor lot in the matter, but are "in that gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity"? This is true of some of you who are here present. When should a Christian, then, be like Jesus Christ? Is there a time when he may strip off his regimentals—when the warrior may unbuckle his armor and become like other men? Oh, no! At all times and in every place let the Christian be what he professes to be. I remember talking, some time ago, with a person who said, "I do not like visitors who come to my house and introduce religion. I think we ought to have religion on Sundays, when we go to the house of God, but not in the drawing room." I suggested to the individual, that there would be a great deal of work for the upholsterers if there were no religion except in the house of God. "How is that?" was the question. "Why," I replied, "we would need to have beds fitted up in all our places of worship, for surely we need re-

ligion to die with and, consequently, everyone would want to die there." Yes, we all need the consolations of God at the last! But how can we expect to enjoy them unless we obey the precepts of religion during life? My brethren, let me say, be like Christ at all times, imitate Him in *public.* Most of us live in some sort of publicity. Many of us are called to work before our fellow men every day. We are watched. Our words are caught. Our lives are examined—taken to pieces. The eagle-eyed world observes everything we do. And sharp critics are upon us. Let us live the life of Christ in public. Let us take care that we exhibit our Master and not ourselves—so that we can say, "It is no longer I that lives, but Christ that lives in me." Take heed that you carry this into the *church* too, you who are church members. Be like Christ in the church. How many there are of you like Diotrephes, seeking pre-eminence. How many are trying to have some dignity and power over their fellow Christians, instead of remembering that it is the fundamental rule of all our churches that all men are equal, alike to be received as such. Carry out the spirit of Christ, then, in your churches, wherever you are. Let your fellow members say of you, "He has been with Jesus."

But, most of all, take care to have religion in your *houses.* A religious house is the best proof of true piety. It is not my chapel, it is my house—it is not my minister—it is my home companion who can best judge me. It is the servant, the child, the wife, the friend who can discern most of my real character. A good man will improve his household. Rowland Hill once said he would not believe a man to be a true Christian if his wife, his children, his servants and even the dog and cat, were not the better for it. That is being religious! If your household is not the better for your Christianity—if men cannot say, "This is a better house than others," then be not deceived—you have nothing of the grace of God. Let not your servant, on leaving your employ, say, "Well, this is a strange sort of a religious family. There was no prayer in the morning. I began the day with my drudgery. There was no prayer at night. I was kept at home all Sunday. Once a fortnight, perhaps, I was allowed to go out in the afternoon when there was nowhere to go to where I could hear a gospel sermon. My master and mistress went to a place where, of course, they heard the blessed gospel of God—that was all for them. As for me, I might have the dregs and leavings of some over-worked curate in the afternoon." Surely Christians will not act in that way. No! Carry out your godliness in your family. Let everyone say that you have practical religion. Let it be known and read in the house, as well as in the world. Take care of your character there. For what we are there, we really are! Our life abroad is often but a borrowed part—actors part of a great scene—but at home the mask is removed and men are what they seem. Take care of your home duties.

Yet again, my brethren, before I leave the point imitate Jesus in *secret.* When no eye sees you except the eyes of God, when darkness covers you, when you are shut up from the observation of mortals, even *then* be like Jesus Christ! Remember His ardent piety, His secret devotion—how, after

laboriously preaching the whole day, He stole away in the midnight shades to cry for help from His God. Remember how His entire life was constantly sustained by fresh inspirations of the Holy Spirit, derived by prayer. Take care of your secret life—let it be such that you will not be ashamed to read at the last great day. Your inner life is written in the book of God and it shall one day be opened before you. If the entire life of some of you were known, it would be no life at all—it would be a death. Yes, even of some true Christian, we may say, it is scarcely a *life.* It is a dragging on of an existence—one hasty prayer a day—one breathing, just enough to save our soul alive, but no more. O my brethren, strive to be more like Jesus Christ! These are times when we need more secret prayer. I have had much fear all this week. I know not whether it is true. But when I feel such a thing, I like to tell it to those of you who belong to my own church and congregation. I have trembled, lest by being away from our own place, you have ceased to pray as earnestly as you once did! I remember your earnest groans and petitions—how you would assemble together in the house of prayer in multitudes and cry out to God to help His servant. We cannot meet in such style at present. But do you still pray in private? Have you forgotten me? Have you ceased to cry out to God? Oh, my friends, with all the entreaties that a man can use, let me appeal to you—remember who I am and what I am—a child, having little education, little learning, ability, or talent—and here I am, called upon week after week to preach to this crowd of people! Will you not, my beloved, still plead for me? Has not God been pleased to hear your prayers ten thousand times? And will you now cease, when a mighty revival is taking place in many churches? Will you now stop your petitions? Oh, no! Go to your houses, fall upon your knees, cry aloud to God to enable you still to hold up your hands like Moses on the hill, that Joshua below may fight and overcome the Amalekites. Now is the time for victory—shall we lose it? This is the high tide that will float us over the bar. Now let us put out the oars. Let us pull by earnest prayer, crying for God the Spirit to fill the sails! You who love God, of every place and every denomination, wrestle for your ministers, pray for them! For why should not God even now pour out His Spirit? What is the reason why we are to be denied Pentecostal seasons? Why not this hour, as one mighty band, fall down before Him and entreat Him, for His Son's sake, to revive His drooping church? Then would all men discern that we are, verily, disciples of Christ!

III. But now, thirdly, WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS IMITATE CHRIST? The answer comes very naturally and easily. Christians should be like Christ, first, *for their own sakes.* For their honesty's sake and for their credit's sake, let them not be found liars before God or men! For their own healthful state, if they wish to be kept from sin and preserved from going astray, let them imitate Jesus. For their own happiness' sake, if they would drink wine on the lees well refined. If they would enjoy holy and happy communion with Jesus, if they would be lifted up above the

cares and troubles of this world—let them imitate Jesus Christ! Oh, my brethren, there is nothing that can so advantage you. Nothing that can so prosper you, so assist you, so make you rapidly walk towards heaven, so keep your head upwards towards the sky and your eyes radiant with glory, like the imitation of Jesus Christ! It is when by the power of the Holy Spirit you are enabled to walk with Jesus in His very footsteps and tread in His ways, you are most happy. And you are most known to be the children of God. For your own sakes, my brethren, I say, be like Christ!

Next, for *religion's sake,* strive to imitate Jesus. Ah, poor religion, you have been sorely shot at by cruel foes but you have not been wounded one half as much by them as by your friends. None have hurt you, O Christianity, so much as those who profess to be your followers. Who have made these wounds in this fair hand of Godliness? I say the *professor* has done this—the *professor* who has not lived up to his profession. The man, who with pretences, enters the fold, being nothing but a wolf in sheep's clothing. Such men, sirs, injure the gospel more than others—more than the laughing infidel, more than the sneering critic. No one hurts our cause more than does the man or woman who professes to love it, but in their actions lie. Is the name of the dear Redeemer precious to you? Would you see the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ? Do you wish to see the proud man humbled and the mighty abased? Do you long for the souls of perishing sinners and are you desirous to win them and save their souls from everlasting burning? Would you prevent their fall into the regions of the damned? Is it your desire that Christ should see the travail of His soul and be abundantly satisfied? Does your heart yearn over your fellow immortals? Do you long to see them forgiven? Then be consistent with your religion. Walk *before God* in the land of the living. Behave as an elect man or woman should do! Remember what manner of people we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness. This is the best way to convert the world. Yes, such conduct would do more than even the efforts of missionary societies, excellent as they are. Let but men see that our conduct is superior to others, then they will believe there is something in our religion. But if they see us quite the contrary to what we avow, what will they say? "These religious people are no better than others! Why should we go among them?" And they say quite rightly. It is but common sense judgment. Ah, my friends, if you love religion, for her own sake be consistent and walk in the love of God. Follow Christ Jesus!

Then, to put it into the strongest form I can, let me say, for *Christ's sake*, endeavor to be like He. Oh, could I fetch the dying Jesus here and let Him speak to you! My own tongue is tied this morning, but I would make His blood, His tears and His wounds speak. Poor dumb mouths, I bid each of them plead in His behalf. How would Jesus, standing here, show you His hands this morning! "My friends," He would say, "Behold Me! These hands were pierced for you. And look here at this, My side; it

was opened as the fountain of your salvation. See My feet; there entered the cruel nails. Each of these bones were dislocated for your sake. These eyes gushed with torrents of tears. This head was crowned with thorns. These cheeks were smitten. This hair was plucked. My body became the center and focus of agony. I hung quivering in the burning sun. And all for you, My people—will you not love Me now? I bid you be like I am. Is there any fault in Me? Oh, no. You believe that I am fairer than ten thousand fairs, and lovelier than ten thousand loves. Have I injured you? Have I not rather done all for your salvation? And do I not sit at My Father's throne, even now, interceding on your behalf? If you love Me"—Christian, hear that word, let the sweet syllables ring forever in your ears, like the prolonged sounding of silver-toned bells—*"if you love Me, if you love Me, keep My commandments."* Oh, Christian, let that "if" be put to you this morning. "If you love Me." Glorious Redeemer! Is it an "if" at all? You precious, bleeding Lamb, can there be an "if"? What? When I see Your blood gushing from You, is it an "if"? Yes, I weep to say it is an "if." Often my thoughts make it "if," and often my words make it "if." But yet I think my soul feels it is not "if" either—

"Not to my eyes is light so dear,
Nor friendship half so sweet."

"Yes, I love You; I know that I love You! Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You," the Christian can say. "Well then," says Jesus, looking down with a glance of affectionate approbation, "*since* you love Me, keep My commandments." O beloved, what mightier reason can I give than this? It is the argument of love and affection. Be like Christ, since gratitude demands *obedience*—and so shall the world know that you have been with Jesus!

IV. Ah, then you wept, and I perceive you felt the force of pity, and some of you are inquiring, "HOW CAN I IMITATE HIM?" It is my business, then, before you depart, to tell you how you can become transformed into the image of Christ.

In the first place, then, my beloved friends, in answer to your inquiry, let me say, you must *know* Christ as your Redeemer before you can follow Him as your Exemplar. Much is said about the example of Jesus, and we scarcely find a man now who does not believe that our Lord was an excellent and holy man, much to be admired. But excellent as His example, it would be impossible to imitate it had He not also been our sacrifice! Do you, this morning, know that His blood was shed for you? Can you join with me in this verse—

"O the sweet wonders of that cross
Where God the Savior loved and died!
Her noblest life my spirit draws,
From His dear wounds and bleeding side."

If so, you are on a fair way to imitate Christ. But do not seek to copy Him until you are bathed in the fountain filled with blood drawn from His veins. It is not possible for you to do so; your passion will be too strong and corrupt, and you will be building without a foundation, a structure

which will be about as stable as a dream. You cannot mold your life to His pattern, until you have had His Spirit, till you have been clothed in His righteousness! "Well," say some, "we have proceeded so far, what shall we do next? We know we have an interest in Him, but we are still sensible of manifold deficiencies." Next then, let me entreat you to study Christ's character. This poor Bible is become an almost obsolete book, even with some Christians; there are so many magazines, periodicals, and such like brief productions, that we are in danger of neglecting to search the Scriptures. Christian, would you know your Master? Look at Him! There is a wondrous power about the character of Christ, for the more you regard it, the more you will be conformed to it. I view myself in the mirror—I go away and forget what I was! I behold Christ and I become like Christ. Look at Him, then; study Him in the evangelists, studiously examine His character. "But," you say, "we have done that and we have proceeded but little farther"; then in the next place, correct your poor copy every day! At night, try and recount all the actions of the previous 24 hours, scrupulously putting them under review. When I have proof sheets sent to me of any of my writings, I have to make the corrections in the margin. I might read them over 50 times and the printers would still put in the errors if I did not mark them. So must you do if you find anything faulty! At night make a mark in the margin that you may know where the fault is, and tomorrow you may amend it. Do this day after day, continually noting your faults one by one so that you may better avoid them. It was a maxim of the old philosophers that three times in the day we should go over our actions. So let us do. Let us not be forgetful. Let us rather examine ourselves each night, and see wherein we have done amiss, that we may reform our lives.

Lastly, as the best advice I can give, seek more of the Spirit of God, for this is the way to become Christ-like. Vain are all your attempts to be like He till you have sought His Spirit. Take the cold iron and attempt to weld it, if you can, into a certain shape. How fruitless the effort! Lay it on the anvil, seize the blacksmith's hammer with all your might. Let blow after blow fall upon it and you shall have done nothing. Twist it, turn it, use all your implements, but you shall not be able to fashion it as you would. But put it in the fire, let it be softened and made malleable—then lay it on the anvil—and each stroke shall have a mighty effect, so that you may fashion it into any form you may desire. So take your heart, not cold as it is, not stony as it is by nature, but put it into the furnace. There let it be molten, and after that it can be turned like wax to the seal, and fashioned into the image of Jesus Christ!

Oh my brethren, what can I now say to enforce my text but that if you are like Christ on earth, you shall be like He is in heaven! If by the power of the Spirit you become followers of Jesus, you shall enter glory. For at heaven's gate there sits an angel who admits no one who has not the same features as our adorable Lord. There comes a man with a crown upon his head. "Yes," he says, "you have a crown, it is true, but crowns

are not the medium of access here." Another approaches dressed in robes of state and the gown of learning. "Yes," says the angel, "it may be good, but gowns and learning are not the marks that shall admit you here." Others advance fair, beautiful, and comely. "Yes," says the angel "that might please on earth, but beauty is not needed here." There comes up another who is heralded by fame, and prefaced by the blast of the clamor of mankind. But the angel says, "It is well with man, but you have no right to enter here." Then there appears another—poor he may have been, illiterate he may have been—but the angel, as he looks at him, smiles and says, "It is Christ again; a second edition of Jesus Christ is there. Come in, come in! Eternal glory you shall win! You are like Christ in heaven; you shall sit because you are like He is." Oh, to be like Christ is to enter heaven! But to be unlike Christ is to descend to hell. Likes shall be gathered together at last, tares with tares, wheat with wheat. If you have sinned with Adam and have died, you shall lie with the spiritually dead forever, unless you rise in Christ to newness of life! Then shall we live with Him throughout eternity. Wheat with wheat, tares with tares. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked—whatever man sows that shall he also reap." Go away with this one thought, then, my brethren, that you can test yourselves by Christ. If you are like Christ, you are of Christ, and shall be with Christ! If you are unlike He is, you have no portion in the great inheritance. May my poor discourse help to fan the floor and reveal the chaff; yes, may it lead many of you to seek to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, to the praise of His grace. And to Him be all honor! Amen.

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A CAUTION TO THE PRESUMPTUOUS
NO. 22

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 13, 1855, *BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,* AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."
1 Corinthians 10:12.

IT is a singular fact, but nevertheless most certain, that the vices are the counterfeits of virtues. Whenever God sends from the mint of heaven a precious coin of genuine metal, Satan will imitate the impress and utter a vile production of no value. God gives love; it is His nature and His essence. Satan also fashions a thing which he calls love, but it is lust. God bestows courage. And it is a good thing to be able to look one's fellow in the face, fearless of all men in doing our duty. Satan inspires foolhardiness, styles it courage and bids the man rush to the cannon's mouth for "bubble reputation." God creates in man holy fear. Satan gives him unbelief and we often mistake the one for the other. So with the best of virtues, the saving grace of faith—when it comes to its perfection it ripens into confidence—and there is nothing so comfortable and so desirable to the Christian as the full assurance of faith. Hence, we find Satan, when he sees this good coin, at once takes the metal of the bottomless pit of hell, imitates the heavenly image and superscription of assurance and palms upon us the vice of presumption!

We are astonished, perhaps, as Calvinistic Christians, to find Paul saying, "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." But we need not be astonished. We have a great right to believe that we stand if we think we stand through the power of God. But we cannot be too confident of the might of the Most High because there is a thing so near akin to true confidence that unless we use the greatest discernment we cannot tell the difference. *UNHOLY PRESUMPTION*—it is against that which I am to speak this morning. Let me not be misunderstood. I shall not utter one word against the strongest faith. I wish all Little-Faiths were Strong-Faiths, that all Fearings were made Valiant-for-Truth and the Ready-to-Halts, Asahel's Nimble-of-Foot—that they might all run in their Master's work. I speak not against strong faith or full assurance. God gives it to us—it is the holiest, happiest thing that a Christian can have—and there is no state so desirable as that of being able to say, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." It is not against that I speak. I warn you against that evil thing—a false confidence and presumption which creeps over a Christian like the cold death sleep on the mountaintop—from which, if he is not awakened, as God will see that he shall be, death will be the in-

evitable consequence. “Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”

I shall this morning attempt first, *to find out the character;* secondly, *to show the danger*, and thirdly, *to give the counsel*. The character is the man who thinks he stands. The danger is that he may fall, and the counsel is, “Let him take heed.”

I. My first business shall be to FIND OUT THE CHARACTER intended by the presumptuous man, the man who thinks he stands. I could find a multitude of such if I might search the wide world over. I could find men in business filled with an arrogant hardihood, who, because they have in one speculation been successful, will wade far out into the stormy sea of this contending life, risk their all—and lose it, too. I might mention others who, presuming upon their health, are spending their years in sin and their lives in iniquity because they think their bones are iron and their nerves, steel, and “all men mortal but themselves.” I might speak of men who will venture into the midst of temptation, confident in their boasted power, exclaiming with self-complacency, “Do you think I am so weak as to sin? Oh, no, I shall stand. Give me the glass. I shall never be a drunkard. Give me the song. You will not find me a midnight reveler. I can drink a little and then I can stop.” Such are presumptuous men. But I am not about to find them there. My business, this morning, is with God’s Church! The fanning must begin with the floor, the winnowing must try the wheat. So we are to winnow the Church this morning to discover the presumptuous. We need not go far to find them. There are in every Christian church—men who think they stand, men who vaunt themselves in fancied might and power. They are children of nature finely dressed, but not the living children of the living God. They have not been humbled or broken in spirit, or if they have, they have fostered carnal security until it has grown to a giant and trampled the sweet flower of humility under its foot. They think they stand. I speak now of *real* Christians, who, notwithstanding, have grown presumptuous and indulge in a fleshly security. May my Master awaken such, while in preaching I endeavor to go to the core and root of the matter, for a little while I will expatiate upon the frequent causes of presumption in a Christian.

1. And first, a very common cause is continued *worldly prosperity*. Moab is settled on his lees, he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel. Give a man wealth. Let his ships continually bring home rich freights. Let the winds and waves appear to be his servants, to bear his vessels across the bosom of the mighty deep. Let his lands yield abundantly. Let the weather be propitious to his crops and the skies smile pleasantly upon his enterprise. Let the bands of Orion be loosed for him. Let the sweet influence of the Pleiades descend upon him. Let uninterrupted success attend him. Let him stand among men as a successful merchant, as a princely Dives, as a man who is heaping up riches to a large extent, who is always prospering—or, if not wealth, let him enjoy continued health. Let him know no sickness. Allow him with braced

nerve and brilliant eyes to march through the world and live happily. Give him the buoyant spirit. Let him have the song perpetually on his lips and his eyes are always sparkling with joy—the happy, happy man who laughs at care and cries, "Begone, dull care, I pray you be gone from me." I say the consequence of such a state to a man, let him be the best Christian who ever breathed—will be presumption! And he will say, "I stand." "In my prosperity," says David, "I said, I shall never be moved!" And we are not much better than David, nor half as good. If God should always rock us in the cradle of prosperity—if we were always dandled on the knees of fortune—if we had not some stain on the alabaster pillar, if there were not a few clouds in the sky, some specks in our sunshine—if we had not some bitter drops in the wine of this life, we would become intoxicated with pleasure, we would dream, "We stand." And stand we would, but it would be upon a pinnacle. Stand we might, but like the man asleep upon the mast, each moment we would be in jeopardy! We bless God, then, for our afflictions! We thank Him for our depressions of spirit. We extol His name for the losses of our property. For we feel that had it not so happened to us, had He not chastened us every morning and vexed us every evening, we might have become too secure. Continued worldly prosperity is a fiery trial. If it is so with any of you, apply this proverb to your own state, "As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold—so is a man to his praise."

2. Again, *light thoughts of sin* will engender presumption. When we are first converted, our conscience is so very tender that we are afraid of the slightest sin. I have known young converts almost afraid to proceed a step lest they should put their feet in the wrong direction. They will ask advice of their minister and difficult cases of moral principles will they bring before us, such as we hardly know how to answer. They have a holy timidity, a godly fear lest they should offend God. But alas, very soon the fine bloom upon these first ripe fruits is removed by the rough handling of the surrounding world! The sensitive plant of young piety turns into a willow in after life, too pliant, too easily yielding. It is sadly true that even a Christian will grow by degrees so callous that the sin which once startled him and made his blood run cold does not alarm him in the least. I can speak from my own experience. When first I heard an oath, I stood aghast and knew not where to hide myself. Yet now I can hear an imprecation or blasphemy against God and though a shudder still runs through my veins, there is not that solemn feeling, that intense anguish which I felt when first I heard such evil utterances. By degrees we get familiar with sin. The ear in which the cannon has been booming will not notice slight sounds. The men who work in those huge vessels, the hammering of which causes immense noise, cannot, at first, sleep, for the continual din in their ears; but, by-and-by they, when they are used to it, think nothing of it; an so it is with sin. First, a little sin does startle us; soon we say, "Is it not a little one," like Lot did of Zoar? Then there comes another, larger and then another, until by degrees we begin to re-

gard it as but a little ill. And then you know, there comes an unholy presumption and we think we stand. "We have not fallen," we say, "we only did such a little thing. We have not gone astray. True, we tripped a little, but we stood upright in the main. We might have uttered one unholy word, but as for the most of our conversation, it was consistent." So we palliate sin. We throw a gloss over it, we try to hide it. Christian, beware! When you think lightly of sin, you have become presumptuous! Take heed, lest you should fall. Sin—a little thing? Is it not a poison? Who knows its deadliness? Sin—a little thing? Do not the little foxes spoil the vines? Sin—a little thing? Does not the tiny coral insect build a rock that wrecks a navy? Do not little strokes fell lofty oaks? Will not continual droppings wear away stones? Sin—a little thing? It girded *His* head with thorns that now is crowned with glory! Sin—a little thing? It made *Him* suffer anguish, bitterness and woe till He endured, "All that incarnate God could bear, with strength enough and none to spare."

It is not a little thing, sirs! Could you weigh it in the scales of eternity, you would fly from it as from a serpent and abhor the least appearance of evil. But alas, loose thoughts of sin often beget a presumptuous spirit—and we think we stand!

3. A third reason is often *low thoughts of the value of religion*. We, none of us, value religion enough. Religious furor, as it is called, is laughed at everywhere. But I do not believe there is such a thing as religious furor at all. If a man could be so enthusiastic as to give his body to be burned at the stake—pour out his drops of blood and turn each drop into a life—and then let that life be slaughtered in perpetual martyrdom—he would not love his God too much! Oh, no, when we think that this world is but a narrow space, that time will soon be gone and we shall be in the forever of eternity. When we consider we must be either in hell or in heaven throughout a never-ending state of immortality, how, sirs, can we love too much? How can we set too high a value on the immortal soul? Can we ask too great a price for heaven? Can we think we do too much to serve that God who gave Himself for our sins? Ah, no! And yet my friends, most of us do not sufficiently regard the value of religion. We cannot, any of us, estimate the soul rightly. We have nothing with which to compare it. Gold is sordid dust, diamonds are but small lumps of congealed air that can be made to melt away. We have nothing with which to compare the soul—therefore we cannot tell its value. It is because we do not know this, that we presume. Does the miser who loves his gold let it be scattered on the floor that his servant may steal it? Does he not hide it in some secret place where no eyes shall behold it? Day after day, night after night, he counts out his treasure because he loves it. Does the mother trust her baby by the riverside? Does she not, in her sleep, think of it? And when it is sick, will she leave it to the care of some poor nurse who may allow it to die? Oh, no! What we love, we will not wantonly throw away. What we esteem most precious, we will guard with the most anxious care!

So, if Christians knew the value of their souls, if they estimated religion at its proper rate, they never would presume. But low thoughts of Christ, low thoughts of God, mean thoughts of our souls' eternal state—these things tend to make us carelessly secure. Take heed, therefore, of low ideas of the gospel, lest you be overtaken by the evil one!

4. But again, this presumption often springs from *ignorance of what we are and where we stand*. Many Christians have not yet learned what they are. It is true, the first teaching of God is to show us our own state but we do not know that thoroughly till many years after we have known Jesus Christ. The fountains of the great deep within our hearts are not broken up all at once. The corruption of our soul is not developed in an hour. "Son of man," said the angel of Ezekiel, "I will show you the abominations of Israel." He then took him in at one door where he saw abominable things and stood aghast. "Son of man, I will show you greater abominations than these." Then he takes him into another chamber and Ezekiel says, "Surely I have now seen the worst." "No," says the angel, "I will show you greater things than these." So, all our lifelong the Holy Spirit reveals to us the horrid abomination of our hearts! I know there are some here who do not think anything about it—they think they are good-hearted creatures. Good hearts, have you? *Good* hearts? Jeremiah had a better heart than you, yet he said, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" No, the black lesson cannot be learned in a night. God alone knows the evil of the heart. And Young says, "God spares all eyes but His own that awful sight—the vision of a human heart." If we could but see it, we would stand aghast. It is ignorance of this that makes us presume. We say, "I have a good nature, I have a good disposition. I have none of those hot and angry passions that some have, I can stand secure. I have not that dry, tinder heart that is on fire in a moment. My passions are weakened, my powers for evil are somewhat taken down and I may stand safely." Ah, you little know that it is when you talk like this that you presume, O worm of the dust! You are not yet free from an evil nature, for sin and corruption remain in the heart even of the regenerate. And it is strangely true, though it appears a paradox, as Ralph Erskine said, that a Christian sometimes thinks himself—

"To good and evil bent
And both a devil and a saint."

There is such corruption in a Christian that while he is a saint in his life and justified through Christ, he seems a devil sometimes in imagination and a demon in the wishes and corruptions of his soul. Take heed, Christian, you have need to be upon the watch tower. You have a heart of unbelief—therefore watch both night and day!

5. But to finish this delineation of a presumptuous man. *Pride* is the most pregnant cause of presumption. In all its various shapes it is the fountain of carnal security. Sometimes it is *pride of talent*. God has endowed a man with gifts. He is able to stand before the multitude or to

write for the many. He has a discerning mind, he has a judgment and such like things. Then he says, "As for the ignorant, those who have no talent, they may fall. My brother ought to take care—but look at me. How am I wrapped in grandeur!" And thus in his self-satisfaction he thinks he stands. Ah, those are the men who fall! How many that flamed like comets in the sky of the religious world have rushed into space and been quenched in darkness! How many a man who has stood like a prophet before his fellows and who would exclaim as he wrapped himself in his conceit, "I, only I am alive. I am the only prophet of God." And yet that only prophet fell! His lamp was quenched and his light put out in darkness. How many have boasted of their might and dignity and have said, "I have built this mighty Babylon," but then they thought they stood and they fell at once. "Let him that thinks he stands," with the proudest talents, "take heed lest he fall." Others have the *pride of grace*. That is a curious fact. But there is such a thing as being proud of grace. A man says, "I have great faith, I shall not fall. Poor Little-Faith may, but I never shall." "I have fervent love," says another man, "I can stand, there is no danger of my going astray. As for my brother over there, he is so cold and slow, he will fall, I dare say." Says another, "I have a most burning hope of heaven and that hope will triumph. It will purge my soul from sense and sin, as Christ the Lord is pure. I am safe." He who boasts of grace, has little grace to boast of! But there are some who do, who think their graces shall keep them, knowing not that the stream must flow constantly from the fountainhead, otherwise the bed of the brook shall soon be dry and you shall see the pebbles at the bottom. If a continuous stream of oil comes not to the lamp, though it burn brightly, today, it shall smoke tomorrow and noxious will be the scent. Take heed that you neither glory in your talents nor in your graces!

Many are still worse. They think they shall not fall because of their *privileges*. "I take the sacrament, I have been baptized in an orthodox manner, as written in God's word. I attend such-and-such a ministry. I am well fed. I am fat and flourishing in the courts of my God. If I were one of those starved creatures who hear a false gospel. I might possibly sin, but oh, our minister is the model of perfection! We are constantly fed and made fat—surely we shall stand." Thus in the complacency of their privileges they run down others, exclaiming, "My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved." Take heed, presumption, take heed!

Pride comes before a fall—and a haughty spirit is the usher of destruction. Take heed, watch your footsteps, for where pride creeps in it is the worm at the root of the gourd, causing it to wither and die. "Let him that thinks he stands," because of pride of talent, or grace, or privilege, "take heed lest he fall."

I hope I have touched some here. I trust the lancet has been sharp. I have taken the scalpel and I hope I have discovered something. O you presumptuous ones! I speak to you and I shall do so while next I warn you of your danger.

II. I shall be more brief on the second point—THE DANGER. He who thinks he stands is in danger of a fall. The true Christian cannot possibly suffer a *final* fall, but he is very much disposed to a foul fall. Though the Christian shall not stumble so as to destroy his life, he may break his limbs. Though God has given His angels charge over him—to keep him in all his ways—yet there is no commission to keep him when he goes astray. And when he is astray he may thrust himself through with many sorrows.

1. I must now try and give you the reason why a man who thinks he stands is more exposed to the danger of falling than any other.

First, because *such a man in the midst of temptation will be sure to be more or less careless*. Make a man believe he is very strong and what will he do? The fight is thickening around him. Yet he has his sword in his scabbard. "Oh," he says, "my arm is nimble and strong. I can draw it out and strike home." So perhaps he lies down in the field, or slothfully sleeps in his tent. "For," he says, "when I hear enemies approaching, such is my prowess and such my might that I can mow them down by thousands. You sentinels watch the weak! Go to the Ready-to-Halts and the Fearings and awaken them. But I am a giant. And let me once get this old Toledo blade in my hand, it will cut through body and soul. Whenever I meet my enemies I shall be more than conqueror." The man is careless in battle. He lifts up his helmet, as it is said Goliath did and then a stone pierces his forehead. He throws away his shield and then an arrow penetrates his flesh. He will put his sword into his scabbard—then the enemy smites him—and he is ill prepared to resist. The man who thinks he is strong, is off his guard. He is not ready to ward off the strokes of the evil one—and then the poison enters his soul.

2. Again, *the man who thinks he stands will not be careful to keep out of the way of temptation*, but rather will run into it. I remember seeing a man who was going to a place of worldly amusement—he was a professor of religion—and I called to him, "What are you doing there, Elijah?" "Why do you ask me such a question as that?" he asked. I said, "What are you doing here, Elijah? Are you going in *there?"* "Yes," he replied, with some sort of blush, "but I can do that with impunity." "I could not," I said, "If I were there, I know I would commit sin. I would not care what people said about it—I always do as I like, as far as I believe it to be right. I leave the *saying* to anybody who likes to talk about me. But this is a place of danger and I could not go there with impunity." "Ah," he said, "I can. I have been, before, and I have had some sweet thoughts there. I find it enlarges the intellect. You are narrow-minded. You do not get these good things. It is a rich treat I assure you. I would go if I were you." "No," I said, "it would be dangerous for me—from what I hear, the name of Jesus is profaned there. And there is much said that is altogether contrary to the religion we believe. The persons who go there are none of the best and it will surely be said that birds of a feather flock together." "Ah, well," he replied, "perhaps you young men had better stay away. I am a strong

man, I can go." And off he went to the place of amusement. That man, sirs, was an apple of Sodom! He was a professor of religion. I guessed there was something rotten at the core from that very fact. And I found it so by experience, for the man was a downright sensualist even then. He wore a mask, he was a hypocrite and had none of the grace of God in his heart. Presumptuous men will say they can go into sin—they are so full of moral strength. But when a man tells you he is so good, always read his words backwards and understand him to mean that he is as bad as he can be. The self-confident man is in danger of falling because he will even *run into* temptation in the confidence that he is strong and able to make his escape!

3. Another reason is that *these strong men sometimes will not use the means of grace,* and therefore, they fall. There are some persons here, who, very likely, never attend a place of worship. They do not profess to be religious and I am sure they would be astonished if I were to tell them that I know some professedly religious people, accepted in some churches as being true children of God, who yet make it a habit of staying away from the house of God. They conceive they are so advanced that they do not need it. You smile at such a thing as that. They boast such deep experience within. They have a volume of sweet sermons at home and they will stop and read them. They need not go to the house of God, for they are fat and flourishing. They conceit themselves that they have received food enough seven years ago, to last them the next ten years! They imagine that old food will feed their souls now. These are your presumptuous men. They are not to be found at the Lord's Table, eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ in the holy emblems of bread and wine. You do not see them in their closets. You do not find them searching the Scriptures with holy curiosity. They think they stand—they shall never be moved—they fancy that means are intended for weaker Christians. And leaving those means, they fall. They will not have the shoe to put upon the foot and, therefore, the flint cuts them. They will not put on the armor and, therefore, the enemy wounds them—sometimes well-near unto death! In this deep quagmire of neglect of the means, many a haughty professor has been smothered.

4. Once more, the man who is self-confident runs a fearful hazard, because *God's Spirit always leaves the proud.* The gracious Spirit delights to dwell in low places. The Holy Dove came to Jordan. We read not that it ever rested on Bashan. The man upon the white horse rode among the myrtle trees—not among the cedars. The myrtle trees grew at the foot of the mountains; the cedars on the summit! God loves humility; he who walks with fear and trembling, fearing lest he should go astray—that man the Spirit loves. But when once pride creeps in and the man declares, "Now I am in no danger," away goes the Dove. It flies to heaven and will have nothing to do with him. Proud souls, you quench the Spirit. You arrogant men, you grieve the Holy Spirit. He leaves every heart where pride dwells—that evil spirit of Lucifer He abhors. He will not rest

with it. He will not tarry in its company. Here is your greatest danger, you proud ones—that the Spirit leaves those who deny their entire dependence on Him.

III. The third point is THE COUNSEL. I have been expounding the text—now I want to enforce it. I would, if my Lord would allow me, speak home to your souls and so picture the danger of a presumptuous man, that I would make you all cry out to heaven that sooner might you die than presume. That sooner might you be found among those who lie prostrate at the foot of Christ, trembling all their lives, than among those who think they stand and, therefore, fall! Christian, the counsel of Scripture is—"Take heed."

1. First, take heed, because *so many have fallen*. My brothers and sisters, could I take you into the wards of that hospital where lie sick and wounded Christians, I could make you tremble. I would show you one, who, by a sin that occupied him not a single moment, is so sorely broken that his life is one continued scene of misery. I could show you another one, a brilliant genius, who served his God with energy who is now—not a priest of the devil it is true, but almost that—sitting down in despair because of his sin. I could point you to another person who once stood in the church, pious and consistent, but who now comes up to the same house of prayer as if he were ashamed of himself. He sits in some remote corner and is no longer treated with the kindness he formerly received—the brothers and sisters, themselves, being suspicious because he so greatly deceived them and brought such dishonor upon the cause of Christ. Oh, do you know the sad pain which those who fall, endure? Could you tell how many have fallen (and have not perished, it is true), but still have dragged themselves along in misery throughout their entire existence, I am sure you would take heed. Come with me to the foot of the mountain of presumption. See there the maimed and writhing forms of many who once soared with eagles' wings in the airy regions of self-confidence, yet there they lie with their bones broken and their peace destroyed. There lies one who has immortal life within him. See how full of pain he appears. And he looks like a mass of helpless matter. He is alive, it is true, but just barely alive. You know not how some of those enter heaven who are saved, "so as by fire." One man walks to heaven. He keeps consistent. God is with him and he is happy all his journey through. Another says, "I am strong, I shall not fall." He runs aside to pluck a flower. He sees something which the devil has laid in his way. He is caught, first, in this sin and then in that trap. And when he comes near the river, instead of finding before him that stream of nectar of which the dying Christian drinks, he sees fire through which he has to pass, blazing upon the surface of the water! The river is on fire and as he enters it, he is scorched and burned. The hand of God is lifted up saying, "Come on, come on." But as he dips his foot in the stream, he finds the fire kindling around him and though the hand clutches him by the hair of the head and drags him through, he stands upon the shore of heaven

and cries, "I am a monument of divine mercy, for I have been saved so as by fire." Oh, do you want to be saved by fire, Christians? Would you not rather enter heaven singing songs of praises? Would you not glorify Him on earth and then give your last testimony with, "Victory, victory, victory, unto Him that loved us"? Would you not rather shut your eyes on earth and open them in heaven? If you would do so, presume not! "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

2. Once more, my brothers and sisters, take heed, because *a fall will so much damage the cause of Christ*. Nothing has hurt religion one-half, or one thousandth part, so much as the fall of God's people. Ah, when a true Believer sins, how will the world point at him. "That man was a deacon, but he knows how to charge exorbitantly. That man was a professor, but he can cheat as well as his neighbors. That man is a minister and he lives in sin." Oh, when the mighty fall—it is, "rejoice fir tree, for the cedar has fallen"—how does the world exult! They chuckle over our sins, they rejoice over our faults. They fly around us and if they can see one point where we are vulnerable, how they will say, "See these holy people are no better than they should be." Because there is one hypocrite, men set down all the rest the same. I heard one man say, a little while ago, that he did not believe there was a true Christian living because he had found out so many hypocrites. I reminded him that there could be no hypocrites if there were no genuine ones. No one would try to forge bank notes if there were no genuine ones. No one would think of passing a bad sovereign if there were no sterling coin. So the fact of their being some hypocrites proves that there are some genuine characters. But let those who are so, take heed. Let them always, in their conduct, have the ring of true gold. Let your conversation be such as to become the gospel of Christ—lest by any means the enemy get the advantage over us and slander the name of Jesus. And especially is this incumbent upon the members of our own denomination, for it is often said that the doctrines we believe have a tendency to lead us to sin. I have heard it asserted most positively that those high doctrines which we love and which we find in the Scriptures, are licentious ones! I do not know who has the hardihood to make that assertion when they consider that the holiest of men have been believers in them. I ask the man who dares to say that Calvinism is a licentious religion, what he thinks of the character of Augustine, or Calvin, or Whitefield who, in successive ages, were the great exponents of the system of grace! Or what will he say of those Puritans whose works are full of them? Had a man been an Arminian in those days, he would have been accounted the vilest heretic breathing! But now *we* are looked upon as the heretics and *they* the orthodox! *We* have gone back to the old school, *we* can trace our descent from the apostles. It is that vein of free grace running through the sermonizing of Baptists which has saved us as a denomination. Were it not for that, we would not stand where we are. We can run a golden link from here up to Jesus Christ Himself through a holy succession of mighty fathers who all held

these glorious truths! And we can say to them, where will you find holier and better men in the world? We are not ashamed to say of ourselves that however much we may be maligned and slandered, you will not find a people who will live closer to God than those who believe that they are saved, not by their works, but by free grace alone. But, oh, you Believers in free grace, be careful. Our enemies hate the doctrine. And if one falls, "Ah there," they say, "see the tendency of your principles?" No, we might reply, see what is the tendency of *your* doctrine! The exception in our case proves the rule is true, that after all, our gospel does lead us to holiness. Of all men, those have the most selfless piety, the most sublime reverence, the most ardent devotion who believe that they are saved by grace, without works, through faith and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God! Christian take heed, lest by any means Christ should be crucified afresh and should be put unto an open shame.

And now, what more can I say? Oh you, my beloved, you, my brothers and sisters, think not that you stand, lest you should fall. Oh you fellow heirs of everlasting life and glory—we are marching along through this weary pilgrimage. And I, whom God has called to preach to you, would turn affectionately to you little ones and say, take heed lest you fall. My brothers and sisters, stumble not. There lies the sin, there the snare. I am come to gather the stones out of the road and take away the stumbling blocks. But what can I do unless, with due care and caution, you yourselves walk guardedly? Oh, my brothers and sisters, be much more in prayer than ever. Spend more time in pious adoration. Read the Scriptures more earnestly and constantly. Watch your lives more carefully. Live nearer to God. Take the best examples for your pattern. Let your conversation be fragrant of heaven. Let your hearts be perfumed with affection for men's souls. So live that men may take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus and have learned of Him. And when that happy day shall come when He whom you love shall say, "Come up higher," let it be your happiness to hear Him say, "Come My beloved, you have fought a good fight, you have finished your course and henceforth there is laid up for you a crown of righteousness that fades not away." On, Christian, proceed with care and caution! On with holy fear and trembling! On yet, with faith and confidence, for you shall not fall. Read the next verse of this very chapter—"He will not allow you to be tempted above that which you are able to bear, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape."

But I have some here, perhaps, who may never hear my voice again. And I will not let my congregation go, God helping me, without telling them the way of salvation. Sirs, there are some of you who know you have not believed in Christ. If you were to die, where you now sit you have no hope that you would rise among the glorified in bliss. How many are there here who, if their hearts could speak, must testify that they are without God, without Christ, and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel? Oh, let me tell you, then, what you must do to be saved. Does

your heart beat high? Do you grieve over your sins? Do you repent of your iniquities? Will you turn unto the living God? If so, this is the way of salvation—"Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved." I cannot reverse my Master's order—He says, "believes," and then, "baptized." And He tells me that, "He that believes *not* shall be *damned."* Oh, my Hearers, your works cannot save you! Though I have spoken to Christians and exhorted them to live in good works, I talk not so to you. I ask you not to get the flower before you have the seed. I will not bid you get the roof of your house before you lay the foundation! Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Whoever here will now cast himself as a guilty worm, flat on Jesus—whoever will throw himself into the arms of Everlasting Love—that man or woman shall be accepted! They shall go through that door justified and forgiven, with their souls as safe as if they were in heaven, without the danger of ever being lost. All this is through belief in Christ!

Surely you need no argument. If I thought you did, I would use it. I would stand and weep till you came to Christ if I thought I was strong enough to fetch a soul to Jesus. If I thought that moral persuasion could win you, I would go round to each of your seats and beg of you in God's name to repent. But since I cannot do that, I have done my duty when I have prophesied to the dry bones. Remember, we shall meet again. I boast of neither eloquence nor talent and I cannot understand why you come here. I only speak right on and tell you what I feel. But mark me—when we meet before God's bar—however ill I may have spoken, I shall be able to say that I said to you, "Believe on the name of Jesus and you shall be saved." Why will you die, O house of Israel? Is hell so sweet, is everlasting torment so much to be desired that therefore you can let go of the glories of heaven, the bliss of eternity? Men, are you to live forever? Or, are you to die like brutes? "Live!" you say. Well, then, are you not desirous to live in a state of bliss? Oh may God grant you grace to turn to Him with full purpose of heart! Come, guilty sinner, come! God help you to come and I shall be well repaid if but one soul is added to the visible fold of Jesus through anything I may have said. Amen.

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THOUGHTS ON THE LAST BATTLE
NO. 23

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, MAY 13, 1855, *BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,* AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."
1 Corinthians 15:56, 57.

WHILE the Bible is one of the most poetical of books and though its language is unutterably sublime, yet we must remark how constantly it is true to nature. There is no straining of a fact, no glossing over a truth. However dark may be the subject, while it lights it up with brilliance, yet it does not deny the gloom connected with it. If you will read this chapter of Paul's Epistle, so justly celebrated as a masterpiece of language, you will find him speaking of that which is to come after death with such exaltation and glory that you feel, "If this is to die, then it were well to depart at once." Who has not rejoiced and whose heart has not been lifted up, or filled with a holy fire, while he has read such sentences as these—"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" Yet with all that majestic language, with all that bold flight of eloquence, he does not deny that death is a gloomy thing. Even his very figures imply it. He does not laugh at it, he does not say, "Oh, it is nothing to die." He describes death as a monster. He speaks of it as having a sting. He tells us wherein the strength of that sting lies and even in the exclamation of triumph he imputes that victory not to unaided flesh, but he says, "Thanks be to God which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

When I select such a text as this, I feel that I cannot preach from it. The thought overpowers me, my words stagger—there are no utterances that are great enough to convey the mighty meaning of this wondrous text! If I had the eloquence of all men united in one, if I could speak as never man spoke, (with the exception of that one godlike Man of Nazareth), I could not compass so vast a subject as this! I will not, therefore, pretend to do so, but offer you such thoughts as my mind is capable of producing.

Tonight we shall speak of three things—first, *the sting of death;* secondly, the *strength of sin;* and thirdly, the *victory of faith.*

I. First, THE STING OF DEATH. The apostle pictures death as a terrible dragon or monster, which, coming upon all men, must be fought with by each one for himself. He gives us no hope whatever that any of us can avoid it. He tells us of no bridge across the river death. He does not give us the faintest hope that it is possible to emerge from this state of existence into another without dying. He describes the monster as being exactly in our path and with it we must fight—each man personally, separately and alone—each man must die. We all must cross the black stream. Each one of us must go through the iron gate. There is no passage from this world into another without death. Having told us, then, that there is no hope of our escape, he braces up our nerves for the combat. But he gives us no hope that we shall be able to slay the monster. He does not tell us that we can strike our sword into his heart and so overturn and overwhelm death. But pointing to the dragon, he seems to say, "You cannot slay it, man, there is no hope that you should ever put your foot upon its neck and crush its head. But one thing can be done—it has a sting which you may extract. "You cannot crush death under foot, but you may pull out the sting which is deadly. And then you need not fear the monster, for monster it shall be no longer—but rather it shall be a swift-winged angel to waft you aloft to heaven." Where, then, is the sting of this dragon? Where must I strike? What is the sting? The apostle tells us that, "The sting of death is sin." Once let me cut off *that,* though death may be dreary and solemn, I shall not dread it. But holding up the monster's sting, I shall exclaim, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" Let us now dwell upon the fact that "That sting of death is sin."

I. First, sin puts a sting into death from the fact that *sin brought death into the world*. Men could be more content to die if they did not know it was a *punishment*. I suppose if we had never sinned, there would have been some means for us to go from this world to another. It cannot be supposed that so huge a population would have existed that all the myriads who have lived from Adam down till now could ever have inhabited so small a globe as this. There would not have been space enough for them. But there might have been provided some means for taking us off when the proper time should come and bearing us safely to heaven. God might have furnished horses and chariots of fire for each of His Elijahs. Or as it was said of Enoch, so it might have been declared of each of us, "He *is not*, for God has taken him." Thus to die, if we may call it death, to depart from this body and to be with God, would have been no disgrace. In fact it would have been the highest honor—fitting the loftiest aspiration of the soul—to live quickly its little time in this world, then to mount and be with its God. And in the prayers of the most pious and devout man—one of his most sublime petitions would be, "O God, hasten the time of my departure, when I shall be with You." When such sinless beings thought of their departure, they would not tremble, for the gate would be of ivory and pearl—not as now, of iron—the stream would be as

nectar, far different from the present "bitterness of death." But alas, how different! Death is now the punishment of sin. "In the day you eat, thereof, you shall surely die." "*In Adam* all die." By his sin every one of us becomes subject to the penalty of death and thus, being a punishment, death has its sting. To the best man, the holiest Christian, the most sanctified intellect, the soul that has the nearest and dearest communion with God, death must appear to have a sting, because sin was its mother. O fatal offspring of sin, I only dread you because of your parentage! If you did come to me as an honor, I could wade through Jordan even now and when its chilling billows were around me I would smile amidst its surges. And in the swellings of Jordan my song should swell, too—and the liquid music of my voice should join with the liquid swellings of the floods, "Hallelujah! It is blessed to cross to the land of the glorified." This is one reason why the sting of death is sin.

2. But I must take it in another sense. "The sting of death is sin"—that is to say, *that which shall make death most terrible to man will be sin, if it is not forgiven*. If that is not the exact meaning of the apostle, still it is a great truth and I may find it here. If sin lay heavy on me and were not forgiven—if my transgressions were unpardoned—if such were the fact (though I rejoice to know it is not so) it would be the very sting of death to me. Let us consider a man dying and looking back on his past life—he will find in death a sting and that sting will be his past sin. Imagine a conqueror's deathbed. He has been a man of blood from his youth up. Bred in the camp, his lips were early set to the bugle and his hands, even in infancy, struck the drum. He had a martial spirit. He delighted in the fame and applause of men. He loved the dust of battle and the garment rolled in blood. He has lived a life of what men call glory. He has stormed cities, conquered countries, ravaged continents, overrun the world. See his banners hanging in the hall and the marks of glory on his escutcheon. He is one of earth's proudest warriors! But now he comes to die. And when he lies down to expire, what shall invest his death with horror? It shall be his sin. I think I see the monarch dying. He lies in state. Around him are his nobles and his counselors. But there is someone else there. Hard by his side there stands a spirit from Hades. It is the soul of a departed woman. She looks on him and says, "Monster! My husband was slain in battle through your ambition—I was made a widow and my helpless orphan and I were starved." And she passes by. Her husband comes, and opening wide his bloody wounds, he cries, "Once I called you Monarch, but by your vile covetousness, you did provoke an unjust war. See here these wounds—I gained them in the siege; for your sake I mounted first the sealing ladder; this foot stood upon the top of the wall, and I waved my sword in triumph. But in hell I lifted up my eyes in torment. Base wretch! Your ambition hurried me there!" Turning his horrid eyes upon him, he passes by. Then up comes another and another and another yet—waking from their tombs they stalk around his bed and haunt him. The dreary procession still marches on, looking at the dying

tyrant. He shuts his eyes, but he feels the cold and bony hand upon his forehead. He quivers—for the sting of death is in his heart. "O death!" he says, "to leave this large estate, this mighty realm, this pomp and power—this were somewhat—but to meet those men, those women and those orphan children, face to face, to hear them saying, 'Have you become like one of us?' While kings whom I have dethroned and monarchs whom I have cast down shall rattle their chains in my ears and say, 'You were our destroyer, but how are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How are you brought down as in a moment from your glory and your pride!'" There you see the sting of death would be the man's sin. It would not sting him that he had to die but that he had sinned—that he had been a bloody man, that his hands were red with wholesale murder—this would plague him, indeed, for, 'The sting of death is sin."

Or suppose another character—a minister. He has stood before the world proclaiming something which he called the gospel. He has been a noted preacher—the multitude have been hanging on his lips, they have listened to his words. Before his eloquence a nation stood amazed and thousands trembled at his voice. But his preaching is over. The time when he can mount the pulpit is gone. Another standing-place awaits him, another congregation. And he must hear another and a better preacher than himself. There he lies. He has been unfaithful to his charge. He preached philosophy to charm his people, instead of preaching the truth of God and aiming at their hearts. And as he pants upon his bed, that worst and most accursed of men—for surely, none can be worse than he—there comes up one, a soul from the pit of hell and looking him in the face, says, "I came to you once trembling on account of sin. I asked you the road to heaven and you did say, 'Do such-and-such good works,' and I did them and am damned! You told me an lie. You did not declare plainly the word of God." He vanishes only to be followed by another. He has been an irreligious character and as he sees the minister upon his deathbed. He says, "Ah, and are you here; once I strolled into your house of prayer, but you had such a sermon that I could not understand. I listened. I wanted to hear something from your lips, some truth of God that might burn my soul and make me repent. But I knew not what you said and here I am." The ghost stamps his foot, and the man quivers like an aspen leaf, because he knows it is all true. Then the whole congregation arises before him, and as he lies upon his bed, he looks upon the motley group. He beholds the snowy heads of the old, and the glittering eyes of the young. And lying there upon his pillow, he pictures all the sins of his past life, and he hears it said, "Go! Unfaithful to your charge—you did not divest yourself of your love of pomp and dignity. You did not speak—

As though you never might speak again,
A dying man to dying men."

Oh, it may be something for that minister to leave his charge, somewhat for him to die. But worst of all, the sting of death will be his sin—to hear

his parish come howling after him to hell—to see his congregation following behind him in one mingled herd. He led them astray. He was a false prophet instead of a true one, speaking peace, peace, where there was no peace, deluding them with lies, charming them with music, when he ought rather to have told them in rough and rugged accents the word of God! Verily it is true, it is true, the sting of death to such a man shall be his great, his enormous, his heinous sin of having deluded others!

Thus, then, having painted two full-length pictures, I might give each one of you miniatures of yourselves. I might picture, O drunkard, when your cups are drained and when your liquor shall no longer be sweet to your taste. When worse than gall shall be the dainties that you drink—when within an hour the worms shall make a carnival upon your flesh. I might picture you as you look back upon your misspent life. And you, O swearer, I think I see you there with your oaths echoed back by memory to your own dismay. And you man of lust and wickedness—you who have debauched and seduced others. I see you there and the sting of death to you, how horrible, how dreadful! It shall not be that you are groaning with pain, it shall not be that you are racked with agony, it shall not be that your heart and flesh fails. But the sting, the sting shall be your sin! How many in this place can spell that word, "remorse?" I pray you may never know its awful meaning. Remorse, remorse! You know its derivation—it signifies to bite. Ah, now we dance with our sins—it is a merry life with us—we take their hands and sporting in the noontide sun, we dance, we dance and live in joy!

But then those sins shall bite us. The young lions we have stroked and played with shall bite. The young adder, the serpent whose azure hues have well delighted us, shall bite, shall sting when remorse shall occupy our souls. I might, but I will not tell you, a few stories of the awful power of remorse—it is the first pang of hell, it is the ante-chamber of the pit of hell. To have remorse is to feel the sparks that blaze upwards from the fire of the bottomless Gehenna. To feel remorse is to have eternal torment commenced within the soul. The sting of death shall be unforgiven, unrepented sin!

3. But if sin in the retrospect is the sting of death, what must *sin in the prospect be?* My friends, we do not often enough look at what sin is to be. We see what it is—first the seed, then the blade, then the ear and then the full corn in the ear. It is the wish, the imagination, the desire, the sight, the taste, the deed. But what is sin in its next development? We have observed sin as it grows. We have seen it at first a very little thing but expanding itself until it has swelled into a mountain. We have seen it like, "a little cloud, the size of a man's hand," but we have beheld it gather until it covered the skies with blackness and sent down drops of bitter rain. But what is sin to be in the *next* state? We have gone so far, but sin is a thing that cannot stop. We have seen where it *has* grown, but where *will* it grow? For it is not ripe when we die, it has to still go on. It is set, going, but it has to unfold itself forever! The moment we die the voice

of Justice cries, "Seal up the fountain of blood, stop the stream of forgiveness! He that is holy, let him be holy, still. He that is filthy, let him be filthy, still." And after that the man goes on growing filthier and filthier! His lust develops itself. His vice increases. All those evil passions blaze with ten-fold more fury and, amidst the companionship of others like himself, without the restraints of divine grace, without the preached word of God, the man becomes worse and worse! And who can tell where his sin may grow? I have sometimes likened the hour of our death to that celebrated picture which I think you have seen in the National Gallery—of Perseus holding up the head of Medusa. That head turned all persons into stone who looked upon it. There is a warrior there with a dart in his hand—he stands stiffened, turned into stone, with the javelin even in his fist. There is another with a knife beneath his robe about to stab. He is now the statue of an assassin, motionless and cold. Another is creeping along stealthily, like a man in ambush—and there he stands a consolidated rock—he has looked only upon that head and he is frozen into stone!

Well, such is death. What I am when death is held before me, that I must be forever. When my spirit goes, if God finds me hymning His praise, I shall hymn it in heaven. If He finds me breathing out oaths, I shall follow up those oaths in hell. Where death leaves me, judgment finds me. As I die, so shall I live eternally—

"There are no acts of pardon passed
In the cold grave to which we haste."

It is forever, forever! Ah, there are a set of heretics in these days who talk of short punishment and preach about God's transporting souls for a term of years and then letting them die. Where did such men learn their doctrine, I wonder?

I read in God's word that the angel shall plant one foot upon the earth and the other upon the sea and shall swear by Him that lives and was dead, that *time* shall be no longer. But if a soul could die in a thousand years, it would die in *time*. If a million of years could elapse and then the soul could be extinguished, there would be such a thing as *time.* Talk to me of *years* and there is *time*. But, sirs, when that angel has spoken the word, "*Time* shall be no longer," things will then be eternal. The spirit shall proceed in its ceaseless revolution of weal or woe, never to be stayed, for there is no time to stop it. The fact of its stopping would imply time—but everything shall be eternal—for time shall cease to be! It well becomes you, then, to consider where you are and what you are. Oh, stand and tremble on the narrow neck of land between the two unbounded seas, for God in heaven, alone, can tell how soon you may be launched upon the eternal future. May God grant that when that last hour may come, we may be prepared for it! Like the thief, unheard, unseen, it steals through night's dark shade. Perhaps, as here I stand and rudely speak of these dark hidden things, soon may the hand be stretched and dumb the mouth that lisps the faltering strain. Oh, You

who dwell in heaven; You power supreme! You everlasting king—let not that hour intrude upon me in an ill-spent season, but may it find me wrapped in meditation high, hymning my great Creator!

So in the last moment of my life I will hasten beyond the azure, to bathe the wings of this, my spirit, in their native element and then to dwell with You forever—

"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in."

II. "THE STRENGTH OF SIN is the law."

I have attempted to show how to fight this monster—it is by extracting and destroying its sting. I prepare myself for the battle. It is true I have sinned and, therefore, I have put a sting into death, but I will endeavor to take it away. I attempt it, but the monster laughs me in the face and cries, "The strength of sin is the law. Before you can destroy sin you must in some way satisfy the law. Sin cannot be removed by your tears or by your deeds, for the law is its strength and until you have satisfied the vengeance of the law, until you have paid the uttermost farthing of its demands, my sting cannot be taken away for the very strength of sin is the law." Now, I must try and explain this doctrine, that the strength of sin is the law. Most men think that sin has no strength at all. "Oh," many say, "we may have sinned very much, but we will repent and we will be better for the rest of our lives. No doubt God is merciful and He will forgive us." And we hear many divines often speak of sin as if it were a very venial thing. Inquire of them what a man is to do—there is no deep repentance required, no real inward workings of divine grace, no casting himself upon the blood of Christ. They never tell us about a complete atonement having been made. They have, indeed, some shadowy idea of atonement—that Christ died just as a matter of form to satisfy justice—but as to any liberal taking away of our sins and suffering the actual penalty for us, they do not consider that God's law requires any such thing. I suppose they do not, for I never hear them assert the positive satisfaction and substitution of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, without that, how can we take away the strength of sin?

1. The strength of sin is in the law, first, in this respect, *that the law, being spiritual it is quite impossible for us to live without sin*. If the law were merely carnal and referred to the flesh. If it simply related to open and overt actions, I question even then, whether we could live without sin. But when I turn over the Ten Commandments and read, "You shall not covet," I know it refers even to the wish of my heart. It is saind, "You shall not commit adultery." But it is said, also, that whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has already committed that sin. So that it is not merely the *act*, it is the *thought*. It is not simply the *deed*, it is the very *imagination* that is a sin! Oh, now, sinner, how can you get rid of sin? Your very thoughts, the inward workings of your mind—these are crimes—this is guilt and desperate wickedness. Is there not, now, strength in sin? Has not the law put a potency in it? Has it not nerved

sin with such a power that all your strength cannot hope to wipe away the black enormity of your transgression?

2. Then, again, the law puts strength into sin in this respect—that *it will not abate one tittle of its stern demands*. It says to every man who breaks it, "I will not forgive you." You hear persons talk about God's mercy. Now, if they do not believe in the gospel, they must be under the law, but where in the law do we read of *mercy?* If you will read the commandments through, there is a curse after them, but there is no provision made for pardon. The law, itself, speaks not of that. It thunders out, without the slightest mitigation, "The soul that sins, it shall die." If any of you desire to be saved by works, remember, one sin will spoil your righteousness. One speck of this earth's dross will spoil the beauty of that perfect righteousness which God requires at your hands! If you would be saved by works, Brothers and Sisters, you must be as holy as the angels, you must be as pure and as immaculate as Jesus. For the law requires perfection and nothing short of it. And God with unflinching vengeance will smite every man or woman low who cannot bring Him a perfect obedience! If I cannot, when I come before His Throne, plead a perfect righteousness as being mine, God will say, "You have not fulfilled the demands of My law. Depart, accursed one! You have sinned and you must die." "Ah," says one, "can we ever have a perfect righteousness, then?" Yes, I will tell you of that in the third point. Thanks be unto Christ, who gives us the victory through His blood and through His righteousness, who adorns us as a bride in her jewels, as a husband arrays his with ornaments.

3. Yet again, the law gives strength to sin from the fact that *for every transgression, it will exact a punishment*. The law never remits a farthing of debt—it says, "Sin—punishment." They are linked together with adamantine chains. They are tied and cannot be severed. The law speaks not of sin and *mercy*. Mercy comes in the gospel. The law says, "Sin—die. Transgress—be chastised. Sin—hell." Thus are they linked together. Once let me sin and I may go to the foot of stern Justice and, as with blind eyes, she holds the scales. I may say, "Oh, Justice, remember, I was holy *once*, remember that on such-and-such an occasion I did keep the law." "Yes," says Justice, "all I owe you, you shall have. I will not punish you for what you have not done. But do you remember *this* crime, O sinner?" And she puts in the heavy weight. The sinner trembles and he cries, "But can you not forget that? Will you not cast it away?" "No," says Justice, and she puts in another weight. "Sinner, do you recollect *this* crime?" "Oh," says the sinner, "will you not for mercy's sake forget that one?" "I will not have mercy," says Justice. "Mercy has its own palace, but I have nothing to do with forgiveness here. Mercy belongs to Christ. "If you will be saved by Justice you shall have your full of it. If you come to me for salvation, I will not have mercy brought in to help me, she is not my vicegerent. I stand here alone without her." And again, as she holds the scales, she puts in another iniquity, another crime, another

enormous transgression. And each time the man begs and prays that he may have that passed by—Justice says, "No, I must exact the penalty. I have sworn I will and I will. Can you find a Substitute for yourself? If you can, there is the only room I have for mercy. I will exact it of that Substitute, but even at His hands I will have the utmost jot and tittle. I will abate nothing, I am God's Justice—stern and unflinching, I will not alter, I will not mitigate the penalty." She still holds the scales. The plea is in vain. "Never will I change!" She cries, "Bring me the blood, bring me the price to its utmost. Count it down, or else, sinner, you shall die."

Now, my friends, I ask you, if you consider the spirituality of the law, the perfection it requires and its unflinching severity, are you prepared to take away the sting of death in your own persons? Can you hope to overcome sin yourselves? Can you trust that by some righteous works you may yet cancel your guilt? If you think so, go, foolish one, go! O madman, go! Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, without the God that works in you. Go, twist your rope of sand, go, build a pyramid of air. Go, prepare a house with bubbles and think it is to last forever. But know it will be a dream with an awful awakening, for as a dream, when one awakes will he despise, alike, your image and your righteousness. "The strength of sin is the law."

III. But now, in the last place, we have before us THE VICTORY OF FAITH. The Christian is the only champion who can smite the dragon of death and even he cannot do it himself. But when he has done it, he shall cry, "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." One moment and I will show you how the Christian can look upon death with complacency through the merits of Jesus Christ.

First, Christ has taken away the strength of sin in this respect, *that He has removed the law*. We are not under bondage, but under grace. Law is not our directing principle, grace is. Do not misunderstand me. The principle that I must do a thing—that is to say, the principle of law—"do, or be punished. Do and be rewarded," is not the motive of the Christian's life. His principle is grace. "God has done so much for me, what ought I to do for Him?" We are not under the law in that sense but under grace.

Then Christ has removed the law in this sense, *that He has completely satisfied it*. The law demands a perfect righteousness. Christ says, "Law, you have it. Find fault with Me. I am the sinner's Substitute, have I not kept your commandments? Wherein have I violated your statutes?" "Come here, My Beloved," He says and then He cries to Justice, "Find a fault in this man? I have put My robe upon him. I have washed him in My blood. I have cleansed him from his sin. All the past is gone. As for the future, I have secured it by sanctification. As for the penalty, I have borne it Myself. At one tremendous draught of love, I have drunk that man's destruction dry. I have borne what he should have suffered! I have endured the agonies he ought to have endured. Justice, have I not satisfied you? Did I not say upon the tree and did you not coincide with it, 'It

is finished! It is finished!'? Have I not made so complete an atonement that there is now no need for that man to die and expiate his guilt? Did I not complete the perfect righteousness of this poor, once-condemned but now, justified spirit?" "Yes," says Justice, "I am well satisfied and even more content, if possible, than if the sinner had brought a spotless righteousness of his own." And now what says the Christian after this? Boldly he comes to the realms of death and entering the gates there, he cries, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect!" And when he has said it, the dragon drops his sting. He descends into the grave. He passes by the place where fiends lie down in fetters of iron. He sees their chains and looks into the dungeon where they dwell. And as he passes by the prison door, he shouts, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect!" They growl and bite their iron bonds and hiss in secret, but they cannot lay anything to his charge. Now see him mount aloft. He approaches God's heaven, he comes against the gates and faith still triumphantly shouts, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" And a voice comes from within—"Not Christ, for He has died. Not God, for He has justified." Received by Jesus, faith enters heaven and again she cries, "Who," even here among the spotless and ransomed, "shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Now the law is satisfied. Sin is gone. And now surely we need not fear the sting of the dragon but we may say as Paul did, when he rose into the majesty of poetry—such beautiful poetry, that Pope, himself, borrowed his words, only transposing the sentences—"O grave, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

If it were necessary, tonight, I might speak to you concerning the *resurrection* and I might tell you how much that takes away the sting of death. But I will confine myself to the simple fact that "That sting of death is sin," that, "the strength of sin is the law," and that Christ gives us the victory by taking the sting away and removing the strength of sin by His perfect obedience.

And now, sirs, how many are there here who have any hope that Christ Jesus died for them? Am I coming too close home, when most solemnly I put the question to each one of you, as I stand in God's presence this night, to free my head of your blood? As I stand and appeal with all the earnestness this heart is capable of? Are you prepared to die? Is sin pardoned? Is the law satisfied? Can you view the flowing—

"Of Christ's soul-redeeming blood
With divine assurance knowing
That He made your peace with God?"

Oh, can you now put one hand upon your heart and the other upon the Bible and say, "God's word and I agree. The witness of the Spirit here, and the witness there are one. I have renounced my sin; I have given up my evil practices; I have abhorred my own righteousness. I trust in nothing but Jesus' doings; simply do I depend on Him—

Nothing in my hands I bring

Simply to Your cross I cling."

If so, should you die where you are—sudden death were sudden glory!

But, my hearers, shall I be faithful with you? Or shall I belie my soul? Which shall it be? Are there not many here who, each time the bell tolls the departure of a soul, might well ask the question, "Am I prepared?" And they must say, "No"? I shall not turn Prophet tonight but were it right for me to say so, I fear not one half of you are prepared to die. Is that true? Yes, let the speaker ask himself the question, "Am I prepared to meet my Maker face to face?" Oh, sit in your seats and catechize your souls with that solemn question! Let each one ask himself, "Am I prepared, should I be called to die?" I think I hear one say with confidence, "I know that my Redeemer lives." "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." I hear another say with trembling accents—

"A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall.
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all"

Yes, sweet words! I would rather have written that one verse than Milton's "Paradise Lost." It is such a matchless picture of the true condition of the believing soul. But I hear another say, "I shall not answer such a question as that. I am not going to be dull today. It may be gloomy weather outside today, but I do not want to be made melancholy." Young man, young woman, go your way! Let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. But for all this the Lord shall bring you to judgment! What will you do, careless spirit, when your friends have forsaken you, when you are alone with God? You do not like to be alone, now, do you? A falling leaf will startle you. To be alone an hour will bring on an insufferable feeling of melancholy. But you will be alone—and a dreary alone it will be—with God your enemy! How will you do in the swellings of Jordan? What will you do when He takes you by the hand at eventide and asks you for an account? When He says, "What did you do in the beginning of your days? How did you spend your life?" When He asks you, "Where are the years of your manhood?" When He questions you about your wasted Sabbaths and inquires how your latter years were spent? What will you say then? Speechless, without an answer you will stand. Oh, I beseech you, as you love yourselves, take care! Even now begin to weigh the solemn matters of eternal life. Oh, say not, "Why so earnest? Why in such haste?"

Sirs, if I saw you lying in your bed, and your house was on fire, the fire might be at the bottom of the house and you might slumber safely for the next five minutes, but with all my might I would pull you from your bed, or I would shout, "Awake! Awake! The flame is under you." So with some of you who are sleeping over hell's mouth, slumbering over the pit of perdition, may I not awake you? May I not depart a little from clerical rules and speak to you as one speaks to his fellow whom he loves? Ah, if I loved you not, I need not be here. It is because I wish to win your souls

and if it is possible, to win for my Master some honor, that I would thus pour out my heart before you! As the Lord lives, sinner, you stand on a single plank over the mouth of hell and that plank is rotten! You hang over the pit of hell by a solitary rope and the strands of that rope are breaking! You are like that man of old, whom Dionysius placed at the head of the table—before him was a dainty feast, but the man ate not, for directly over his head was a sword suspended by a hair. So are you, sinner. Let your cup be full, let your pleasures be high, let your soul be elevated—do you see the sword? The next time you sit in the theater, look up and see that sword! The next time you are in a tavern, look at that sword. When next in your business you scorn the rules of God's gospel, look at that sword. Though you see it not, it is there. Even now you may hear God saying to Gabriel—"Gabriel, that man is sitting in his seat in the hall. He is hearing, but as though he heard not—unsheathe your blade. Let the glittering sword cut through that hair, let the weapon fall upon him and divide his soul and body." *Stop! Gabriel, stop!* Save the man a little while. Give him yet an hour that he may repent! Oh, let him not die! True, he has been here these ten or a dozen nights and he has listened without a tear. But stop—perhaps he may yet repent!

Jesus backs up my entreaty and He cries, "Spare him yet another year, till I dig about him, and feed him, and though he now cumbers the ground, he may yet bring forth fruit, that he may not be hewn down and cast into the fire." I thank You, O God, You will not cut him down tonight. But tomorrow may be his last day. You may never see the sun rise, though you have seen it set. Take heed! Hear the word of God's gospel and depart with God's blessing—"Whoever believes on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." "He that believes, and is baptized shall be saved." "He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto Him." "Whosoever comes unto Him, He will in no wise cast out."

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FORGIVENESS
NO. 24

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 20, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions
for My own sake, and will not remember your sins."
Isaiah 43:25.

THERE are some passages of Sacred Writ which have been more abundantly blessed to the conversion of souls than others. They may be called *salvation texts*. We may not be able to discover how it is, or why it is, but certainly it is a fact that some chosen verses have been more used of God to bring men to the cross of Christ than any others in His word. Certainly they are not more inspired, but I suppose they are more noticeable from their position, from their peculiar phraseology more adapted to catch the eye of the reader and more suitable to a prevailing spiritual condition. All the stars in the heavens shine very brightly, but only a few attract the eye of the mariner and direct his course. The reason is that those few stars from their peculiar grouping are more readily distinguished and the eye easily fixes upon them. So I suppose it is with those passages of God's word which especially attract attention and direct the sinner to the cross of Christ. It so happens that this text is one of the chief of them. I have found it, in my experience, to be a most useful one. Out of the hundreds of persons who have come to me to narrate their conversion and experience, I have found a very large proportion who have traced the divine change which has been worked in their hearts to the hearing of this precious declaration of sovereign mercy read and the application of it with power to their souls. "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake and will not remember your sins." Hence I feel this morning somewhat pleased to have such a text, because I anticipate that my Master will give me souls. And I feel likewise somewhat afraid lest I should spoil the passage by my own imperfect handling thereof. I will, therefore, cast myself implicitly on the help of the Spirit, so that whatever I speak may be suggested by Him and whatever He says, that may I speak—to the exclusion of my own thoughts as much as possible.

We shall notice first, this morning, *the recipients of mercy*—the persons of whom the Lord is here speaking; secondly, *the deed of mercy*—"I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions"; thirdly, the reason for

mercy—"for My own sake"; and fourthly, *the promise of mercy*—"I will not remember your sins."

I. We are about to see who are THE RECIPIENTS OF MERCY. And I would have you all listen. Perhaps there are some strayed in here who are the very chief of sinners—some who have sinned against light and knowledge, who have gone the full length of their powers for sin—so that they come here self-condemned. They may fear that for them there is neither mercy nor pardon. I am about to talk to you of the loving-kindness of our glorious Jehovah, and may some of you be led to read your own condition in those characters which I shall describe to you.

If you will turn to your Bibles, you will find who the persons are here spoken of. Look, for example, at the 22nd verse of the chapter from which our text is taken and you will see, first, that they were a *prayerless people*—"You have not called upon Me, O Jacob." And are there not some prayerless ones sitting or standing here this morning? Might I not walk along these benches and point my finger to one and another and say, "You are not a praying one"? Or might I not reach out my hand to one and another upon this platform and say, "You have not been with God in secret and had close communion with Him"? These prayerless ones may have repeated many a *form* of prayer, but the breathing desire, the living words, have not come from their lips. You have lived, sinner, up to this time without sincere prayer and if an intercession has been forced from your lips from a fear that took hold of you—if a cry has gone forth from you when in the sufferings of a sick bed because the pains of death got hold upon you—if it has not been your habit to pray, the impressions of that trying period have soon been forgotten. Is prayer your constant practice, my hearers? How many of you now, before me, yes, and behind me, too, must confess that you have not prayed, that it is not your habit to hold communion with God? Prayerless souls are Christless souls! You can have no real fellowship with Christ, no communion with the Father, unless you approach His Mercy Seat and are often there. And yet if you are condemning yourselves and lamenting that this has been your condition, you need not despair, for this mercy is for you—"You have not called upon Me, O Jacob." Yet, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake."

Next, these persons were *despisers of religion*, for observe the language of the same verse—"You have been weary of Me, O Israel." And may I not say to some here—you despise religion, you hate God? You are weary of Him and love not His services. As for a Sunday, do not too many of you find it the most tiresome day in the week? And do you not, in fact, look over your ledger on a Sunday afternoon? If you were compelled to attend a place of worship twice on a Sunday, would you not think it the greatest

and most terrible hardship that could be inflicted upon you? You have to find some worldly amusement to make the hours of a Sunday pass away with any comfort at all. So far from wishing that, "congregations might never break up," and a Sunday last for eternity, is it not to some of you the most tedious day of the week? You feel it to be weariness, and are glad when it is gone. You do not understand the sentiment expressed by the poet—

"Sweet is the work, my God, my King,
To praise Your name, give thanks and sing."

You know nothing of the pain of banishment from the courts of Zion, where the sacred tribes repair. And when there, you do not hold communion with God, rejoicing that the hallowed place has become a Bethel—the house of God—the very gate of heaven. You can never say—

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss."

Ah, no, not only is religion unlovely to you, but it is a weariness! But if you are now convinced of this sin and are repenting of it and desire to be delivered from its power, then God speaks to *you* this morning and says, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake—return unto Me with unfeigned repentance and I will have mercy upon you."

Note again the character. They have been *thankless persons*—"You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings." They have been unthankful. They had their cattle and their flocks all multiplied and increased many fold, but they did not bring even one of the small cattle to Him in return. You never gave Him a kid for a burnt offering but have been like the swine, regardless of the oak which strews food upon the ground for you. You have been a carnal worldly character, receiving a gift but never thanking the Almighty who caused it to be bestowed. While even the little chicken, after it has drunk of the stream, lifts its head as if to thank God who provided the water. You have been fed, day by day, by an almighty power and yet you have never given in return even one of the small cattle of your flock for a burnt offering. This is true of some who attend our houses of prayer. They very rarely give to any collection for the cause of God. They are like the man in America, of whom someone has told us, who boasted that religion had been to him a very cheap thing, costing him only a few cents a year, of whom a good man said, "The Lord have mercy on your little stingy soul." If a man has no more religion than that—if he has not a religion that will make him generous—he has no religion at all. I thought of that passage last Thursday night, while I was preaching—"You have bought Me no sweet cane with money." God needs

nothing at your hands but He likes little presents. He loves, now and then, to receive of your substance. For you know that little as it is in His eyes, comparatively speaking, it is great because it comes from a friend. But some of you have never bought Him a sweet cane with your money—never sang a hymn to His praise. You have attributed everything to your good luck and have boasted that you have obtained everything you have by the labor of your own hands. You boast that you can say, "I have need to thank nobody for what I have." That has been your spirit. You have given no thanks to God—the God of heaven and earth. You have not glorified *Him*, but yourself—and yet the Most High is willing to pardon your sin in this thing if you are but sincerely penitent and ask for forgiveness, for He also says to you, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions."

Yet, again, these people were a *useless people*. "Neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices. But you have made Me to serve with your sins." It is well said the chief end of man is to glorify God. For that purpose God made the sun, moon and stars and all His works—that they might honor Him. And yet how many are there, even, perhaps among my hearers this morning, who have never honored God in their lives? Ask yourselves what you have done? If you were to write your own history, it would be little better than that of Belzon's toad which existed in the rock for three thousand years. You may have *lived* like it, but you have *done* nothing. What souls have you ever won to the Savior? How has His name been magnified by you? Have you ever served Him? How have you ever worked for Him? What have you done for God? Have you not been cumberers of the ground, taking the nourishment of the earth where some better tree might have grown and bearing no fruit for your Creator? For all you have done, the world might as well have never known you! You have not even been as much use as the glowworm, which, at least, serves to light the steps of the traveler. The world may possibly be glad to get rid of some of you and rejoice when you are gone. Perhaps you have assisted in destroying the souls of those with whom you have been connected in life. You can recollect the time when you led that young man first into the ale house. You can remember the hour when you swore a most horrible oath—your child was within hearing—and learned to also be profane. You may look upon some souls who are going even now to damnation through your example. And in hell you may see spirits starting up from their iron beds and hear them shrieking in their woe—"Who is it that led me here and caused my soul to be destroyed?—you are the author of my damnation!" Is the indictment true? Will you not be compelled to plead guilty to the charge? Do you not even now repent of your great transgressions? Even if it is so, my Master authorizes me to say again,

"Thus says the Lord, I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions and will not remember your sins."

Again—there are some who may be termed *sanctuary sinners*—sinners in Zion—and these are the worst of sinners. I can usually tell whether inquirers have been the children of pious parents or not, if, after a confession of great guilt they feel unable to proceed at the remembrance of what they once were. Groaning, sobbing and tears running down their cheeks are the silent language of their woe. When I see this, I always know that the language that succeeds will be—"I have been the child of pious parents. And I feel that I am one of the worst of sinners because I was brought up to religion. And yet I disregarded it and turned aside from it." O yes, the worst of sinners are sinners in Zion because they sin against light and knowledge. They *force* their way to hell, as John Bunyan says, *over* the cross of Christ. And the worst way to hell is to go by the cross to it. Many of you now before me were consecrated to God by a beloved mother. And many of your fathers taught you to read and love the Scriptures of truth. You were brought up like Timothy. You well understand the theory of the way of salvation and yet you come here, young men and women, some of you enemies of God and without Christ and despisers of His word! Some of you are even scoffers, or if not actually scoffers, you say religion is nothing to you and by your actions, if not by your words, declare it is nothing to you that Jesus should die! Ah, when I speak to you, I should not forget myself. Should it ever be my lot to wake up in hell, I should be among the most horribly damned there, for I had a most pious training and would be forced to take my place with the sanctuary sinners. And you that are such, whom I am addressing now, are you not afraid? Ask yourselves now, "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire?" Do you tremble and shake for fear and with a penitent heart desire forgiveness? If so, then I say again, in my Master's name—who spoke nothing but love and mercy to penitent sinners—who said, "Neither do I condemn you"—Jehovah now declares—"I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake and will not remember your sins."

Yet, once more, we have here *some who have wearied God*—"You have made Me to serve with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities." You see here the man who has been a professor of religion and can look back 20 years ago, when he was a member of a Christian church. He was apparently walking in the fear of the Lord and all men thought he had received the grace of God in truth. But he has turned aside into the paths of sin. Sometimes his lips have been defiled with oaths, and his soul the bond slave of sin. But even now he is often found in God's house. Sometimes he is affected to tears and says within himself, "Surely

I will return unto the Lord, for then was it better with me than now." Self-condemned, he stands and weeps in the bitterness of his heart. And mark you, it may be this morning he has stepped into this vast assembly and that his knees are knocking one against the other. Yet it may be that his goodness shall prove like the morning cloud and the early dew that passes away. Or it may be that the turning point is now come; "Now or never," as Baxter used to say; now God or Satan, now accepted or condemned. Poor backslider, by God's grace return to the Lord, and He will have mercy upon you! He will blot out all your sins. And so blot them out that He will not remember them against you any more forever.

These, then, are the characters who receive mercy. Some of you may say, "You seem to think us a bad lot"—and so I do. Others exclaim, "How can you talk to us in this way? We are an honest, moral and upright people." If so, then I have no gospel to preach to you. You may go elsewhere if you will, for you may get moral sermons in scores of chapels if you want them. I am come in my Master's name to preach to sinners and so I will not say a word to you Pharisees except this—by so much as you think yourself righteous and holy, by so much shall you be cast out of God's presence at last! Your sentence will be eternal banishment from the presence of Him who has said to every repenting sinner, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions, and will not remember your sins."

II. The second point is THE DEED OF MERCY. We have found out the persons to whom God will give mercy. Now what is mercy's deed? It is a deed of forgiveness and in speaking of it, I shall speak first of its being a *divine forgiveness*—"I, even I, am He." Divine pardon is the only forgiveness possible. For no one can remit sin but God only. It matters not whether a Roman Catholic priest, or any other priest shall say in the name of God, "I absolve you from your transgressions," it is an abominable blasphemy! If a man has offended me, *I* can forgive him, but if he has offended God, *I cannot* forgive him. The only discharge possible is pardon by God. But then it is the only pardon necessary. Suppose I have so sinned that the king or the queen will not pardon me, that my brethren will not forgive me, and that I cannot pardon myself. If *God* absolves me, that is all the acquittal that will be necessary for my salvation! Perhaps I stand condemned by the law of my country—I am a murderer and must suffer on the scaffold. The queen refuses to pardon and perhaps she does right in such a refusal. But I do not need her forgiveness in order to enter heaven. If God acquits me, that will be enough! Were I such a reprobate that all men hissed at me and wished me gone from existence. If I knew that they would never forgive my crime—though I ought to desire my fellow creatures' forgiveness—it would not be *necessary* that I should have

it to enter heaven. If God says, I forgive you, that is enough. It is only God who can forgive satisfactorily because no human pardon can ease the troubled conscience. The self-righteous Pharisee may be content to give himself into the hands of a priest to be rocked to sleep in the cradle of delusion—but the poor convinced sinner needs something more than the arrogant dictum of a priest. Ten thousand priests, with all their enchantments, he feels to be all in vain, unless Jehovah, Himself, shall say, "I have blotted out your sins for My own sake"

Again—it is *surprising forgiveness*. For the text speaks as if God, Himself, were surprised that such sins should be remitted—"I, even, I." It is so surprising that it is repeated in this way lest any of us should doubt it. And it is amazing to the poor sinner when first awakened to his sin and danger. It seems to be too good to be true and he "wonders to feel his own hardness depart." The mercy offered is so overwhelming. It is said that Alexander, whenever he attacked a city, put a light before the gate of it. And if the inhabitants surrendered before the light was burnt out, he spared them. But if the light went out first, he put them all to death. But our Master is more merciful than this. For if He had manifested grace, only, while a small light would burn, where should we have been? There are some here 70 or 80 years of age and God still has mercy on you. But there is a light you know which when once quenched, extinguishes all hope of pardon—the light of life! See then, gray-headed man, your candle is burnt almost to the socket—it has but the snuff left. Eighty years you have been here living in sin, and yet mercy waits for you; but you shall soon depart—and mark me—there is no hope for you then! But surprising grace, mercy's message is still proclaiming—

"***For while the lamp holds out to burn,***
The vilest sinner may return."

Unutterable mercy! There is no sinner out of hell so black but that God can wash him white. There is not out of the pit of hell one so guilty that God is not able and *willing* to forgive him, for He declares the wondrous fact—"I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions."

Notice once more, that it is a *present forgiveness*. It does not say I am He that *will* blot out your transgressions, but that blots them out *now*. There are some who believe, or at least seem to imagine, that it is not possible to know whether our sins are forgiven in this life. We may have hope, it is thought, that at last there will be a balance to strike on our side. But this will not satisfy the poor soul who is really seeking pardon and is anxious to find it. And God has, therefore, blessedly told us that He blots out our sin *now*—that He will do it at any moment the sinner believes. As soon as he trusts in His crucified God, all his sins are forgiven, whether past, present, or future! Even supposing that he is yet to commit them, they are all pardoned! If I live 80 years after I receive par-

don, doubtless I shall fall into many errors—but the one pardon will avail for them as well as for the past. Jesus Christ bore our punishment and God will never require at my hands the fulfillment of that Law which Christ has honored in my place—for then would there be injustice in heaven—and that is far from God. It is no more possible for a pardoned man to be lost than for Christ to be lost, because Christ is the sinner's surety. Jehovah will never require my debt to be paid twice. Let none impute injustice to the God of the whole earth—let none suppose that He will twice exact the penalty of one sin. If you have been the chief of sinners, you may have the chief of sinner's forgiveness—and God can bestow it now!

I cannot help noticing the *completeness of this forgiveness*. Suppose you call on your creditor and say to him, "I have nothing to pay with." "Well," he says, "I can issue a distress against you and place you in prison and keep you there." You still reply that you have nothing and he must do what he can. Suppose he should then say, "I will forgive all." You now stand amazed and say, "Can it be possible that you will give me that great debt of a thousand pounds?" He replies, "Yes, I will." "But how am I to know it?" Here is the note—he takes it and crosses it all out and hands it back to you and says, "Here is a full discharge, I have blotted it all out." So does the Lord deal with penitents; He has a book in which all your debts are written—but with the blood of Christ, He crosses out the handwriting of ordinances which is there written against you! The note is destroyed and He will not demand payment for it again. The devil will sometimes insinuate to the contrary, as he did to Martin Luther—"Bring me the catalog of my sins," said Luther. And he brought a scroll black and long. "Is that all?" said Luther. "No," said the devil. And he brought yet another. "And now," said the heroic saint of God, "write at the foot of the scroll—'The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses from all sin.' That is a full discharge."

III. Now, very briefly, the third thing—THE REASON FOR MERCY. Some poor sinner says, "Why should God forgive me? I am sure there is no reason why He should, for I have never done anything to deserve His mercy." Hear what God says, "I am not about to forgive you for your sake, but for My sake." "But, Lord, I shall not be thankful enough." "I am not about to pardon you because of your gratitude, but for My name's sake." "But, Lord, if I am taken into Your church I can do very little for Your cause in future years, for I have spent my best days in the devil's service. Surely the impure dregs of my life cannot be sweet to You, O God." "I will not engage to forgive you for your sake, but for My own. I do not need you," says God, "I can do as well without you as with you. The cattle upon a thousand hills are Mine. And if I pleased I could create a

whole race of men for My service who would be as renowned as the greatest monarchs, or the most eloquent preachers—but I can do as well without them, as with them. And I forgive you, therefore, for My sake." Is there not hope for a guilty sinner here? It cannot be pleaded by anyone that his sins are too great to be pardoned! The amount of guilt is hereby put entirely out of consideration, seeing that God forgives not on account of the sinner, but for His own sake! Did you ever hear of a physician visiting a man upon a sick bed, when the poor man said, "I have nothing to give you for your attention to me." "But," says the doctor, "I did not ask for anything; I attend you from pure benevolence, and moreover, to prove my skill. It will make no difference to me how long you live; I love to try my skill and let the world know that I have power to heal diseases. I want to get myself a name." And so God says, I desire to have a name for mercy, so that the worse you are, the more God is honored in your salvation. Go, then, to Christ, poor sinner—naked, filthy, poor, wretched, vile, lost, dead—come as you are, for there is nothing required of you, except the *need* of Him—

"This He gives you,
Tis His Spirit's rising beam."

"For My own sake," says God, "I will forgive."

IV. Now to conclude—THE PROMISE OF MERCY. "And will not remember your sins." There are some things which even God cannot do. Though it is true He is omnipotent, yet there are some things He cannot do. God cannot lie—He cannot forsake His people—He cannot disown His covenant. And this is one of the things it might be thought He could not do—that is, *forget*. Is it impossible for God to forget? We finite creatures forget many things, but can the Almighty ever do so? God who counts the stars and calls them all by their names—who knows how many microscopic organisms there are in the mighty ocean—who notices every grain of dust that floats in the summer air and is acquainted with every leaf of the forest—can He cease to remember? Perhaps we may answer, "No." Not as to the absolute fact of the committal of the deed. But there *are* senses in which the expression is entirely accurate. In what sense *are* we to understand God's forgetfulness of our sins?

First of all, He will not exact *punishment for them when we come before His judgment bar at last*. The Christian will have many accusers. The devil will come and say, "That man is a great sinner." "I don't remember it," says God. "That man rebelled against You, and cursed You," says the accuser. "I do not remember it," says God, "for I have said I will not remember his sins." Conscience says, "Ah, but Lord, it is true, I did sin against You, and that most grievously." "I do not remember it," says God—"I said, I will not remember his sins." Let all the demons in the pit of hell clamor in God's ears, and let them vehemently shout out a list of

our sins—we may stand boldly forth at that great day and sing, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" for God does not even *remember* their sin! The Judge does not remember it and who, then, shall punish? Unrighteous as we were; wicked as we have been, yet He has forgotten it all. Who, then, can bring to remembrance what God has forgotten? He says, "I will cast your sins into the depths of the sea," not into the shallows where they might be fished up again, but into the depths of the sea, where Satan, himself, cannot find them. There are no such things as sins recorded against God's people. Christ has so taken them away that sin becomes a nonentity to Christians—it is all gone and through Jesus' blood they are clean!

The second meaning of this is, *I will not remember your sins to suspect you*. There is a father and he has a wayward son who went away that he might live a life of looseness and profligacy. But after a while he comes home again in a state of penitence. The father says, "I will forgive you." But he says the next day to his younger son, "There is business to be done at a distant town tomorrow and here is the money for you to do it with." He does not trust the returned prodigal with it. "I have trusted him before with money," says the father to himself, "and he robbed me, and it makes me afraid to trust him again." But our heavenly Father says, "I will not remember your sins." He not only forgives the past, but trusts His people with precious talents. He never suspects them. He has never one suspicious thought. He loves them just as much as if they had never gone astray. He will employ them to preach His gospel. He will put them into the Sunday school and make them servants of His Son—for He says, "I will not remember your sins."

Again—*He will not remember in His distribution of the recompense of the reward*. The earthly parent will kindly pass over the faults of the prodigal—but you know when that father comes to die and is about to make his will, the lawyer sitting by his side—he says, "I shall give so much to William, who always behaved well. And my other son shall have so-and-so. My daughter, she shall have so much. But there is that prodigal. I have spent a large sum upon him when he was young and he wasted what he received. Though I have taken him, again, into favor—and for the present he is going on well—still I think I must make a little difference between him and the others. "I think it would not be fair—though I have forgiven him—to treat him precisely as the rest." And so the lawyer puts him down for a few hundred pounds, while the others, perhaps, get their thousands. But God will not remember your sins like that! He gives all an inheritance. He will give heaven to the chief of sinners as well as to the chief of saints. When He divides the portion to His children it may be He will put Mary Magdalene as high as He does Peter, and the good thief

as high as He does John. Yes, the malefactor who died on a cross is as much in the sight of God as the most moral person that ever lived. Here is a blessed forgetfulness! What do you say, poor sinner? Is your heart drawn by a mysterious inspiration to the foot of the cross? Then I thank my Master! For I trust the one objective of my life is to win souls for Christ and if I may be blessed in that, my life shall be happy! Do you still say, "My sins are too great to be forgiven"? No, but O man, as high as the heaven is above the earth, so great is His mercy above your sins and so far does His grace exceed your thoughts! "Oh, but," you say, "He will not accept *me*." What then is the meaning of this text—"He is able to save unto the uttermost." Or this—"Whoever comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out." And again—"Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." Do you still say, "This does not include me"? Oh be not so faithless, but rather believe! Oh, had I the power, God knows I would weep myself away in order to win your souls—

"But feeble our compassion proves
And can but weep where most it loves."

I can do nothing but preach God's gospel. But since the moment Christ forgave me, I cannot help speaking of His love. I turned away from His gospel and would have none of His reproofs. I cared not for His voice or His word. That blessed Bible lay unread. These knees refused to bend in prayer and my eyes looked on vanity. Has He not pardoned? Has He not forgiven? Yes! Then sooner may this tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth than cease to proclaim free grace in all its mighty displays of electing, redeeming, pardoning, and saving mercy!

Oh, how loud I ought to sing, seeing I am out of hell and delivered from condemnation! And if I am out of hell, why should not you be? Why should I be saved and not another? It was for sinners, remember, that Jesus came. Mary Magdalene, Saul of Tarsus—the very chief of sinners, were accepted and why do you foolishly conclude that you are cast out? Oh, poor Penitent, if you perish, you will be the FIRST penitent who ever did so! God give you His blessing, my dear friends, for Christ's sake. Amen. Amen.

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THE HOPE OF FUTURE BLISS
NO. 25

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, MAY 20, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness."
Psalm 17:15.

IT would be difficult to say to which the gospel owes most—to its friends or to its enemies! It is true that by the help of God, its friends have done much for it. They have preached it in foreign lands, they have dared death, they have laughed to scorn the terrors of the grave, they have ventured all things for Christ and so have glorified the doctrine they believed. But the enemies of Christ, unwittingly, have done a great deal, too! For when they have persecuted Christ's servants, they have scattered them abroad so that they have gone everywhere preaching the word. Yes, when they have trampled upon the gospel, like a certain herb we read of in medicine, it has grown all the faster—and if we refer to the pages of Sacred Writ, how very many precious portions of it do we owe, under God, to the enemies of the cross of Christ! Jesus Christ would never have preached many of His discourses had not His foes compelled Him to answer them. Had they not brought objections, we would not have heard the sweet sentences in which He replied. So, with the Book of Psalms—had not David been sorely tried by enemies, had not the foemen shot their arrows at him, had they not attempted to malign and blast his character, had they not deeply distressed him and made him cry out in misery, we would have missed many of those precious experimental utterances we here find! Much of that holy song which he penned after his deliverance and very much of that glorious statement of his trust in the infallible God we would have lost! We would have lost all this had it not been wrung from him by the iron hand of anguish. Had it not been for David's enemies, he would not have penned his Psalms. But when hunted like a partridge on the mountains, when driven like the timid roe before the hunter's dogs, he waited for a while, bathed his sides in the brooks of Siloa and panting on the hilltop a little, he breathed the air of heaven and stood and rested his weary limbs. Then was it that he gave honor to God. Then it was he shouted aloud to that mighty Jehovah, who for him had gotten the victory. This sentence follows a description of the great troubles which the wicked bring upon the righteous, wherein he consoles himself with the hope of future bliss. "As for me," says the patriarch, casting his eyes aloft—"As for me," said the hunted chieftain of the caves of Engedi—"As for me," says the once shepherd boy, who was

soon to wear a royal diadem—"As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness."

In looking at this passage tonight, we shall notice first of all, the *spirit of it;* secondly, the *matter of it,* and then, thirdly, we shall close by speaking of *the contrast which is implied in it.*

I. First, then, the SPIRIT OF THIS UTTERANCE, for I always love to look at the spirit in which a man writes, or the spirit in which he preaches. In fact, there is vastly more in that than in the words he uses!

Now, what should you think is the spirit of these words—"As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness"?

First, they breathe the spirit of a man *entirely free from envy*. Notice that the psalmist has been speaking of the wicked. "They are enclosed in their own fat—with their mouth they speak proudly." "They are full of children and leave the rest of their substance to their babes." But David envies them not. "Go," he says, "rich man, in all your riches—go, proud man, in all your pride—go, you happy man, with your abundance of children. I envy you not. As for me, my lot is different—I can look on you without desiring to have your possessions. I can well keep that commandment, 'You shall not covet,' for in your possessions there is nothing worth my love. "I set no value upon your earthly treasures. I envy you not your heaps of glittering dust. For my Redeemer is mine." The man is above envy because he thinks that the joy would be no joy to him—that the portion would not suit his disposition. Therefore he turns his eyes heavenward and says, "As for me I will behold Your face in righteousness." Oh, beloved, it is a happy thing to be free from envy! Envy is a curse which blights creation. And even Eden's Garden, itself, would have become defaced and no longer fair if the wind of envy could have blown on it! Envy tarnishes the gold. Envy dims the silver. Should envy breathe on the hot sun, it would quench it! Should she cast her evil eye on the moon, it would be turned into blood and the stars would fly astonished at her. Envy is accursed of heaven. Yes, it is Satan's first-born—the vilest of vices. Give a man riches, but let him have envy and there is the worm at the root of the fair tree. Give him happiness and if he envies another's lot, what would have been happiness becomes his misery because it is not so great as that of someone else's. Give me freedom from envy! Let me be content with what God has given me. Let me say, "You may have yours, I will not envy you—I am satisfied with mine." Yes, give me such a love to my fellow creatures that I can rejoice in their joy and the more they have, the more glad I am of it! My candle will burn no less brightly because theirs outshines it. I can rejoice in their prosperity. Then am I happy, for all around tends to make me blissful when I can rejoice in the joys of others and make their gladness my own. Envy? Oh, may God deliver us from it! How, in truth, can we get rid of it? By believing that you have something that is not on earth, but in heaven! If we can look upon

all the things in the world and say, "As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied, by-and-by!" Then we cannot envy other men, because their lot would not be adapted to our peculiar taste. Does the ox envy the lion? No, for it cannot feed upon the carcass. Does the dove grieve because the raven can gloat itself on carrion? No, for it lives on other food. Will the eagle envy the wren his tiny nest? Oh, no! So the Christian will mount aloft as the eagle, spreading his broad wings he will fly up to his nest among the stars where God has made him his nest, saying, "As for me, I will dwell here. I look upon the low places of this earth with contempt. I envy not your greatness, you mighty emperors. I desire not your fame, you mighty warriors. I ask not for wealth, O Croesus. I beg not for your power, O Caesar. As for me, I have something else—my portion is the Lord." The text breathes the spirit of a man free from envy. May God give that to us!

Then, secondly, you can see that there is about it the air of a man who is *looking into the future*. Read the passage thoroughly and you will see that it all has relation to the future because it says, "As for me, I *will."* It has nothing to do with the present—it does not say, "As for me I do, or I am, so-and-so," but, "As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness; I *shall* be satisfied when I awake." The psalmist looks beyond the grave into another world. He overlooks the narrow deathbed where he has to sleep and he says, "When I awake." How happy is that man who has an eye to the future. Even in worldly things we esteem that man who looks beyond the present day—he who spends all his money as it comes in will soon bring himself to rags. He who lives on the present is a fool! But wise men are content to look after future things. When Milton penned his book he might know, perhaps, that he would have little fame in his lifetime. But he said, "I shall be honored when my head shall sleep in the grave." Thus have other worthies been content to tarry until time has broken the earthen pitcher and allowed the lamp to blaze. As for honor, they said, "We will leave that to the future, for that fame which comes late is often most enduring." They lived upon the "shall" and fed upon the future; "I *shall* be satisfied" by-and-by. So says the Christian. I ask no royal pomp or fame, now. I am prepared to wait. I have an interest in reversion. I need not a pitiful estate here—I will tarry till I get my domains in heaven—those broad and beautiful domains that God has provided for them that love Him. Well content will I be to fold my arms and sit down in the cottage, for I shall have a mansion of God, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Do any of you know what it is to live on the future; to live on expectation; to live on what you are to have in the next world? To feast on some of the droppings of the tree of life that fall from heaven? To live upon the manna of expectation which falls in the wilderness and to drink that stream of nectar which gushes from the throne of God? Have you ever gone to the great Niagara of hope and drank the spray with ravishing delight? For the very spray of heaven is

glory to one's soul! Have you ever lived on the future and said, "As for me I *shall* have somewhat, by-and-by?" Why, this is the highest motive that can actuate a man. I suppose this was what made Luther so bold when he stood before his great audience of kings and lords and said, "I stand by the Truth that I have written and will so stand by it till I die, so help me God!" I think he must have said, "I *shall* be satisfied, by-and-by. I am not satisfied now, but I *shall* be soon."

For this the missionary ventures the stormy sea. For this he treads the barbarous shore. For this he goes into inhospitable climes and risks his life—because he knows there is a payment to come by-and-by. I sometimes laughingly tell my friends when I receive a favor from them that I cannot return it, but set it up to my Master in heaven, for they shall be satisfied when they awake in His likeness. There are many things that we may never hope to be rewarded for here, but shall be remembered before the throne hereafter, not of debt, but of grace! Like a poor minister I heard of, who, walking to a rustic chapel to preach, was met by a clergyman who had a far richer berth; he asked the poor man what he expected to have for his preaching. "Well," he said, "I expect to have a crown." "Ah," said the clergyman, "I have not been in the habit of preaching for less than a guinea." "Oh," said the other, "I am obliged to be content with a crown and what is more, I do not have my crown now, but I have to wait for that in the future." The clergyman little thought that he meant the "crown of life that fades not away"! Christian! Live on the future! Seek nothing here, but expect that you shall shine when you shall come in the likeness of Jesus, with Him to be admired, and to kneel before His face adoringly. The psalmist had an eye to the future.

And again, upon this point, you can see that David, at the time he wrote this, was *full of faith.* The text is fragrant with confidence. "As for me," says David, no *perhaps* about it. "I *will* behold Your face in righteousness; I *shall* be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness." If some men should say so now, they would be called fanatics and it would be considered presumption for any man to say, "I will behold Your face, I shall be satisfied." And I think there are many now in this world who think it is quite impossible for a man to say to a certainty, "I know. I am sure. I am certain." But, beloved, there are not one or two, but there are thousands and thousands of God's people alive in this world who can say with an assured confidence—no more doubting of it than of their very existence—"I *will* behold Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness." It is possible, though perhaps not very easy, to attain to that high and eminent position wherein we can say no longer do I *hope,* but I *know.* No longer do I trust, but I am persuaded. I have a happy confidence—I am sure of it. I am certain, for God has so manifested Himself to me that now it is no longer "if," and "perhaps," but it is the positive, eternal, "shall." "I *shall* be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness." How many are there here of that sort? Oh, if you are talk-

ing like that, you must expect to have trouble, for God never gives strong faith without fiery trial! He will never give a man the power to say that, "shall," without trying him. He will not build a strong ship without subjecting it to very mighty storms. He will not make you a mighty warrior if He does not intend to try your skill in battle. God's swords must be used! The old Toledo blades of heaven must be smitten against the armor of the evil one and yet they shall not break, for they are of true Jerusalem metal which shall never snap! Oh, what a happy thing to have that faith to say "I shall." Some of you think it quite impossible, I know. But it "is the gift of God," and whoever asks for it shall obtain it—and the very chief of sinners now present in this place may yet be able to say long before he comes to die, "I shall behold Your face in righteousness." I think I see the aged Christian. He has been very poor. He is in an attic where the stars look between the tiles. There is his bed; his clothes ragged and torn; there are a few sticks on the hearth—they are the last he has. He is sitting up in his chair. His paralytic hand quivers and shakes and he is evidently near his end. His last meal was eaten yesterday at noon. And as you stand and look at him—poor, weak and feeble, who would desire his lot? But ask him, "Old man, would you change your attic for Caesar's palace? Aged Christian, would you give up these rags for wealth and cease to love your God?" See how indignation burns in his eyes at once! He replies, "As for me, I *shall*, within a few more days, behold His face in righteousness. I *shall* be satisfied soon. Here I never shall be. Trouble has been my lot and trial has been my portion, but I have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Bid high. Bid him fair—offer him your hands full of gold—lay all down for him to give up his Christ. "Give up Christ?" He will say, "No, never!"—

"While my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the miser's gold."

Oh, what a glorious thing to be full of faith and to have the confidence of assurance, so as to say, "I *will* behold Your face; I *shall* be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness."

Thus much concerning the spirit of David; it is one very much to be copied and eminently to be desired.

II. But now, secondly, THE MATTER OF THIS PASSAGE. And here we will dive into the very depths of it, God helping us. For without the Spirit of God I feel I am utterly unable to speak to you. I have not those gifts and talents which qualify men to speak. I need inspiration from on high, otherwise I stand like other men and have nothing to say. May that be given me. For without it I am dumb. As for the matter of this verse, I think it contains a double blessing. The first is a beholding—"I will behold Your face in righteousness," and the next is a satisfaction—"I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness."

Let us begin with the first, then. David expected that he would *behold God's face*. What a vision will that be, my brothers and sisters! Have you ever seen God's hand? I have seen it, when sometimes He places it

across the sky and darkens it with clouds. I have seen God's hand, sometimes, when the carts of night drag along the shades of darkness. I have seen His hand when, launching the thunderbolt, His lightning splits the clouds and rends the heavens. Perhaps you have seen it in a gentler fashion, when it pours out the water and sends it rippling along in rills and then rolls into rivers. You have seen it in the stormy ocean—in the sky decked with stars—in the earth gemmed with flowers. But there is not a man living who can know all the wonders of God's hand! His creation is so wondrous that it would take more than a lifetime to understand it. Go into the depths of it, let its minute parts engage your attention. Next take the telescope and try to see remote worlds and can I see all God's handiwork—behold all His hand? No, not so much as one millionth part of the fabric. That mighty hand wherein the callow comets are brooded by the sun, in which the planets roll in majestic orbits—that mighty hand which holds all space and grasps all beings—that mighty hand, who can behold it? But if such is His *hand*, what must His *face* be? You have heard God's voice sometimes and you have trembled. I, myself, have listened awe-struck and yet with a marvelous joy, when I have heard God's voice, like the noise of many waters in the great thunderings. Have you ever stood and listened while the earth shook and trembled and the very spheres stopped their music while God spoke with His wondrous deep bass voice? Yes, you have heard that voice and there is a joy marvelously instinct with love which enters into my soul, whenever I hear the thunder. It is my Father speaking and my heart leaps to hear Him. But you never heard God's loudest voice. It was but the whisper when the thunder rolled. And if such is the voice, what must it be to behold His face? David said, "I will behold Your face." It is said of the temple of Diana that it was so splendidly decorated with gold and so bright and shining that a porter at the door always said to everyone that entered, "Take heed to your eyes, take heed to your eyes. You will be struck with blindness unless you take heed to your eyes." But oh, that view of glory! That great appearance—the vision of God—to see Him face to face, to enter into heaven, and to see the righteous shining bright as stars in the firmament. But best of all, to catch a glimpse of the eternal throne! Ah, there He sits; 'twere almost blasphemy for me to attempt to describe Him. How infinitely far my poor words fall below the mighty subject! But to behold God's *face?* I will not speak of the luster of those eyes, or the majesty of those lips that shall speak words of love and affection. But to behold His face, you who have dived into the Godhead's deepest sea and have been lost in its immensity—you can tell a little of it! You haughty ones who have lived in heaven these thousands of years, perhaps you know, but you cannot tell, what it is to see His face. We must, each of us, go there. We must be clad with immortality. We must go above the blue sky and bathe in the river of life—we must outsoar the lightning and rise above the stars to know what it is to see God's face.

words cannot set it forth. So there I leave it. The assurance the psalmist had was that he would see God's face.

But there was a *peculiar sweetness mixed with this joy*, because he knew that he would behold God's face *in righteousness*. "I shall behold Your face in righteousness." Have I not seen my Father's face here below? Yes, I have, "through a glass darkly." But has not the Christian sometimes beheld Him, when in his heavenly moments earth is gone and the mind is stripped of matter? There are some seasons when the gross materialism dies away and when the ethereal fire within blazes up so high that it almost touches the fire of heaven! There are seasons, when in some retired spot, calm and free from all earthly thought, we have taken our shoes off our feet because the place whereon we stood was holy ground. And we have talked with God! Even as Enoch talked with Him, so has the Christian held intimate communion with his Father. He has heard His love whispers. He has told out his heart, poured out his sorrows and his groans before Him. But after all he has felt—he has not beheld His face in righteousness. There was so much sin to darken the eyes, so much folly, so much frailty, that we could not get a clear prospect of our Jesus. But here the psalmist says, "I will behold Your face in righteousness." When that illustrious day shall arise and I shall see my Savior face to face, I shall see Him "in righteousness." The Christian in heaven will not have so much as a speck upon his garment. He will be pure and white. Yes, on the earth He is—

"Pure through Jesus' blood and white as angels are."

But in heaven that whiteness shall be more apparent. Now, it is sometimes smoked by earth and covered with the dust of this poor carnal world. But in heaven he will have brushed himself and washed his wings and made them clean. And then will he see God's face in righteousness.

My God, I believe I shall stand before Your face as pure as You are Yourself, for I shall have the righteousness of Jesus Christ! There shall be upon me the righteousness of a God. "I shall behold Your face in righteousness." O Christian, can you enjoy this? Though I cannot speak about it, does your heart meditate upon it? To behold His face forever! To bask in that vision! True, you cannot understand it. But you may guess the meaning. To behold His face in righteousness!

The second blessing, upon which I will be brief, is *satisfaction*. He will be satisfied, the psalmist says, when he wakes up in God's likeness. Satisfaction! This is another joy for the Christian when he shall enter heaven. Here we are never thoroughly satisfied. True, the Christian is satisfied from himself. He has that within which is a spring of comfort and he can enjoy solid satisfaction. But heaven is the home of true and real satisfaction. When the believer enters heaven, I believe His *imagination* will be thoroughly satisfied. All he has ever thought of, he will see there—every holy idea will be solidified—every mighty conception will become a reality, every glorious imagination will become a tangible thing that he

can see. His imagination will not be able to think of anything better than heaven—and should he sit down through eternity, he would not be able to conceive of anything that should outshine the luster of that glorious city! His imagination will be satisfied. Then His *intellect* will be satisfied—

"Then shall I see and hear and know,
All I desired, or wished, below."

Who is satisfied with his knowledge here? Are there not secrets we want to know—depths in the mysteries of nature that we have not entered? But in that glorious state we shall know as much as we want to know! The *memory* will be satisfied. We shall look back upon the vista of past years and we shall be content with whatever we endured, or did, or suffered on earth—

"There, on a green and flowery mound,
My wearied soul shall sit,
And with transporting joys recount
The labors of my feet."

Hope will be satisfied, if there is such a thing in heaven. We shall hope for a future eternity and believe in it. But we shall be satisfied as to our hopes continually—and the whole man will be so content that there will not remain a single thing in all God's dealings that he would wish to have altered. Yes, perhaps I say a thing to which some of you will object—but the righteous in heaven will be quite satisfied with the damnation of the lost. I used to think that if I could see the lost in hell, surely I must weep for them. Could I hear their horrid wailings and see the dreadful contortions of their anguish, surely I must pity them. But there is no such sentiment as that known in heaven. The believer shall be there so satisfied with all God's will, that he will quite forget the lost in the idea that God has done it for the best—that even their loss has been their own fault—and that He is infinitely just in it. If my parents could see me in hell they would not have a tear to shed for me, though they were in heaven. They would say, "It is justice, great God. And Your justice must be magnified, as well as Your mercy." And moreover, they would feel that God was so much above His creatures that they would be satisfied to see those creatures crushed if it might increase God's glory. Oh, in heaven I believe we shall think rightly of men. Here men seem great things to us. But in heaven they will seem no more than a few creeping insects that are swept away in plowing a field for harvest! They will appear no more than a tiny handful of dust, or like some nest of wasps that ought to be exterminated for the injury they have done. They will appear such little things when we sit on high with God and look down on the nations of the earth as grasshoppers and "count the isles as very little things." We shall be satisfied with everything. There will not be a single thing to complain of. "I *shall* be satisfied."

But when? "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness." But not till then; no, not till then. Now here a difficulty occurs. You know there are some in heaven who have not yet waked up in God's likeness.

In fact, none of those in heaven have done so. They never did sleep as respects their souls. The waking refers to their *bodies* and they are not awake yet—but are still slumbering. O earth! You are the bedchamber of the mighty dead! What a vast sleeping house this world is! It is one vast cemetery. The righteous still sleep. And they are to be satisfied on the resurrection morn, when they awake. "But," you say, "are they not satisfied now? They are in heaven—is it possible that they can be distressed?" No, they are not. There is only one dissatisfaction that can enter heaven—the dissatisfaction of the blest that their *bodies* are not there. Allow me to use a simile which will somewhat explain what I mean. When a Roman conqueror had been at war and won great victories, he would very likely come back with his soldiers, enter into his house and enjoy himself till the next day, when he would go out of the city and then come in again in triumph. Now, the saints, as it were, if I might use such a phrase, steal into heaven without their bodies. But on the last day, when their bodies wake up, they will enter in their triumphal chariots. And I think I see that grand procession, when Jesus Christ, first of all—crowns on His head—with His bright, glorious body, shall lead the way. I see my Savior entering first. Behind Him come the saints, all of them clapping their hands—all of them touching their golden harps and entering in triumph. And when they come to heaven's gates and the doors are opened wide to let the King of Glory in, *now* will the angels crowd at the windows and on the housetops, like the inhabitants in the Roman triumphs, to watch them as they pass through the streets and scatter heaven's roses and lilies upon them, crying, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! the Lord God omnipotent reigns!" "I shall be satisfied" in that glorious day, when all His angels shall come to see the triumph and when His people shall be victorious with Him!

One thought here ought not to be forgotten. And that is, the psalmist says we are to wake up in the *likeness of God*. This may refer to the soul. For the spirit of the righteous will be in the likeness of God as to its happiness, holiness, purity, infallibility, eternity and freedom from pain. But specially, I think, it relates to the body because it speaks of the awaking. The body is to be in the likeness of Christ. What a thought! It is—and alas, I have had too many such tonight—a thought too heavy for words. I am to wake up in Christ's likeness. I do not know what Christ is like and can scarcely imagine. I love, sometimes, to sit and look at Him in His crucifixion. I care not what men say—I know that sometimes I have derived benefit from a picture of my dying crucified Savior. And I look at Him with His crown of thorns, His pierced side, His bleeding hands and feet, and all those drops of gore hanging from Him. But I cannot picture Him in heaven—He is so bright, so glorious; the God so shines through the Man; His eyes are like lamps of fire; His tongue like a two-edged sword; His head covered with hair as white as snow, for He is the Ancient of Days. He binds the clouds round about Him for a belt. And when He

speaks, it is like the sound of many waters! I read the accounts given in the Book of Revelation, but I cannot tell what He is. They are Scripture phrases and I cannot understand their meaning. But whatever they mean, I know that I shall wake up in Christ's likeness. Oh, what a change it will be, when some of us get to heaven! There is a man who fell in battle with the word of salvation on his lips. His legs had been shot away and his body had been scarred by saber thrusts. He wakes in heaven and finds that he has not a broken body, maimed and cut about and hacked and injured—but that he is in Christ's likeness! There is an old matron, who has tottered on her staff for years along her weary way. Time has plowed furrows on her brow. Haggard and lame, her body is laid in the grave. But oh, aged woman, you shall arise in youth and beauty! Another has been deformed in his lifetime, but when he wakes, he wakes in the likeness of Christ! Whatever may have been the form of our countenance, whatever the contour, the beautiful shall be no more beautiful in heaven than those who were deformed. Those who shone on earth, peerless, among the fairest, who ravished men with looks from their eyes—they shall be no brighter in heaven than those who are now passed by and neglected—for they shall all be like Christ!

III. But now to close up, HERE IS A VERY SAD CONTRAST IMPLIED. We shall all slumber a few more years and where will this company be? Xerxes wept because in a little while his whole army would be gone. How might I stand here and weep because within a few more years others shall stand in this place and shall say, "The fathers, where are they?" Good God! And is it true? Is it not a reality? Is it all to be swept away? Is it one great dissolving view? Ah, it is. This sight shall soon vanish and you and I shall vanish with it! We are but a show. This life is but "a stage where men act." And then we pass behind the curtain and we there unmask ourselves and talk with God. The moment we begin to live we begin to die. The tree has long been growing that shall be sawn to make you a coffin. The sod is ready for you all. But this scene is to appear again soon. One short dream, one hurried nap and all this sight shall come over again. We shall all awake and as we stand here now, we shall stand together, perhaps, even more thickly pressed. But we shall stand all the same, then—the rich and poor, the preacher and hearer. There will be but one distinction—righteous and wicked. At first we shall stand together. I think I see the scene. The sea is boiling. The heavens are rent in two, the clouds are fashioned into a chariot and Jesus riding on it, with wings of fire, comes riding through the sky. His throne is set. He seats Himself upon it. With a nod He hushes the entire world. He lifts His fingers, opens the great books of destiny, and the book of our probation, wherein are written the acts of time. With His fingers He beckons to the hosts above. "Divide," He says, "divide the universe." Swifter than thought all the earth shall part in sunder. Where shall I be found when the dividing comes? I think I see them all divided and the righteous are

on the right. Turning to them, with a voice sweeter than music, He says, "Come! You have been coming—keep on your progress! Come! It has been the work of your life to come, so continue. Come and take the last step. 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.'" And now the wicked are left alone, and turning to them, He says, "Depart! You have been departing all your life long. It was your business to depart from Me. You said, 'Depart from me, I love not your ways.' You have been departing, keep on, take the last step!'" They dare not move. They stand still. The Savior becomes the avenger. The hands that once held out mercy now grasp the sword of justice. The lips that spoke loving kindness now utter thunder—and with a deadly aim He lifts up the sword and sweeps among them. They fly like deer before the lion and enter the jaws of the bottomless pit of hell.

But never, I hope, shall I cease preaching without telling you what to do to be saved! This morning I preached to the ungodly, to the worst of sinners and many wept—I hope many hearts melted—while I spoke of the great mercy of God. I have not spoken of that tonight. We must take a different line sometimes, led, I trust, by God's Spirit. But oh, you who are thirsty, heavy laden, lost and ruined, mercy speaks yet once again to you! Here is the way of salvation! "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "And what is it to believe?" asks one. "Is it to say I know Christ died for me?" No, that is not to believe, it is part of it, but it is not all. Every Arminian believes that. And every man in the world believes it who holds that doctrine, since he conceives that Christ died for every man. Consequently that is not faith. But faith is this—to cast yourself on Christ. As the American slave said, most curiously, when asked what he did to be saved—"Massa," said he, "I fling myself down on Jesus, and dere I lay. I fling myself flat on de promise and dere I lay." And to every penitent *sinner* Jesus says, "I am able to save to the uttermost." Throw yourself flat on the promise, and say "Then, Lord, You are able to save *me*." God says, "Come now, let us reason together, though your sins are as scarlet they shall be white as snow and though they are red like crimson they shall be as wool."

Cast yourself on Him and you shall be saved! "Ah," says one, "I am afraid I am not one of God's people. I cannot read my name in the book of life." A very good thing you can't, for if the Bible had everybody's name in it, it would be a pretty large book. And if your name is John Smith and you saw that name in the Bible, if you do not believe God's promise, now, you would be sure to believe that it was some other John Smith! Suppose the Emperor of Russia should issue a decree to all the Polish refugees to return to their own country. You see a Polish refugee looking at the great placards hanging on the wall. He looks with pleasure and says, "Well, I shall go back to my country." But someone says to him, "It does not say Walewski." "Yes," he would reply, "but it says *Polish refugees*—Polish is

my Christian name, refugee my surname and that is me." And so, though it does not say your name in the Scriptures, it says *lost sinner*. Sinner is your Christian name and *lost* is your surname—therefore, why not come? It says, "lost sinner"—is not that enough? "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief." "Yes, but," another one says, "I am afraid I am not elect." Oh, dear Souls, do not trouble yourselves about that. If you believe in Christ you *are* elect. Whoever puts himself on the mercy of Jesus is elect, for he would never do it if he had not been elect! Whoever comes to Christ and looks for mercy through His blood is elect and he shall see that he is elect afterwards. But do not expect to read *election* till you have read *repentance*. Election is a college to which you little ones will not go till you have been to the school of repentance. Do not begin to read your book backwards, and say, "Amen," before you have said your Pater Noster! Begin with "Our Father," and then you will go on to, "Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory." But begin with "the kingdom," and you will have hard work to go back to "Our Father." We must begin with faith. We must begin with—

"Nothing in my hands I bring."

As God made the world out of nothing, He always makes His Christians out of nothing. And he who has nothing at all tonight shall find grace and mercy, if he will come for it.

Let me close up by telling you that I have heard of some poor woman, who was converted and brought to life just by passing down a street and hearing a child, sitting at a door, singing—

"I am nothing at all
But Jesus Christ is All-in-All."

That is a blessed song! Go home and sing it, and he who can rightly apprehend those little words—who can feel himself vanity without Jesus—but that he has all things in Christ—is not far from the kingdom of heaven! And he is there in faith and shall be there in fruition, when he shall wake up in God's likeness!

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THE TWO EFFECTS OF THE GOSPEL
NO. 26

SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 27, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"
2 Corinthians 2:15, 16.

THESE are the words of Paul, speaking on the behalf of himself and his brothers, the apostles. They are true concerning all those who by the Spirit are chosen, qualified and thrust into the vineyard to preach God's gospel. I have often admired the 14th verse of this chapter, especially when I have remembered from whose lips the words fell, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ and makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place." Picture Paul, the aged, the man who had been beaten five times with "forty stripes save one," who had been dragged forth for dead, the man of great sufferings who had passed through whole seas of persecution—only think of him saying, at the close of his ministerial career, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ"! To triumph when shipwrecked, to triumph when scourged, to triumph in the stocks, to triumph under the stones, to triumph amidst the hiss of the world! To triumph when he was driven from the city and shook off the dust from his feet—to triumph at all times in Christ Jesus! Now, if some ministers of modern times should talk thus, we would think little of it for they enjoy the world's applause. They can always go to their place in ease and peace. They have an admiring people and no open foes—against them not a dog moves his tongue—everything is safe and pleasant. For them to say, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph" is a very little thing. But for one like Paul—so trampled on, so tried, so distressed, to say it—then we say, out spoke a hero—here is a man who had true faith in God and in the divinity of his mission!

And, my brothers, how sweet is that consolation which Paul applied to his own heart amid all his troubles. "Notwithstanding all," he says, "God makes known the savor of His knowledge by us in every place." Ah, with this thought, a minister may lay his head upon his pillow—"God makes manifest the savor of His knowledge." With this he may shut his eyes

when his career is over and with this he may open them in heaven—"God has made known by me the savor of His knowledge in every place." Then follow the words of my text, of which I shall speak, dividing it into three particulars. Our first remark shall be that *although the gospel is "a sweet savor" in every place, yet it produces different effects in different persons*—"to one it is the savor of death unto death, and to the other the savor of life unto life." Our second observation shall be, that *ministers of the gospel are not responsible for their success*, for it is said, "We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish." And thirdly, *the gospel minister's place is by no means a light one*—his duty is very weighty. The apostle, himself, said, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

I. Our first remark is that THE GOSPEL PRODUCES DIFFERENT EFFECTS. It must seem a strange thing, but it is strangely true that there is scarcely ever a good thing in the world of which some little evil is not the consequence. Let the sun shine in brilliance—it shall moisten the wax, it shall harden clay. Let it pour down floods of light on the tropics—it will cause vegetation to be extremely luxuriant, the richest and choicest fruits shall ripen and the fairest of all flowers shall bloom—but who does not know that there the worst of reptiles and the most venomous snakes are also brought forth? So it is with the gospel. Although it is the very sun of righteousness to the world, although it is God's best gift, although nothing can be in the least comparable to the vast amount of benefit which it bestows upon the human race, yet even of that we must confess that sometimes it is the "savor of death unto death." But then we are not to blame the gospel for this. It is not the fault of God's truth. It is the fault of those who do not receive it. It is the "savor of life unto life" to everyone that listens to its sound with a heart that is open to its reception. It is only "death unto death" to the man who hates the truth, despises it, scoffs at it and tries to oppose its progress. It is of that character we must speak first.

1. The gospel is to *some* men "a savor of death unto death." Now, this depends very much upon what the gospel is because there are some things called, "gospel," that are "a savor of death unto death" to everybody that hears them. John Berridge says he preached morality till there was not a moral man left in the village. And there is no way of injuring morality like legal preaching. The preaching of good works and the exhorting of men to holiness—as the means of salvation—is very much admired in theory—but when brought into practice, it is found not only ineffectual, but more than that—it becomes even "a savor of death unto death." So it has been found and I think even the great Chalmers, himself, confessed that for years and years before he knew the Lord, he

preached nothing but morality and precepts. But he never found a drunkard reclaimed by strewing on him merely the evils of drunkenness. Nor did he find a swearer stop his swearing because he told him the heinousness of the sin. It was not until he began to preach the love of Jesus in His great heart of mercy—it was not until he preached the gospel as it was in Christ—in some of its clearness, fullness, power and the doctrine that, "by grace you are saved, through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," that he ever met with success! But when he did preach salvation by faith, by shoals the drunkards came from their cups and swearers refrained their lips from evil speaking! By God's grace thieves became honest men and unrighteous and ungodly persons bowed to the scepter of Jesus. But you must confess, as I said before, that though the gospel does in the main produce the best effect upon almost all who hear it either by restraining them from sin, or compelling them to Christ—it is a great fact and a solemn one, upon which I hardly know how to speak this morning—that to some men the preaching of Christ's gospel is "death unto death," and produces evil instead of good.

(1.) And the first sense is this. *Many men are hardened in their sins by hearing the gospel*. Oh, 'tis terribly and solemnly true that of all sinners, some sanctuary sinners are the worst! Those who can dive deepest into sin and have the most quiet consciences and hardest hearts are some who are to be found in God's own house! I know that a faithful ministry will often prick them and the stern denunciations of a Boanerges will frequently make them shake. I am aware that the word of God will sometimes make their blood curdle within them. But I know (for I have seen the men) that there are many who turn the grace of God into licentiousness and make even God's truth a stalking-horse for the devil and abuse God's grace to palate their sin. Such men have I found among those who hear the doctrines of grace in their fullness. They will say, "I am elect, therefore I may swear. I am one of those who were chosen of God before the foundation of the world and, therefore, I may live as I like." I have seen the man who stood upon the table of a public house and grasping the glass in his hand, said, "Mates! I can say more than any of you. I am one of those who are redeemed with Jesus' precious blood"—and then he drank his tumbler of ale and danced again before them and sang vile and blasphemous songs. Now, that is a man to whom the gospel is "a savor of death unto death." He hears the truth, but he perverts it. He takes what is intended by God for his good and what does he do? He commits suicide with it! That knife which was given him to open the secrets of the gospel he drives into his own heart. That which is the purest of all truth and the highest of all morality he turns into the panderer of his vice and makes it a scaffold to aid in building up his wickedness and sin. Are

there any of you here like that man—who love to hear *the gospel*, as you call it—and yet live impurely? Are there any here who can sit down and say you are the children of God and still behave like liege servants of the devil? Be it known unto you that you are liars and hypocrites, for the truth is not in you at all! "If any man is born of God, he cannot sin." God's elect will not be allowed to fall into continual sin. They will never "turn the grace of God into licentiousness." But it will be their endeavor, as much as in them lies, to keep near to Jesus. Rest assured of this—"By their fruits you shall know them." "A good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit; neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit." Such men, however, are continually turning the gospel into evil. They sin with a high hand, from the very fact that they have heard what they consider excuses for their vice. There is nothing under heaven, I conceive, more liable to lead men astray than a perverted gospel. A truth perverted is generally worse than a doctrine which everyone knows to be false. As fire, one of the most useful of the elements can also cause the fiercest of conflagrations, so the gospel, the best thing we have, can be turned to the vilest account. This is one sense in which it is "a savor of death unto death."

(2.) But another. It is a fact that *the gospel of Jesus Christ will increase some men's damnation at the last great day*. Again, I startle myself when I have said it, for it seems too horrible a thought for us to venture to utter—that the gospel of Christ will make hell hotter to some men than it otherwise would have been. Men would all have sunk to hell had it not been for the gospel. The grace of God reclaims "a multitude that no man can number." It secures a countless army who "shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." But, at the same time, it causes those who reject it, their damnation to be even more dreadful. And let me tell you why.

First, *because men sin against greater light,* and the light we have is an excellent measure of our guilt. What a Hottentot might do without a crime would be the greatest sin to me because I am taught better. And what some even in London might do with impunity—set down, as it might be, as a sin by God, but not so exceedingly sinful—would be to me the very height of transgression because I have from my youth up been tutored to piety. The gospel comes upon men like the light from heaven. What a wanderer must he be who strays in the light! If he who is blind falls into the ditch, we can pity him, but if a man, with the light on his eyeballs dashes himself from the precipice and loses his own soul, is not pity out of the question?—

"How they deserve the deepest hell,
That slight the joys above!
What chains of vengeance must they feel,
Who laugh at sovereign love!"

It will increase your condemnation, I tell you all, unless you find Jesus Christ to be your Savior. To have had the light and not to walk by it shall be *the* condemnation, the very essence of it. This shall be the virus of the guilt—that the "light came into the world and the darkness comprehended it not," for "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

Again—it must increase your condemnation if you *oppose the gospel*. If God devises a scheme of mercy and man rises up against it, how great must his sin be? Who shall tell the great guilt incurred by such men as Pilate, Herod and the Jews? Oh, who shall picture out, or even faintly sketch, the doom of those who cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" And who shall tell what place in hell shall be hot enough for the man who slanders God's minister, who speaks against His people, who hates His truth, who would, if he could, utterly cut off the godly from the land? Ah, God help the infidel! God help the blasphemer! God save his soul—for of all men least would I choose to be that man! Do you think, sirs, that God will not take account of what men have said? One man has cursed Christ. He has called Him a charlatan. Another has declared, (knowing that he spoke a lie), that the gospel was otherwise. A third has proclaimed his licentious maxims and then has pointed to God's word and said, "There are worse things there!" A fourth has abused God's ministers and held up their imperfections to ridicule. Do you think God shall forget all this at the last day? When His enemies come before Him, shall He take them by the hand and say, "The other day you did call My servant a dog and spit on him and for this I will give you heaven"? Rather, if the sin has not been cancelled by the blood of Christ, will He not say, "Depart, cursed one, into the hell which you did scoff at! Leave that heaven which you did despise. And learn that though you said there was no God, this right arm shall teach you eternally the lesson that there is one! For he who discovers it not by My works of benevolence shall learn it by My deeds of vengeance—therefore depart, again, I say!"? It *shall* increase men's hell that they have opposed God's truth. Now, is not this a very solemn view of the gospel, that it is, indeed, to many, "a savor of death unto death"?

(3.) Yet, once more. I believe *the gospel makes some men in this world more miserable than they would be*. The drunkard could drink and could revel in his intoxication with greater joy if he did not hear it said, "All drunkards shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." How jovially the Sabbath-breaker would riot through his Sabbaths if the Bible did not say, "Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy"! And how happily could the libertine and licentious man drive on in his mad career if he were not told, "The wages of sin is death and after

death the judgment"! But the truth puts the bitter in his cup. The warnings of God freeze the current of his soul. The gospel is like the skeleton at the Egyptian feast. Though by day he laughed at it, by night he will quiver as the aspen leaf and when the shades of evening gather around him, he will shake at a whisper. At the thought of a future state, his joy is spoiled and immortality, instead of being a benefit to him, is in its very contemplation the misery of his existence! The sweet wooing of mercy are to him no more harmonious than peals of thunder because he knows he despises them. Yes, I have known some who have been in such misery under the gospel because they would not give up their sins, that they have been ready to take their own lives. Oh, terrible thought! The gospel is "a savor of death unto death." Unto how many here is it so? Who are now hearing God's word to be damned by it? Who shall retire to be hardened by the sound of the truth? Why, every man who does not believe it—for unto those that receive it, it is "a savor of life unto life"—but to unbelievers it is a curse and "a savor of death unto death."

2. But, blessed be God, the gospel has a second power. Besides being "death unto death," it is "a savor of life unto life." Ah, my brothers and sisters, some of us could speak, if we were allowed this morning, of the gospel as being "a savor of life" to us. We can look back to that hour when we were "dead in trespasses and sins." In vain all Sinai's thunders, in vain the rousing of the watchmen. We slept on in the death-sleep of our transgressions. An angel could not have awakened us. But we look back with joy to that hour when first we stepped within the walls of a sanctuary and savingly heard the voice of mercy. With some of you it is but a few weeks. I know where you are and who you are. But a few weeks or months ago you, too, were far from God. But now you are brought to love Him. Can you look back, my brothers and sisters, to that very moment when the gospel was "a savor of life" to you—when you did cast away your sins, renounce the lusts and turning to God's word, by His grace, received it with full purpose of heart? Ah, that hour—of all hours the sweetest! Nothing can be compared with it! I knew a person who for 40 or 50 years had been completely deaf. Sitting one morning at her cottage door as some vehicle was passing, she thought she heard melodious music. It was not music, it was but the sound of the vehicle. Her ears had suddenly opened and that rough sound seemed to her like the music of heaven because it was the first she had heard for so many years! Even so, the first time our ears were opened to hear the words of love—the assurance of our pardon—we never heard the word so well as we did then! It never seemed so sweet. And perhaps, even now, we look back and say—

"What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!"

When first it was "a savor of life" unto our souls!

Then, beloved, if it ever has been "a savor of life," it will *always* be "a savor of life," because it says it is not a savor of life unto death, but "a savor of life unto life." Now I must aim another blow at my antagonists the Arminians. I cannot help it. They will have it that sometimes the gospel is a savor of life unto death. They tell us that a man may receive spiritual life and yet may die eternally. That is to say, a man may be forgiven and yet be punished afterwards. He may be justified from all sin and yet after that, his transgressions can be laid on his shoulders again. They say a man may be born of God and yet die. A man may be loved of God and yet God may hate him tomorrow. Oh, I cannot bear to speak of such doctrines of lies! Let those believe them that will. As for me, I so deeply believe in the Immutable Love of Jesus, that I suppose that if one believer were to be in hell, Christ, Himself, would not long stay in heaven, but would soon cry, "To the rescue! To the rescue!" Oh, if Jesus Christ were in glory with one of the gems missing in His crown, and Satan had that gem in hell, Satan would say, "Aha, Prince of light and glory, I have one of Your jewels!" And he would hold it up and then he would say, "Aha, You did die for this man, but You had not strength enough to save him. You did love him once—where is Your love? It is not worth having, for You did hate him afterwards!" And how would Satan chuckle over that heir of heaven and hold him up and say, "This man was redeemed. Jesus Christ purchased him with His blood"—and plunging him in the waves of hell, he would say, "There, purchased one! See how I can rob the Son of God!" And then again he would say, "This man was forgiven! Behold the justice of God! He is to be punished after he is forgiven. Christ suffered for this man's sins and yet," says Satan with a malignant joy, "I have him afterwards, for God exacted the punishment twice!"

Shall that ever be said? Ah, no. It is "a savor of life unto *life*," and not of life unto death. Away with your vile gospel, Arminian! Preach it where you please. But my Master said, "I give unto My sheep eternal life." You give to your sheep temporary life and they lose it. But my Master says, "I give unto My sheep ETERNAL life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hands." I generally wax warm when I get to this subject because I think few doctrines more vital than that of the perseverance of the saints. If ever one child of God did perish, or if I knew it were possible that one could, I should conclude at once that I must and I suppose each of you would do the same. And then where is the joy and happiness of the gospel? Again I tell you the Arminian gospel is the shell without the kernel. It is the husk without the fruit and those

who love it may have it. We will not quarrel with them. Let them go and preach it. Let them go and tell poor sinners that if they believe in Jesus they will be damned after all—that Jesus Christ will forgive them and yet the Father send them to hell. Go and preach your gospel, Arminian and who will listen to it? And if they do listen, is it worth their hearing? I say no. For if I am to stand after conversion on the same footing as I did before conversion, then it is of no use for me to have been converted at all. But whom He loves He loves to the end—

"Once in Christ, in Christ forever—
Nothing from His love can sever."

It is "a savor of life unto life." And not only "life unto life" in this world, but of "life unto life" eternal! Everyone who has this life shall receive the next life. For "the Lord will give grace and glory and no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly."

I am obliged to leave this point. But if my Master will but take it up and make His word a savor of "life unto life" this morning, I shall rejoice in what I have said.

II. Our second remark was that THE MINISTER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS SUCCESS. He *is* responsible for what he preaches. He is accountable for his life and actions. But he is not responsible for other people. If I do but preach God's word, if there never were a soul saved, the King would say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" If I do but tell my message—if none should listen to it—He would say, "You have fought the good fight—receive your crown." You hear the words of the text—"We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, as well in them that perish, as in them that are saved." This will appear clearer, if I just tell you what a gospel minister is called in the Bible. Sometimes he is called an *ambassador*. Now, for what is an ambassador responsible? He goes to a country as a diplomatic agent. He carries terms of peace to the conference—he uses all his talents for his master. He tries to show that the war is inimical to the prosperity of the different countries. He endeavors to bring about peace—but the other kings haughtily refuse it. When he comes home, does his master say, "Why did you not make peace?" "Why, my Lord," he would say, "I told them the terms. But they said nothing." "Well, then," he will say, "you have done your duty. I am not to condemn you if the war continues." Again—the minister of the gospel is called a *fisherman*. Now a fisherman is not responsible for the quantity of fish he catches, but for the *way he fishes*. That is a mercy for some ministers, I am sure, for they have neither caught fish, nor even attracted any around their nets. They have been spending all their life fishing with most elegant silk lines and gold and silver hooks. They always use nicely polished phrases, but the fish will not bite for all that. Whereas we of a

rougher order have put the hook into the jaws of hundreds; however, if we cast the gospel net in the right place, even if we catch none, the Master will find no fault with us. He will say, "Fisherman! Did you labor? Did you throw the net into the sea in the time of storms?" "Yes, my Lord, I did." "What have you caught?" "Only one or two." "Well, I could have sent you a shoal, if it so pleased Me. It is not *your* fault. I give in My sovereignty where I please, or withhold when I choose. But as for you, you have well labored; therefore there is your reward." Sometimes the minister is called a *sower*. Now, no farmer expects a sower to be responsible for the harvest. All he is responsible for is—does he sow the seed? And does he sow the right seed? If he scatters it on good soil, then he is happy. But if it falls by the wayside and the fowls of the air devour it, who shall blame the sower? Could he help it? No, he did his duty. He scattered the seed broadcast and there he left it. Who is to blame? Certainly not the sower. So, beloved, if a minister comes to heaven with but one sheaf on his shoulder, his Master will say, "O reaper! Once a sower! Where did you gather your sheaf?" "My Lord, I sowed upon the rock and it would not grow, only one seed on a chance Sunday morning was blown a little awry by the wind and it fell on a prepared heart. And this is my one sheaf." "Hallelujah!" the angelic choirs resound, "one sheaf from a rock is more honor to God than a thousand sheaves from a good soil—therefore let him take his seat as near the Throne as yon man, who, stooping beneath his many sheaves, comes from some fertile land, bringing his sheaves with him." I believe that if there are degrees in glory, they will not be in proportion to success, but in proportion to the earnestness of our endeavors. If we mean right and if with all our heart we strive to do the right thing, as ministers—if we never see any effect—still shall we receive the crown. But how much more happy is the man who shall have it in heaven said to him, "He shines forever, because he was wise and won many souls unto righteousness"?

It is always my greatest joy to believe that if I should enter heaven, I shall in future days see heaven's gates open and in shall fly a cherub, who, looking me in the face, will smilingly pass along to God's Throne and there bow down before Him. And when he has paid his homage and his adoration, he may fly to me and though, unknown, shall clasp my hand. And if there were tears in heaven, surely I should weep and he would say, "Brother, from your lips I heard the word. Your voice first admonished me of my sin. Here I am and you the instrument of my salvation." And as the gates open one after another, still will they come in, souls ransomed, souls ransomed. And for each one of these a star—for each one of these another gem in the diadem of glory—for each one of them another honor and another note in the song of praise. Blessed be

that man who shall die in the Lord and his works shall follow him. For thus says the Spirit. What will become of some good Christians now in Exeter Hall if crowns in heaven are measured in value by the souls that are saved? Some of you will have a crown in heaven without a single star in it. I read a little while ago a piece upon the starless crown in heaven—a man in heaven with a crown without a star! Not one saved by him! He will sit in heaven as happy as he can be, for sovereign mercy saved him. But oh, to be in heaven without a single star! Mother! What do you say to be in heaven without one of your children to deck your brow with a star? Minister! What would you say to be a polished preacher and yet have no star? Writer! Will it well become you to have written even as gloriously as Milton, if you should be found in heaven without a star? I am afraid we pay too little regard to this. Men will sit down and write huge folios and books that they may have them put in libraries forever and have their names handed down by fame! But how few are looking to win stars forever in heaven! Toil on, child of God, toil on! For if you wish to serve God, your bread cast upon the waters shall be found after many days. If you send in the feet of the ox or the donkey, you shall reap a glorious harvest in that day when He comes to gather in His elect. The minister is not responsible for his success.

III. But yet, in the last place, TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IS HIGH AND SOLEMN WORK. The ministry has been very often degraded into a trade. In these days, men are taken and made into ministers who would have made good captains at sea, who could have waited well at the counter, but who were never intended for the pulpit. They are selected by man, they are crammed with literature, they are educated up to a certain point, they are turned out ready dressed. And persons call them ministers. I wish them all God-speed, every one of them, for as good Joseph Irons used to say, "God be with many of them if it is only to make them hold their tongues." Man-made ministers are of no use in this world and the sooner we get rid of them, the better! Their way is this—they prepare their manuscripts very carefully, then read it on the Sunday most sweetly in *sotto voce,* and so the people go away pleased. But that is not God's way of preaching! If so, I am sufficient to preach forever, I can buy manuscript sermons for a shilling, that is to say, provided they have been preached fifty times before. But if I use them for the first time, the price is a guinea, or more! But that is not the way. Preaching God's word is not what some seem to think, mere child's play—a mere business or trade to be taken up by anyone. A man ought to feel first that he has a solemn *call* to it. Next, he ought to know that he really possesses the Spirit of God and that when he speaks, there is an influence upon him that enables him to speak as God would have him. Otherwise he has no business

in the pulpit. He has no right to be there, even if the living is his own property. He has not been called to preach God's truth and unto him God says, "What have you to do, to declare My statutes?"

But you say "What is there difficult about preaching God's gospel?" Well it must be somewhat hard, for Paul said, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And first I will tell you, it is difficult because it is so hard as not to be warped by your own prejudices in preaching the word. You need to say a stern thing and your heart says, "Master! In so doing you will condemn yourself." Then the temptation is not to say it. Another trial is, you are afraid of displeasing the rich in your congregations. You think, "If I say such-and-such a thing, So-and-So will be offended—such an one does not approve of that doctrine. I had better leave it out." Or perhaps you will happen to win the applause of the multitude and you must not say anything that will displease them, for if they cry, "Hosanna," today, they will cry, "Crucify, crucify," tomorrow. All these things work on a minister's heart. He is a man like you, and he feels it. Then comes again the sharp knife of criticism, and the arrows of those who hate him, and hate his Lord, and he cannot help feeling it sometimes. He may put on his armor and cry, "I care not for your malice," but there were seasons when the archers sorely grieved even Joseph.

Then he stands in another danger, lest he should come out and defend himself. For he is a great fool whoever tries to do it. He who leaves his detractors alone and, like the eagle, cares not for the chattering of the sparrows, or like the lion will not turn aside to rend the snarling jackal—he is the man—and he shall be honored. But the danger is we want to set ourselves right. And oh, who is sufficient to steer clear from these rocks of danger? Rather, "Who is sufficient," my brothers, "for these things?"—To stand up and to proclaim Sabbath after Sabbath, and weekday after weekday, "the unsearchable riches of Christ"?

Having said this much, I may draw the inference—to close up—which is—if the gospel is "a savor of life unto life," and if the minister's work is solemn work, how well it becomes all lovers of the truth to plead for all those who preach it, that they may be "sufficient for these things." To lose my prayer-book, as I have often told you, is the worst thing that can happen to me. To have no one to pray for me would place me in a dreadful condition! "Perhaps," says a good poet, "the day when the world shall perish will be the day it is unwhitened by a prayer." And perhaps the day when a minister turns aside from the truth of God, will be the day when his people fail to pray for him—when there was not a single voice supplicating grace on his behalf. I am sure it must be so with me. Give me the numerous hosts of men and women whom it has been my pride and glory to see in my place before I came to this hall—give me those praying

people who on the Monday evening met in such a multitude to pray to God for a blessing—and we will overcome hell, itself, in spite of all that may oppose us! All our perils are nothing, so long as we have prayer. Increase my congregation. Give me the polite and the noble—give me influence and understanding—and I should fail to do anything without a praying church! My beloved! Shall I ever lose your prayers? Will you ever cease your supplications? Our toils are nearly ended in this great place and happy shall we be to return to our much-loved sanctuary. Will you then ever cease to pray? I fear you have not uttered so many prayers this morning as you should have done. I fear there has not been so much earnest devotion as might have been poured forth. For my own part, I have not felt the wondrous power I sometimes experience. I will not lay it at your doors. But never let it be said, "Those people, once so fervent, have become cold!" Let not Laodiceanism get into Southwark. Let us leave it here in the West End, if it is to be anywhere. Let us not carry it with us. Let us "strive together for the faith once delivered unto the saints"—and knowing in what a sad position the standard bearer stands, I beseech you rally round him. For it will be ill with the army—

"If the standard bearer falls, as fall full well he may.
For never saw I promise yet, of such a deadly fray."

Stand up my friends! Grasp the banner yourselves, and maintain it erect until the day shall come, when standing on the last conquered castle of hell's domains; we shall raise the shout, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigns!" Till that time, fight on!

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THE ETERNAL NAME
NO. 27

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, MAY 27, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"His name shall endure forever."
Psalm 72:17.

NO one here requires to be told that this is the name of Jesus Christ which "shall endure forever." Men have said of many of their works, "They shall endure forever." But how much have they been disappointed! In the age succeeding the flood, they made the brick, they gathered the slime and when they had piled old Babel's tower, they said, "This shall last forever." But God confounded their language. They finished it not. By His lightening He destroyed it and left it a monument of their folly. Old Pharaoh and the Egyptian monarchs heaped up their pyramids and they said, "They shall stand forever," and so, indeed, they do stand. But the time is approaching when age shall devour even these. So with all the proudest works of man, whether they have been his temples or his monarchs, he has written "everlasting" on them. But God has ordained their end, and they have passed away. The most stable things have been evanescent as shadows, and the bubbles of an hour, speedily destroyed at God's bidding. Where is Nineveh and where is Babylon? Where the cities of Persia? Where are the high places of Edom? Where are Moab and the princes of Ammon? Where are the temples or the heroes of Greece? Where are the millions that passed from the gates of Thebes? Where are the hosts of Xerxes, or the vast armies of the Roman emperors? Have they not passed away? And though in their pride they said, "This monarch is an everlasting one—this queen of the seven hills shall be called the eternal city," its pride is dimmed—and she who sat alone and said, "I shall be no widow, but a queen forever," has fallen. She has fallen and in a little while she shall sink like a millstone in the flood, her name being a curse and a byword and her site the habitation of dragons and of owls. Man calls his work eternal—God calls them fleeting. Man conceives that they are built of rock—God says, "No, sand. Or worse than that—they are air." Man says he erects them for eternity—God blows but for a moment and where are they? Like baseless fabrics of a vision, they are passed and gone forever!

It is pleasant, then, to find that there is one thing which is to last forever. Concerning that one thing we hope to speak tonight, if God will en-

able me to preach, and you to hear—"His name shall endure forever." First, *the religion* sanctified by His name shall endure forever; secondly, *the honor* of His name shall endure forever, and thirdly, *the saving, comforting power* of His name shall endure forever.

I. First, *the religion of the name of Jesus is to endure forever.* When impostors forged their delusions, they had hopes that perhaps they might, in some distant age, carry the world before them. And if they saw a few followers gather around their standard, who offered incense at their shrine, then they smiled and said, "My religion shall outshine the stars and last through eternity." But how mistaken have they been! How many false systems have started up and passed away! Why, some of us have seen, even in our short lifetime, sects that rose like Jonah's gourd in a single night and passed away just as swiftly! We, too, have beheld prophets rise who have had their hour—yes, they have had their day, as dogs all have—but like the dogs, their day has passed away and the impostor, where is he? And the arch-deceiver, where is he? Gone and ceased. Specially might I say this of the various systems of infidelity. Within 150 years how has the boasted power of reason changed! It has piled up one thing—and then in another day it has laughed at its own handiwork, demolished its own castle and constructed another—and the next day a third. It has a thousand dresses! Once it came forth like a fool with its bells, heralded by Voltaire. Then it came out a braggart bully, like Tom Paine. Then it changed its course and assumed another shape, till finally we have it in the base, bestial secularism of the present day—which looks for nothing but the earth, keeps its nose upon the ground and like the beast, thinks this world is enough, or looks for another through seeking this! Why, before one hair on this head shall be gray, the last secularist shall have passed away! Before many of us are 50 years of age, a new infidelity shall come and to those who say, "Where will saints be?" we can turn round and say, "Where are you?" And they will answer, "We have altered our names." They will have altered their names, assumed a fresh shape, put on a new form of evil—but still their nature will be the same—opposing Christ and endeavoring to blaspheme His truths! On all their systems of religion, or non-religion; for that is a system, too—it may be written, "Evanescent—fading as the flower, fleeting as the meteor, frail and unreal as a vapor." But of Christ's religion it shall be said, "His name shall endure forever." Let me now say a few things—not to prove it, for that I do not wish to do—but to give you some hints whereby possibly I may one day prove it to other people, that Jesus Christ's religion must inevitably endure forever.

And first, we ask those who think it shall pass away, *when was there a time when it did not exist?* We ask them whether they can point their

finger to a period when the religion of Jesus was an unheard of thing. "Yes," they will reply, "before the days of Christ and His Apostles." But we answer, "No, Bethlehem was not the birthplace of the gospel. Though Jesus was born there, there was a gospel long before the birth of Jesus and a preached one, too, although not preached in all its simplicity and plainness, as we hear it now. There was a gospel in the wilderness of Sinai. Although it might be confused with the smoke of the incense and only to be seen through slaughtered victims, yet there was a gospel there." Yes, more, we take them back to the fair trees of Eden, where the fruits perpetually ripened and summer always rested. Amid these groves we tell them there was a gospel, and we let them hear the voice of God, as He spoke to rebellious man and said, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." And having taken them thus far back, we ask, "Where were false religions born?" Where was their cradle?" They point us to Mecca, or they turn their fingers to Rome, or they speak of Confucius, or the dogmas of Buddha. But we say, you only go back to a distant obscurity. We take you to the primeval age. We direct you to the days of purity. We take you back to the time when Adam first trod the earth. And then we ask you whether it is not likely that as the first-born, it will not also be the last to die? And as it was born so early and still exists, while a thousand ephemera have become extinct, whether it does not look most probable that when all others shall have perished like the bubble upon the wave, this one, only, shall swim, like a good ship upon the ocean and still shall bear its myriad souls, not to the land of shades, but across the river of death to the plains of heaven?

We ask next, supposing Christ's gospel to become extinct, *what religion is to supplant it?* We inquire of the wise man who says Christianity is soon to die, "Pray, sir, what religion are we to have in its place? Are we to have the delusions of the heathen, who bow before their gods and worship images of wood and stone? Will you have the orgies of Baechus, or the obscenities of Venus? Would you see your daughters once more bowing down before Thammuz, or performing obscene rites as of old?" No, you would not endure such things! You would say, "It would not be tolerated by civilized men." "Then what would you have? Would you have Romanism and its superstition?" You will say, "No, God help us, never!" They may do what they please with Britain, but she is too wise to take old popery back again while Smithfield lasts and there is one of the signs of martyrs there. Yes, while there breathes a man who marks himself a free man and swears by the constitution of Old England, we cannot take popery back again. She may be rampant with her superstitions and her priestcraft but with one consent my hearers reply, "We will not have popery." Then what will you choose? Shall it be Mohammedanism? Will you

choose that, with all its fables, its wickedness and lasciviousness? I will not tell you of it. Nor will I mention the accursed imposture of the West that has lately arisen. We will not allow Polygamy, while there are men to be found who love the social circle and cannot see it invaded. We would not wish, when God has given to man one wife that he should drag in twenty, as the companions of that one. We cannot prefer Mormonism. We will not and we shall not! Then what shall we have in the place of Christianity? "Infidelity!" you cry; do you, sirs? And would you have that? Then what would be the consequence? What do many of them promote? Communist views and the real disruption of all society as at present established. Would you desire reigns of terror here, as they had in France? Do you wish to see all society shattered and men wandering like monster icebergs on the sea, dashing against each other and being at last utterly destroyed? God save us from Infidelity! What can you have, then? Nothing; there is nothing to supplant Christianity. What religion shall overcome it? There is not one to be compared with it. If we tread the globe round and search from Britain to Japan, there shall be no religion found, so just to God, so safe to man.

We ask the enemy once more—suppose a religion were to be found which would be preferable to the one we love—*by what means would you crush ours?* How would you get rid of the religion of Jesus? And how would you extinguish His name? Surely, sirs, you would never think of the old practice of persecution, would you? Would you once more try the efficacy of stakes and fires, to burn out the name of Jesus? Would you try racks and thumbscrews? Would you give us the boots and instruments of torture? Try it, sirs and you shall not quench Christianity. Each martyr, dipping his finger in his blood, would write its honors upon the heavens as he died. And the very flame that mounted up to heaven would emblazon the skies with the name of Jesus. Persecution has been tried. Turn to the Alps. Let the valleys of Piedmont speak. Let Switzerland testify. Let France, with its St. Bartholomew. Let England, with all its massacres, speak. And if you have not crushed it yet, shall you hope to do it? Shall you? No, a thousand are to be found, and ten thousand if it were necessary, who are willing to march to the stake tomorrow; and when they are burned, if you could take up their hearts, you would see engraved upon each of them the name of Jesus. "His name shall endure forever," for how can you destroy our love to it? "Ah, but," you say, "we would try gentler means than that." Well, what would you attempt? Would you invent a better religion? We bid you do it and let us hear it. We have not yet so much as believed you capable of such a discovery. What then? Would you wake up one that would deceive us and lead us astray? We bid you do it. For it is not possible to deceive the elect! You

may deceive the multitude, but God's elect shall not be led astray. They have tried us. Have they not given us popery? Have they not assailed us with Puseyism? Are they not tempting us with wholesale Arminianism? And do we therefore renounce God's truth? No! We have taken this for our slogan and by it we will stand—"The Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible," is still the religion of Protestants. And the same truths of God which moved the lips of Chrysostom, the old doctrine that ravished the heart of Augustine, the old faith which Athanasius declared, the good old doctrine that Calvin preached is our gospel now—and God helping us—we will stand by it till we die! How will you quench it? If you wish to do it, where can you find the means? It is not in your power. Aha! Aha! Aha! We laugh you to scorn!

But you will quench it, will you? You will try it, do you say? And you hope you will accomplish your purpose? Yes. I know you will, when you have annihilated the sun; when you have quenched the moon with drops of your tears; when you have dried up the sea with your drinking! Then shall you do it. And yet you say you will.

And next, I ask you, *suppose you did, what would become of the world then?* Ah, were I eloquent tonight, I might perhaps tell you. If I could borrow the language of a Robert Hall I might hang the world in mourning. I might make the sea the great chief mourner, with its dirge of howling pain and its wild death march of disordered waves. I might clothe all nature—not in robes of green, but in garments of somber blackness. I would bid hurricanes howl the solemn wailing—that death shriek of a world—for what would become of us, if we should lose the gospel? As for me, I tell you fairly, I would cry, "Let me be gone!" I would have no wish to be here without my Lord! And if the gospel is not true, I would bless God to annihilate me this instant for I would not care to live if you could destroy the name of Jesus Christ. But that would not be all—that only one man should be miserable—for there are thousands and thousands who can speak as I do. Again, what would become of civilization if you could take Christianity away? Where would be the hope of a perpetual peace? Where governments? Where your Sunday schools? Where all your societies? Where everything that ameliorates the condition of man, reforms his manners and moralizes his character? Where? Let echo answer, "Where?" "They would be gone and not a scrap of them would be left." And where, O men would be your hope of heaven? And where the knowledge of eternity; where a help across the river death? Where a heaven? And where bliss everlasting? All were gone if His name did not endure forever. But we are sure of it, we know it, we affirm it, we declare it. We believe and always will, that "His name shall endure forever"—yes, forever! Let who will, try to stop it!

This is my first point. I shall have to speak with rather bated breath upon the second; although I feel so warm within as well as without, that I would to God I could speak with all my strength as I might do.

II. But, secondly, as His religion, so *the honor of His name is to last forever*. Voltaire said he lived in the twilight of Christianity. He meant a lie. He spoke the truth. He did live in its twilight. But it was the twilight *before* the morning—not the twilight of the evening, as he meant to say, for the morning comes, when the light of the sun shall break upon us in its truest glory. The scorners have said that we should soon forget to honor Christ and that one day no man would acknowledge Him. Now, we assert again, in the words of my text, "His name shall endure forever," as to the honor of it. Yes, I will tell you how long it will endure. As long as on this earth there is a sinner who has been reclaimed by Omnipotent grace, Christ's name shall endure! As long as there is a Mary ready to wash His feet with tears and wipe them with the hair of her head. As long as there breathes a chief of sinners who has washed himself in the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. As long as there exists a Christian who has put his faith in Jesus, and found Him his delight, his refuge, his stay, his shield, his song and his joy, there will be no fear that Jesus' name will cease to be heard! We can never give up that name! We let the Unitarian take his gospel without Godhead in it. We let him deny Jesus Christ. But as long as Christians—true Christians live—as long as we taste that the Lord is gracious, have manifestations of His love, sights of His face, whispers of His mercy, assurances of His affection, promises of His grace, hopes of His blessing—we cannot cease to honor His name! But if all these were gone—if *we* were to cease to sing His praise, would Jesus Christ's name be forgotten then? No. The stones would sing, the hills would be an orchestra, the mountains would skip like rams and the little hills like lambs. For is He not their Creator? And if the lips of all mortals were dumb at once, there are creatures enough in this wide world besides. Why, the sun would lead the chorus. The moon would play upon her silver harp and sweetly sing to her music. Stars would dance in their measured courses. The shoreless depths of ether would become the home of songs. And the immense void would burst out into one great shout, "You are the glorious Son of God; great is Your majesty, and infinite Your power!" Can Christ's name be forgotten? No. It is painted on the skies. It is written on the floods. The winds whisper it. The tempests howl it. The seas chant it. The stars shine it. The beasts low it. The thunders proclaim it—earth shouts it—heaven echoes it!

But if *that* were all gone—if this great universe should all subside in God, just as a moment's foam subsides into the wave that bears it and is lost forever—would His name be forgotten then? No. Turn your eyes up

yonder. See heaven's *terra firma, "Who are* these that are arrayed in white and from where have they come?" "These are they that came out of great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God and praise Him day and night in His temple." And if these were gone; if the last harp of the glorified had been touched with the last fingers; if the last praise of the saints had ceased; if the last hallelujah had echoed through the then deserted vaults of heaven, for they would be gloomy then—if the last immortal had been buried in his grave—if graves there might be for immortals—would His praise cease then? No, by heaven, no! For yonder stand the angels. They, too, sing His glory. To Him the cherubim and seraphim do cry without ceasing, when they mention His name in that thrice holy chorus, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Armies"; but if even these were perished—if angels had been swept away, if the wing of seraph never flapped the ether; if the voice of the cherub never sung his flaming sonnet; if the living creatures ceased their everlasting chorus; if the measured symphonies of glory were extinct in silence, would His name then be lost? Ah, no, for as God upon the throne—He sits—the Everlasting One, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and if the universe were all annihilated, still would His name be heard, for the Father would hear it, and the Spirit would hear it, and deeply engraved on immortal marble in the rocks of ages, it would stand—Jesus the Son of God—co-equal with His Father. "His name shall endure forever."

III. And so shall the *power of His name*. Do you inquire what this is? Let me tell you. Do you see yonder thief hanging upon the cross? Behold the fiends at the foot thereof, with open mouths. Behold they are charming themselves with the sweet thought that another soul shall give them meat in hell. Behold the death bird, fluttering his wings over the poor wretch's head. Vengeance passes by and stamps him for her own. Deep on his breast is written "a condemned sinner." On his brow is the clammy sweat, expressed from him by agony and death. Look in his heart—it is filthy with the crust of years of sin. The smoke of lust is hanging within, in black festoons of darkness. His whole heart is hell condensed. Now, look at him. He is dying. One foot seems to be in hell. The other hangs tottering in life—only kept by a nail. There is a power in Jesus' eyes. That thief looks—he whispers, "Lord, remember me." Turn your eye again there. Do you see that thief? Where is the clammy sweat? It is not there? Where is that horrid anguish? Is it not there? Positively there is a smile upon his lips! The fiends of hell, where are they? There are none—but a bright seraph is present, with his wings outspread and his hands ready to snatch that soul, now a precious jewel, and bear it aloft to the palace of the great king! Look within his heart—it is white with purity. Look at

his breast—it is no longer written "condemned," but "justified." Look in the book of Life—his name is engraved there. Look on Jesus' heart—there on one of the precious stones He bears that poor thief's name. Yes, once more, look! See that bright one amid the glorified, clearer than the sun and fair as the moon? That is the thief! THAT IS THE POWER OF JESUS! And that power shall endure forever. He who saved the thief can save the last man who shall ever live. For still—

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins.
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.
The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day—
O may I there, tho' vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.
Dear dying Lamb! That precious blood
Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Is saved to sin no more."

His powerful name shall endure forever.

Nor is that all the power of His name. Let me take you to another scene and you shall witness something else. There on that deathbed lies a saint. No gloom is on his brow, no terror on his face. Weakly but placidly he smiles. He groans, perhaps, but yet he sings. He sighs now and then, but more often he shouts. Stand by him. "My brother, what makes you look in death's face with such joy?" "Jesus," he whispers. What makes you so placid and so calm? "The name of Jesus." See, he forgets everything! Ask him a question. He cannot answer it—he does not understand you. Still he smiles. His wife comes, inquiring, "Do you know my name?" He answers, "No." His dearest friend requests him to remember his intimacy. "I know you not," he says. Whisper in his ear, "Do you know the name of Jesus?" and his eyes flash glory and his face beams heaven! His lips speak sonnets and his heart bursts with eternity! For he hears the name of Jesus and that name shall endure forever! He who landed one in heaven will land me there. Come on, death! I will mention Christ's name there. O grave! This shall be my glory, the name of Jesus! Hell dog! This shall be your death—for the sting of death is extracted—Christ our Lord. "His name shall endure forever."

I had a hundred particulars to give you. But my voice fails, so I had better stop. You will not require more of me tonight. You perceive the difficulty I feel in speaking each word. May God send it home to your souls! I am not particularly anxious about my own name, whether that shall endure forever or not, provided it is recorded in my Master's book. George Whitefield, when asked whether he would found a denomination,

said, "No, brother John Wesley may do as he pleases, but let my name perish. Let Christ's name last forever." Amen to that! Let my name perish. But let Christ's name last forever! I shall be quite content for you to go away and forget me. I dare say I may not see the faces of half of you again. You may never be persuaded to step within the walls of an assembly. You will think it perhaps not respectable enough to come to a Baptist meeting. Well, I do not say we are a very respectable people. We don't profess to be. But this one thing we do profess, we love our Bibles! And if it is not respectable to do so, we do not care to be had in esteem. But we do not know that we are so disreputable, after all, for I believe, if I may state my own opinion, that if Protestant Christendom were counted out of that door—not merely every real Christian, but every professor—I believe the Paedo-Baptists would have no very great majority to boast of. We are not, after all, such a very small disreputable sect. Regard us in England, we may be; but take America, Jamaica, the West Indies, and include those who are Baptists in principle, though not openly so, and we surrender to none, not even to the Established Church of this country, in numbers! That, however, we care very little about, for I say of the Baptist name, let it perish, but let Christ's name last forever! I look forward with pleasure to the day when there will not be a Baptist living. I hope they will soon be gone. You will say, "Why?" Because when everybody else sees Baptism by immersion, we shall be immersed into all sects, and our sect will be gone! Once give us the predominance, and we are not a sect any longer. A man may be a Churchman, a Wesleyan, or an Independent, and yet be a Baptist; so that I say I hope the Baptist name will soon perish. But let Christ's name last forever! Yes, and yet again, much as I love dear old England, I do not believe she will ever perish. No, Britain, you shall never perish! The flag of old England is nailed to the mast by the prayers of Christians, by the efforts of Sunday schools and her pious men.

But I say let even England's name perish. Let her be merged in one great brotherhood. Let us have no England and no France and no Russia and no Turkey—but let us have Christendom. And I say heartily, from my soul, let nations and national distinctions perish, but let Christ's name last forever. Perhaps there is only one thing on earth that I love better than the last I have mentioned, and that is the pure doctrine of unadulterated Calvinism. But if that is wrong—if there is anything in that which is false—I for one say let that perish, too, and let Christ's name last forever. Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus—"Crown Him Lord of all!" You will not hear me say anything else. These are my last words in Exeter Hall for this time. Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! "Crown Him Lord of all."

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THE CHURCH OF CHRIST
NO. 28

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 3, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"And I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing, and I will cause the shower to come down in his season. There shall be showers of blessing."
Ezekiel 34:26.

The chapter (Ezekiel 34) that I read at the commencement of the service is a prophetical one. I understand it's meaning to refer to the *relation*, not to the *condition* of the Jews during the captivity and their subsequent happiness when they would return to their land, but to a state into which they should fall after they had been restored to their country under Nehemiah and Ezra, and in which state they still continue to the present day. The prophet tells us that the shepherds then, instead of feeding the flock, fed themselves. They trod the grass, instead of allowing the sheep to eat it and they fouled the waters with their feet. This is an exact description of the state of Judea after the captivity. For then there arose the Scribes and Pharisees who took the key of knowledge and would not enter themselves nor allow others to enter. They laid heavy burdens on men's shoulders and would not touch them with one of their fingers. They made religion to consist entirely in sacrifices and ceremonies and imposed such a burden on the people that they cried out, "What a weariness it is!" That same evil has continued with the poor Jews to the present day. Should you read the nonsense of the Talmud and the Gemara and see the burdens they laid upon them, you would say, "Verily, they have idle shepherds." They give the sheep no food. They trouble them with fanciful superstitions and silly views and instead of telling them that the Messiah is already come, they delude them with the idea that there is a Messiah yet to come who shall restore Judea and raise it to its glory. The Lord pronounces a curse upon these Pharisees and Rabbis. These who "thrust with side and with shoulder," those evil shepherds who will not allow the sheep to lie down, neither will feed them with good pasture. But after having described this state, Ezekiel prophecies better times for the poor Jew. The day is coming when the careless shepherds shall be as nothing. Then the power of the Rabbis shall cease. Then the traditions of the Mishna and the Talmud shall be cast aside. The hour is approaching when the tribes shall go up to their own coun-

try, when Judea, so long a howling wilderness, shall once more blossom like the rose. Then, if the temple, itself, is not restored, yet on Zion's hill shall be raised some Christian building where the chants of solemn praise shall be heard, as of old the Psalms of David were sung in the tabernacle. Not long shall it be before they shall come—shall come from distant lands, wherever they rest or roam. And she who has been the offscouring of all things, whose name has been a proverb and a byword, shall become the glory of all lands! Dejected Zion shall raise her head, shaking herself from dust, darkness and the dead. Then shall the Lord feed His people and make them and the places round about His hill a blessing. I think we do not attach sufficient importance to the restoration of the Jews. We do not think enough of it. But certainly, if there is anything promised in the Bible, it is this. I imagine that you cannot read the Bible without seeing clearly that there is to be an actual restoration of the children of Israel. "There they shall go up. They shall come with weeping unto Zion, and with supplications unto Jerusalem." May that happy day soon come, for when the Jews are restored, then the fullness of the Gentiles shall be gathered in. And as soon as they return, then Jesus will come upon Mount Zion to reign with His ancients gloriously, and the halcyon days of the Millennium shall then dawn. We shall then know every man to be a brother and a friend. Christ shall rule with universal sway!

This, then, is the meaning of the text—that God would make Jerusalem and the places round about His hill a blessing. I shall not, however, use it so this morning—I shall use it in a more confined sense—or, perhaps, in a more enlarged sense—as it applies to the Church of Jesus Christ and to this particular church with which you and I stand connected. "I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing. And I will cause the shower to come down in his season. There shall be showers of blessing."

There are two things here spoken of. First, *Christ's Church is to be a blessing;* secondly, *Christ's Church is to be blessed.* These two things you will find in the different sentences of the text.

I. First, CHRIST'S CHURCH IS TO BE A BLESSING. "I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing." The objective of God in choosing a people before all worlds, was not only to save that people, but through them to confer essential benefits upon the whole human race. When He chose Abraham He did not elect him simply to be God's friend and the recipient of peculiar privileges. But He chose him to make him, as it were, the conservator of truth. He was to be the ark in which the truth should be hid. He was to be the keeper of the covenant in behalf of the whole world! And when God chooses any men by His sovereign elect-

ing grace, and makes them Christ's, He does it not only for their own sake, that they may be saved, but for the world's sake. For know you not that, "You are the light of the world"?—"A city set upon a hill which cannot be hid"? "You are the salt of the earth." And when God makes you salt, it is not only that you may have salt in yourselves but that, like salt, you may preserve the whole mass. If He makes you leaven it is that like the little leaven, you may leaven the whole lump. Salvation is not a selfish thing. God does not give it for us to keep to ourselves, but that we may thereby be made the means of blessing to others! And the great day shall declare that there is not a man living on the surface of the earth but has received a blessing in some way or other through God's gift of the gospel. The very keeping of the wicked in life and granting of the reprieve was purchased with the death of Jesus. Through His sufferings and death the temporal blessings which both we and they enjoy are bestowed on us. The gospel was sent that it might first bless those that embrace it and then expand, so as to make them a blessing to the whole human race!

In thus speaking of the church as a blessing, we shall notice three things. First, here is *divinity*—"*I* will make them a blessing." Secondly, here is *personality of religion*—"I will make *them* a blessing." And, thirdly, here is *the development of religion*—"and the *places* round about My hill."

1. First, with regard to this blessing which God will cause His Church to be, here is *divinity*. It is God, the Everlasting Jehovah, speaking—He says, "I will make them a blessing." None of us can bless others unless God has first blessed us. We need divine workmanship. "I will make them a blessing by helping them and by constraining them." God makes His people a blessing by helping them. What can we do without God's help? I stand and preach to thousands, or it may be hundreds. What have I done, unless a greater than man has been in the pulpit with me? I work in the Sunday schools—what can I do, unless the Master is there, teaching the children with me? We want God's aid in every position. And once give us that assistance, there is no telling with how little labor we may become a blessing, Ah, a few words, sometimes, will be more of a blessing than a whole sermon. You take some little prattler on your knee—and some few words that you say to him he remembers and makes use of in later years. I knew a gray-headed old man who was in the habit of doing this. He once took a boy to a certain tree and said, "Now, John, you kneel down at that tree and I will kneel down with you." He knelt down and prayed, and asked God to convert him, and save his soul. "Now," he said, "perhaps you will come to this tree again, and if you are not converted you will remember that I asked under this tree that God would save your soul." That young man went away and forgot the old man's prayer. But it

chanced as God would have it, that he walked down that field, again, and saw a tree. It seemed as if the old man's name was cut in the bark. He recollected what he prayed for, but the prayer was not fulfilled. But he dared not pass the tree without kneeling down to pray, himself—and there was his spiritual birthplace! The simplest observation of the Christian shall be made a blessing, if God helps him. "His leaf also shall not wither"—the simplest word he speaks shall be treasured up. And whatever he does shall prosper.

But there is *constraint* here. "I will *make* them a blessing." I will give them to be a blessing. I will compel them to be a blessing. I can say myself that I never did anything which was a blessing to my fellow creatures without feeling compelled to do it. I thought of going to a Sunday school to teach. On a certain day, someone called—asked me—begged me—prayed me to take his class. I could not refuse to go. And there I was held hand and foot by the superintendent and was compelled to go on. I was asked to address the children. I thought I could not, but no one else was there to do it, so I stood up and stammered out a few words. And I recollect the first occasion on which I attempted to preach to the people—I am sure I had no wish to do it—but there was no one else in the place. And should the congregation go away without a single word of warning or address? How could I allow it? I felt forced to address them. And so it has been with whatever I have laid my hand to. I have always felt a kind of impulse which I could not resist, but, moreover felt placed by providence in such a position that I had no wish to avoid the duty and if I had desired it, could not have helped myself. And so it is with God's people. As they go through their lives, wherever they have been made a blessing, they will find that God seems to have thrust them into the vineyard. Such-and-such a man was once rich. What good was he in the world? He did but loll in his carriage. He did but little good and was of little service to his fellow creatures. Says God, "I will make him a blessing"—so He strips away his riches and brings him into low circumstances. He is then brought into association with the poor and his superior education and intellect make him a blessing to them. God makes him a blessing! Another man was naturally very timid. He would not pray at the prayer meeting, he would hardly like to join the church. Soon he gets into a position in which he cannot help himself. "I will *make* him a blessing." And as sure as ever you are a servant of God, He will *make* you a blessing! He will have none of His gold in the lump. He will hammer it out and make it a blessing. I verily believe there are some in my congregation to whom God has given power to preach His name. They do not know it, perhaps, but God will make it known by-and-by. I would have every man look and see whether God is making him do a certain thing. And when once he

feels the impulse, let him by no means ever check it. I am somewhat of a believer in the doctrine of the Quakers as to the impulses of the Spirit and I fear lest I should check one of them. If a thought crosses my mind, "Go to such a person's house," I always like to do it, because I do not know but what it may be from the Spirit. I understand this verse to mean something like that. "I will make them a blessing. I will force them to do good. If I cannot make a sweet scent come from them in any other way, I will pound them in the mortar of affliction! If they have seed and the seed cannot be scattered in any other way, I will send a rough wind to blow the downy seed everywhere." "I will *make* them a blessing." If you have never been *made* a blessing to anyone, depend upon it, you are not a child of God! For Jehovah says, "I *will* make them a blessing."

2. But notice, next, the *personality* of the blessing. "I will make *them* a blessing." "I will make each member of the Church a blessing." Many people come up to the house of prayer where the church assembles and you say, "Well, what are you doing at such-and-such a place where you attend?" "Well, *we* are doing so-and so." "How do you spell *we?"* "It is a plain monosyllable," you say. "Yes, but do you put *I* in 'we'?" "No." There are a great many people who could easily spell "we" without an I in it, for though they say, "We have been doing so-and-so," they do not say, "How much have I done? Did I do anything in it? Yes. This chapel has been enlarged. What did I subscribe? Two pence!" Of course it is done. Those who paid the money have done it. "We preach the gospel." Do we, indeed? Yes, we sit in our pew and listen a little and do not pray for a blessing. "We have got such a large Sunday school." Did you ever teach in it? "We have got a very good working Society." Did you ever go to work in it? That is not the way to spell, "we." It is "I will make *them* a blessing." When Jerusalem was built, every man began nearest his own house. That is where you must begin to build, or to do something. Do not let us tell a lie about it. If we do not have some share in the building, if we neither handle the trowel nor the spear, let us not talk about *our* church. For the text says, "I will make *them* a blessing," everyone of them.

"But, sir, what can I do? I am nothing but a father at home. I am so full of business, I can only see my children a little." But in your business, do you ever have any servants? "No—I am a servant myself." You have fellow servants? "No, I work alone." Do you work alone, then, and live alone, like a monk in a cell? I don't believe that. But you have fellow servants at work, cannot you say a word to their conscience? "I don't like to intrude religion into business." Quite right, too, so say I. When I am at business, let it be business. When you are at religion, let it be religion. But do you ever have an opportunity? Why, you cannot go into an omnibus, or a railway carriage, but what you can say something for Jesus

Christ! I have found it so and I don't believe I am different from other people. *Cannot do anything?* Cannot you put a tract in your hat and drop it where you go? Cannot you speak a word to a child? Where does this man come from that cannot do anything? There is a spider on the wall. He takes hold on kings' palaces and spins his web to rid the world of noxious flies. There is a nettle in the corner of the churchyard. The physician tells me it has its virtues. There is a tiny star in the sky. That is noted in the chart and the mariner looks at it. There is an insect under water. It builds a rock. God made all these things for something! But here is a *man* that God made and gave him nothing at all to do? I do not believe it! God never makes useless things. He has no superfluous workmanship. I care not what you are. You have something to do. And oh, may God show you what it is and then make you do it, by the wondrous compulsion of His providence and His grace.

3. But we have to notice, in the third place, *the development of gospel blessing*. "I will make them a blessing," but it does not end there—"And the places round about My hill." Religion is an expansive thing. When it begins in the heart, at first it is like a tiny grain of mustard seed. But it gradually increases and becomes a great tree, so that the birds of the air lodge in its branches. A man cannot be religious to himself. "No man lives to himself and no man dies to himself." You have heard, a score of times, that if you do but drop a pebble in a brook it causes a small ring at first, then another outside of that and then another, and another, till the influence of the pebble is perceptible over the entire bosom of the water. So it is when God makes His people a blessing. "I will make a minister a blessing to one or two. I will then make him a blessing to a hundred. I will then make him a blessing to thousands. And then I will make those thousands a blessing. I will make each one, individually, a blessing—and when I have done that, I will make all the places round about a blessing. I will make them a blessing." I hope we shall never be satisfied, as members of Park Street, until we are a blessing not only to ourselves, but to all the places round about our hill. What are the places round about our hill? I think they are first, our agencies, secondly, our neighborhood and thirdly, the churches adjacent to us.

First, there are our agencies. There is our Sunday school—how near that is to our hill? I speak a great deal about this, because I want it to be brought into notice. I intend to preach a practical sermon this morning, to move some of you to come and teach in the Sunday school, for there we require some suitable men to "come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Therefore I mention the Sunday school as a place very near to the hill. It ought to be just at the very foot of it. Yes, it ought to be so near the hill that very many may pass from it

to the church. Then there is our Visiting and Christian Instruction Society which we have for the visiting of this neighborhood. I trust that has been made a blessing. God has sent among us a man who labors zealously and earnestly in visiting the sick. I have, as the superintendent of my beloved brother, the missionary, a regular account of his labors. His report has most highly gratified me and I am able to bear testimony to the fact that he is very efficiently laboring around us. I want that Society to have all your sympathy and strength. I consider him as a Joshua, with whom you are to go forth by hundreds to those who live in the neighborhood. Do you not know what dark places there are? Walk down a street a little to the right. See the shops open on a Sunday. Some, thank God, that used to open them, now come and worship with us. We shall have more yet. For "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," and why should not we have it? My brothers and sisters, as you visit the sick, or distribute tracts from door to door, make this your prayer—that this Society, being one of the places round about our hill, may be made a blessing! Let me not forget any agency connected with this church. There are several more which are places round about our hill—and the Lord has just put it into my heart to fashion other societies, which shall be made a blessing to this hill—and in a little while you shall hear of them. We have several brothers in this congregation to whom God has given a mouth of utterance. These are about to form themselves into a society for proclaiming the word of God. Where God has so blessed His Church and made us to be so noted and named among the people, why should we not keep on? We have been brought up to a great pitch of fervency and love. Now is the time for doing something. While the iron is hot, why not strike and fashion it? I believe we have the materials not only for making a church, here, that shall be the glory of the Baptist churches in London, but for making churches everywhere throughout the metropolis! And we have more plans on hand, which matured by sober judgment and backed by prudence, shall yet make this metropolis more honored than it has been by the sound of the pure gospel and the proclamation of the pure word of God. May God make all our agencies—the places round about our hill—a blessing!

But next, there is the neighborhood. I am paralyzed, sometimes when I think that we are of so little service to the neighborhood, though this is a green oasis in the midst of a great spiritual desert. Just at the back of us we could find you hundreds of Roman Catholics, and men of the very worst character. And it is sad to think that we cannot make this place a blessing to them. It is made a great blessing to you, my hearers. But you do not come from this district. You come from anywhere and nowhere, some of you, I suppose. People say, "There is something doing in that

chapel—look at the crowd—but we cannot get in!" This one thing I ask—never come here to gratify your curiosity. You that are members of other congregations, just consider it your duty to stay at home. There are many stray sheep about. I would rather have them than you. Keep to your own place. I do not want to rob other ministers. Do not come here from charity. We are much obliged to you for your kindly intentions. But we would rather have your seat than your company if you are members of other churches. We want *sinners* to come—sinners of every sort. But do not let us have that sort of men whose ears are everlastingly itching for some new preacher—who are saying, "I need something else, I need something else." Oh, I beseech you, for God's sake, be of some good! And if you are running about from one place to another, you can never expect to be. Do you know what is said of rolling stones? Ah, you have heard of that. They "gather no moss." Now, don't be rolling stones but stay at home. God help to make us a blessing to the neighborhood! I long to see something done for the people around here; we must open our arms to them; we must go out into the open air to them; we must and will preach God's gospel to them! Let, then, the people around listen to the word of the gospel. And may it be said, "That place is the cathedral of Southwark!" So it is now. Out of it goes a blessing—God is pouring out a blessing upon it!

What else do we mean by the places round about our hill? We mean the churches adjacent. I cannot but rejoice in the prosperity of many churches around us. But as our beloved brother, Mr. Sherman, said last Thursday morning, "It is not invidious to say that there are very few churches that are in a prosperous state, but that taking the churches at large, they are in a deplorable condition. It is only here and there," he said, "that God is pouring out His Spirit. But most of the churches are lying like barges at Black Friars Bridge when the tide is down—right in the mud—and all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot pull them off till the tide comes and sets them afloat." Who can tell, then, what good may be done by this church? If there is a light in this candlestick, let others come and light their candles by it! If there is a flame here, let the flame spread until all the neighboring churches shall be lit up with the glory. Then indeed, shall we be made the rejoicing of the earth—for there is never a revival in one spot, but it shall affect others. Who shall tell, then, where it shall end?

"Fly abroad, you mighty gospel!
Win and conquer, never cease!"

And it never will cease, when God once makes the places round about His hill a blessing.

II. The second point is that God's people are not only to be a blessing but THEY ARE TO BE BLESSED. For read the second part of the verse. "And I will cause the shower to come down in his season. There shall be showers of blessing." It is somewhat singular, as a prediction of the showers of blessings we hope to receive here, that God sent us showers on the first day of opening. If I were a believer in omens, I would pray that as it rained the first day, so may it rain every day since! When it stops, may the chapel be shut up. For we only want it open so long as showers of grace continue to descend.

First, here is sovereign *mercy*. Listen to these words; "I will give them the shower in its season." Is it not sovereign, divine mercy, for who can say, "I will give them showers," except God? Can the false prophet who walks among the unenlightened Hottentots? He says he is a rainmaker and can give them showers. But can he do it? Is there an imperial monarch, or the most learned man on earth, who can say, "I will give them the showers in their season?" No. There is only one. There is only one hand in which all the channels of the mighty ocean above the firmament are contained. There is only one voice that can speak to the clouds and bid them beget the rain! "Out of whose womb came the ice? And the hoary frost of Heaven, who has gendered it?" "Who sends down the rain upon the earth? Who scatters the showers upon the green herb? Do not I, the Lord?" Who else could do it? Is not rain in God's power? And who could send it except Him? We know that Catholics pretend that they can get grace without getting it directly from God, for they believe that God puts all His grace into the pope, and then that runs down into smaller pipes, called cardinals and bishops, through which it runs into the priests—and by turning the tap with a shilling, you can get as much "grace" as you like! But it is not so with God's grace. He says, "I will give them showers." Grace is the gift of God, and is not to be created by man.

Notice next, it is *needed grace.* "I will give them showers." What would the ground do without showers? You may break the clods, you may sow your seeds, but what can you do without the rain? Ah, you may prepare your barn and sharpen your sickles. But your sickles will be rusted before you have any wheat, unless there are showers. They are needed. So is the divine blessing—

"In vain Apollos sows the seed,
And Paul may plant in vain."

In vain you come here, in vain you labor, in vain you give your money—

"Till God the plenteous shower bestows,
And sends salvation down."

Then, next, it is *plenteous grace*. "I will send them showers." It does not say, "I will send them drops," but "I will send them showers." "It seldom rains but it pours." So it is with grace. If God gives a blessing, He

usually gives it in such a measure that there is not room enough to receive it. Where are we going to hold God's blessing that we have already obtained? I told the people on Thursday that God had promised us that if we brought the tithes into the storehouse He would send us such a blessing that we would not have room to hold it. We have tried it. And the promise has been fulfilled, as it always will be as long as we rely upon it. Plenteous grace! Ah, we shall need plenteous divine grace, my friends. Plenteous grace to keep us humble, plenteous grace to make us prayerful, plenteous grace to make us holy, plenteous grace to make us zealous, plenteous grace to make us truthful, plenteous grace to preserve us through this life and, at last, to land us in Heaven! We cannot do without showers of grace! How many are there here that have been dry in a shower of grace? Why, there is a shower of divine grace here. But how is it that it does not fall on some of the people? It is because they put up the umbrella of their prejudice. And though they sit here, even as God's people sit, even when it rains they have such a prejudice against God's word they do not want to hear it! They do not want to love it and it runs off their prejudices. Nevertheless, the showers are there—and we will thank God for them where they do fall!

Again, it is *seasonable grace*. "I will give them the shower in its season." There is nothing like seasonable grace. There are fruits, you know, that are best in their season and they are not good at any other time. And there are graces that are good in their season but we do not always require them. A person vexes and irritates me. I need grace just at that moment to be patient! I have not got it and I get angry. Ten minutes after I am ever so patient. But I have not had grace in its season. The promise is, "I will give them the shower in its season." Ah, poor waiting soul, what is your season this morning? Is it the season of drought? Then that is the seasons for showers. Is it a season of great heaviness and black clouds? Then that is the season for showers! What is your season this morning, business man? Lost money all the week, have you? Now is the season to ask for showers. It is nighttime. Now the dew falls. The dew does not fall in the day—it falls in the night; the night of affliction, trial, and trouble. There stands the promise—only go and plead it. "I will give them the shower in its season."

We have one more thought and then we have done. Here is a *varied* blessing. "I will give you *showers* of blessing." The word is in the *plural*. All kinds of blessings God will send. The rain is all of one kind when it comes. But divine grace is not all of one kind, or it does not produce the same effect. When God sends rain upon His Church, He "sends showers of blessing." There are some ministers who think that if there is a shower on their church, God will send a shower of work. Yes, but if He does, He

will send a shower of comfort. Others think that God will send a shower of gospel truth. Yes, but if He sends that, He will send a shower of gospel holiness. For all God's blessings go together! They are like the sweet sister graces that danced hand in hand. God sends showers of blessings!

If He gives comforting grace, He also gives converting grace. If He makes the trumpet blow for the bankrupt sinner, He will also make it sound a shout of joy for the sinner that is pardoned and forgiven. He will send "showers of blessing."

Now, then, there is a promise in that Bible. We have tried to explain and enlarge upon it. What shall we do with it?—

"In that book there lies hidden
A pearl of price unknown."

Well, we have examined this rich promise. We as a church are looking at it. We are saying, "Is that ours?" I think most of the members will say, "It is, for God has poured out upon us showers of blessing in their season." Well, then, if the promise is ours, the precept is ours as much as the promise! Ought we not to ask God to continue to make us a blessing? Some say I did so-and-so when I was a young man. But supposing you are fifty, you are not an old man now. Is there not something you can do? It is all very well to talk about what you *have* done. But what are you doing *now?* I know what it is with some of you. You shined brightly, once, but your candle has not been trimmed lately and so it does not shine so well. May God take away some of the worldly cares and trim the candles a little! You know there were scissors and scissors trays provided in the temple for all the candles, but no extinguishers. And if there should be a poor candle here this morning with a wick that has not given light for a long while, you will have no extinguisher from me—but I hope you will always have a trimming. I thought the first time when I came to the lamps this morning it would be to trim them. That has been the intention of my sermon—to trim you a little—to set you to work for Jesus Christ.

O Zion, shake yourself from the dust! O Christian, raise yourself from your slumbers! Warrior, put on your armor! Soldier, grasp your sword! The captain sounds the alarm of war! O sluggard, why do you sleep? O heir of Heaven, has not Jesus done so much for you that you should live to Him? O beloved brothers and sisters, purchased with redeeming mercies, girt about with loving-kindness and with tenderness—

"Now for a shout of sacred joy,"

and after that to the battle! The little seed has grown to this—who knows what it shall be? Only let us strive together without variance! Let us labor for Jesus. Never did men have so fair an opportunity, for the last hundred years, "There is a tide that, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." Shall you take it at the flood? Over the bar, at the harbor's mouth!

O ship of Heaven, let your sails be out. Let not your canvass be furled. And the wind will blow us across the Sea of Difficulty that lies before us. Oh, that the latter day might have its dawning even in this despised habitation! O my God! From this place cause the first wave to spring which shall move another and then another, till the last great wave shall sweep over the sands of time and dash against the rocks of eternity, echoing as it falls, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! the Lord God omnipotent reigns!"

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CHRIST MANIFESTING HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE
NO. 29

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 10, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Judas said unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us and not unto the world?" John 14:22.

WHAT a blessed Master Jesus Christ was! How familiar did He allow His disciples to make themselves with Him! Though He was the Lord of Life and glory, the Great and Mighty One, as well as the Man of Nazareth, yet see how He talks with His poor disciples, the fishermen, just as if He had been one of the same class and order with themselves! He was none of your dignitaries who pride themselves on that dignity—none of those ecclesiastics who love to carry much of formality about them and to walk above other men—as if they were not, indeed, their fellows. But He talks to His disciples just as a father would to his children—even more kindly than a master might to his pupils. He lets them put the simplest questions to Him and, instead of rebuking them for their familiarity, He condescends to answer everything they please to ask Him! Philip uttered a sentence which one would think no sensible man who had been so long a time with Jesus ever could have troubled Him with. He said, "Show us the Father and it suffices us." A stupid idea! As if Jesus Christ could show the Father—that is to say, could show God to Philip! And Jesus kindly answered—"Have you been so long a time with Me and yet have you not known Me, Philip? Believe you not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? He that has seen Me has seen the Father." And now comes Judas (not Iscariot). And he, also, puts a very simple and easy question—one he needed not to have asked; but Jesus Christ, instead of rebuking him, simply passes on to another subject and forbears most wisely to answer the inquiry because He would teach him more by silence than He could do by an explanation. We must also notice here how very particular the Holy Spirit is that a good man should not be confounded with a bad one. He says, "Judas, not Iscariot." There were two of the name of Judas; the one who betrayed our Lord, and the other who wrote the Epistle of Jude, who should properly have been called Judas. Some of us, in reading the name Judas, might have said, "Ah, it was that traitor Judas Iscariot that asked the question." But the Holy Spirit would not allow this mistake to be made. This, again, should teach us that it is

not an idle wish for us to desire that our name should be handed down to posterity. We ought all to wish to have an unblemished character. We ought to desire to have that promise fulfilled, "The memory of the just is blessed." I would not wish my name to be mistaken for that of some criminal who was hanged. I would not wish to have my name written, even by mistake, in the calendar of infamy. However much I may now be misrepresented, it will one day be known that I have honestly strived for the glory of my Master. And God will say, "Judas, not Iscariot." The man was no deceiver after all.

But we will now forsake Judas altogether and proceed to look at our text. It contains two things—first, *an important fact;* secondly, *an interesting inquiry*. "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us and not unto the world?" Here is a fact and an inquiry concerning it.

I. First, then, here is A GREAT FACT—that Jesus Christ does reveal Himself to His people, but He does not unto the world! The fact is implied in the question. And even if Scripture did not declare it to be the truth, there are many of us who have a Scripture written in our hearts—the Bible of *experience*—which teaches us that it is true. Ask Christians whether they have not had manifestations of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in a peculiar and wonderful manner, such as they never felt when they were in their unregenerate state. Turn to the biographies of eminent saints and you will find, there, instances recorded in which Jesus has been pleased, in a very special manner, to speak to their souls, to unfold the wonders of His person and let them discern the matchless glories of His office! Yes, so have their souls been steeped in happiness that they have thought themselves to be in heaven? Although they were not there, they were well near on the threshold of it—for when Jesus manifests Himself to His people, it is a young heaven on earth, it is a paradise in embryo, it is the beginning of the bliss of the glorified! Yes and it shall be the consummation of that bliss when Jesus Christ shall perfectly unveil Himself to the admiring eyes of all His people and they shall be like He and shall see Him as He is! We are about to talk somewhat, this morning, then, concerning that special manifestation which Jesus Christ vouchsafes to His people and to His people, only. We will make four observations here. We will observe, first, something concerning the favored persons—"unto *us*, not unto the world." Secondly, concerning special seasons—"How is it that You will?" He was not doing it just then. But, "*You* will." There are special seasons. Thirdly, some remarks concerning the wonderful display—"You will manifest *Yourself* unto us, as You do not unto the world." Then, fourthly, we shall dwell a little upon *the effects* which this manifestation will produce upon our souls.

1. First, then, who are the favored people to whom Jesus Christ manifests Himself? "How is it that You will manifest Yourself unto *us* and not

unto the world?" It appears from the text that the persons to whom Jesus Christ shows Himself in this wonderful manner do not belong to the world. Who, then, are these people? I am sure it would be difficult for you or me to discover them. I shall, therefore, this morning, employ a fiction and shall bid some spirit from an unknown world point out these distinguished individuals. O Spirit! I give you an errand. There are a certain number of people *in* this world who are not *of* it—go, search them out and come back and tell me what you have found. We give the spirit time. He flies round the world and he returns. "I have seen," says he, "a multitude of men. They are all pursuing one common path. With one objective I have seen them trampling on each other in the fury of their hot pursuit. I have seen them hurrying after something which each one desired for himself—but in the midst of the throng I saw a few marching in the opposite direction. They, with much elbowing and strong opposition were going exactly contrary to the stream! I saw written on the foreheads of those who were proceeding with the crowd, the word 'Self.' But I marked those who were proceeding in the other direction and behold, they had inscribed upon their brows, 'Christ.' And as I listened to them frequently in their soliloquies I heard them say, 'For us to live is Christ, for us to die is gain.' I marked these men. I saw them constantly pursuing their way in the teeth of all defiance, going against every opposition. I wondered where they were going.

And I saw that before them was a wicket gate and on it the words—'Mercy for the chief of sinners.' I saw them enter there. I marked them as they ran along the walls of salvation. Tracking them along to their destination, I saw them at last fold their arms in death, shut their eyes with tranquility. And I heard angels sing their requiem and a voice shouted, 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.' Surely these must be the persons who are not of the world." You have spoken rightly, O Spirit. These are the individuals. What did you see of them, O Spirit? Did they assemble and congregate together? Or did they mix with the rest of humanity? "Why," he says, "I noticed that once in the week they crowded to a certain place they called the House of God. I heard their songs of praise. I saw them bend their knees in reverence, not only in that house, but in private. I witnessed their groaning, their struggles and their agonies. I knew that they were men of prayer and men that loved God. I saw them gather in secret assemblies to tell what the Lord had done for their souls. I marked that they would not be found with the wicked. I saw some houses that they would not enter.

At the corner of the street there stood a house, well lighted up with many a lamp. And there were on its front some mystic signs, the marks of woe and ill-doings. I saw the wicked there, reeling to and fro. I observed them in their drunkenness. But I marked how the Christian puts

up his hand before his eyes and passed by that place. I saw, too, another haunt of hell, where there were enacted scenes that eyes should not have beheld—where shouts of revelry and mirth, but not songs of holiness, were heard. I looked round that theater and I discerned not a single one of these blessed persons. They would not run in the ways of the wicked, nor sit in the seat of the scorner, nor stand in the council of the unrighteous! I marked that like 'birds of a feather they would flock together'—that they found their mates and there they went—that they built their nest in the same tree and would make their habitation beneath the same roof. Yes," said the spirit, "I heard one of them exclaim, 'He that tells lies shall not abide in my sight.' I saw him drive the liar from his house and bid the profligate depart from him. I marked them. They were a select and separate people and I said, surely these are the men of whom it is written, 'They shall dwell alone, they shall not be numbered among the people.'"

Well, Spirit, rightly have you described them. I wonder how many there are here—he men to whom God will reveal Himself, and not to the world? They are men who are not worldly in principle, in action, in conversation, in desires, in object, or in end. These are the persons. Do not tell me anything about universal grace, or universal manifestations! While I have the power I will proclaim free grace to peculiar characters, as long as I find it written, "You will manifest Yourself to us, but not to the world."

2. Our next remark is concerning *special seasons*. These highly favored men do not always see Jesus Christ alike. They do not always dive in the sunshine of His countenance. There are special times when God is pleased to reveal Himself to His people. And these seasons are generally of two kinds—times of duty and times of trial. I never found a lazy or indifferent Christian have a manifestation of Jesus Christ. I never heard one who gave himself wholly to business talk much of spiritual manifestations. No, poor soul, he had got religion enough to save him, but not enough to make him realize the spiritual and special blessings of a Christian; those who do but little for Christ, Christ does but little for them in the way of special favors. Those who sit down, fold their arms, eat, drink and are satisfied, are not the men who enter into the secret chamber of the Most High and enjoy the presence of the Almighty! The men who are the most zealous for their Master discern the most of His loving-kindness and enjoy the richest blessings from the Lord. Ask a Christian when he is the happiest—he will say when he works the most. I know *I* am. I have not tried rest yet and no doubt I shall find it anything but rest when I have it. When I pass a *day* without preaching my Master's name I feel that I have not done what I ought to have done and I do not rest satisfied till I am within the four boards of a pulpit again! When we work the hardest, we feel divine grace the most plentiful. When we dig

the deepest we get the sweetest water. He who toils the most has his bread the most sweetened. And depend upon it—drops of sweat are blessed things to make dry bread go down.

We shall always have more happiness, the more we labor for Christ. As for Issachar, who is so strong, crouching down between two burdens—the man who is doing little—the promise is, "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass and a rod for the fool's back." The man who is idle must have chastisement. But he who serves his God may rejoice, for God will treat him with dainties. He will give him his portion mixed with honey. He will say, "I have taken your bread and dipped it in My own dish. Take it and eat it, for you are one who works in My own vineyard." It will be in seasons of duty, or, as I have said, in seasons of trial. And you must not suppose when a Christian is laid aside from duty that he is doing nothing. Do not imagine that the time of your sickness has been lost to you. You were not only profiting yourselves, but actually serving God by your suffering, if you bore it patiently. Don't you know the text—"We fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ, for His body's sake, which is the Church." Christ's mystical body, you are aware, is made up of the Head and all the members. The Head had a certain amount to suffer—that is all finished. But the *body* has a measured portion to endure also, and the more *you* suffer, so much the less suffering there is for somebody else. There is a certain quantum of trial which the whole Church has to sustain before it gets to heaven, for as Jesus Christ was afflicted, even so the whole of His people must have fellowship with His sufferings.

There is a cup that is full of mixture and the righteous must drink it. We must all have a sip from it. But if one of us can take a deep draught and do it patiently, there is so much the less for our fellows. Let us not complain, then—for it is in the time of trouble we see most of Jesus. Before Israel fought Amalek, God gave them water from the rock and sent them manna from heaven. And before Jacob met Esau; the Angel of God wrestled with him at the brook Jabbok, and hosts of angels met him at Mahanaim. Previous to trial you may generally expect a season of joy—and when that season of joy is over, you may say, "We must expect some danger now, for we have received too much delight." But when the trial comes, then expect to have delight with it, for our troubles are generally proportioned to our joys, and our joys are usually proportioned to our troubles. The more bitter the vessel of grief, the sweeter the cup of consolation. The heavier weight of trial, here, the brighter the crown of glory hereafter! In fact, the same word in Hebrew signifies "weight" and "glory." A weight of trouble is a glory to a Christian, for it is an honor to him. And glory is a weight, for it often bows him down and makes him lie low at his Master's feet. I appeal to my brothers and sisters and ask them when it

is they have seen most of Jesus—when they have been walking in the garden of delights, or when the bitter medicine has been in their mouth? Have you not had better visions of Jesus when you have been racked with pain than when you have been elevated by prosperity? When the barn has been full, the oil vat has been bursting and the wine has been running over, it is often *then* that the sanctuary of God has been forsaken and the cabinet of God's loving kindness is nearly disregarded. But when the fig tree does not blossom and when there are no herds in the stalls, *then* it is that God often comes nearest to His children and most reveals Himself to them.

3. The next thought is, *the wondrous display, itself*. Jesus Christ manifests *Himself*. There are many manifestations of God to His children, but this is the most precious of all! Some manifestations we never wish to have again. We do not want to have that discovery which we had of our sinfulness, when first we were awakened—we will leave it to God—we will never pray for it. But here is a manifestation we should like to have every day. "I will manifest Myself to him." He does this in different ways. I have had, for a long while, a manifestation of His sufferings in Gethsemane. I have been for months musing on His agonies. I think I have even eaten the bitter herbs that grow there and drank of that black brook, Kidron. I have sometimes gone up stairs alone, to put myself in the very posture Jesus Christ was in and I thought I could sympathize with Him in His sufferings. I thought I saw the sweat of blood falling down to the ground. I had so sweet a view of my Savior in His agonies, I hope that one day I may be able to accompany Him still further and see Him on Calvary and hear His death shriek, "Eli, Eli, lama Sabacthani?" Some of you, I know, have seen Jesus with the eyes of faith quite as plainly as if you had seen Him with your natural eyes. You could see your Savior hanging on the Cross. You thought you saw the very crown of thorns on His head and the drops of blood streaming down His face. You heard His cry. You saw His bleeding side. You beheld the nails and before long you could have gone and pulled them out. You could have wrapped Him up in linen and spices and carried His body and washed it with tears and anointed it with precious ointment. At other times you have had a manifestation of Christ in His gifts. You have seen that mighty sacrifice He offered, the pile smoking up to heaven and all your sins burnt up with it. You have seen clearly the justifying righteousness He has put upon you. And as you have looked at yourselves you have said—

"Strangely, my soul, are you arrayed
By the great sacred Three.
In sweetest harmony of praise
Let all my powers agree."

There are times when you have felt much joy at the exaltation of Jesus Christ as displayed in His gifts.

Then, again, you will see Him in His triumph, with one foot upon Satan and the other upon death. You will be able to behold Him marching up the sky with all the glittering hosts behind Him. And in due time you will have a manifestation of Him to your soul, as sitting on His Father's throne until His enemies are made His footstool. And faith will sometimes so outsoar the wings of time that we can bring futurity to the present and see that great and pompous appearance when, on the great white throne, the King shall sit and grasp His scepter and when His saints before Him shall shout His praise! If I were to go much farther, I should be accused of fanaticism and so it may be. But yet I will believe and must believe that there are seasons when the Christian lives next door to heaven. If I have not gone within an inch of the pearly gates, I am not here! If I have not sometimes snuffed the incense from the censers of the glorified and heard the music of their harps, I think I am not a living man! There have been seasons of ecstatic joy, when I have climbed the highest mountains and I have caught some sweet whisper from the throne of God. Have you had such manifestations? I will not condemn you if you have not—but I believe most Christians have them and if they are much in duty and much in suffering they *will* have them. It is not given to all to have that portion. But to some it is and such men know what religion means.

I was reading a short time ago of a Mr. Tennant. He was about to preach one evening and thought he would take a walk. As he was walking in the woods he felt so overpoweringly the presence of Christ and such a manifestation of Him, that he knelt down, and they could not find him at the hour when he was to have preached. He continued there for hours, insensible as to whether he was in the body or out of the body. And when they awakened him, he looked like a man who had been with Jesus and whose face shone! He would never forget, he said, to his dying day, that season of communion, when positively, though he could not *see* Christ, Christ was there, holding fellowship with him! Heart against heart, in the sweetest manner; a wondrous display it must have been. You must know something of it, if not much—otherwise you have not gone far on your spiritual course. God teach you more and lead you deeper! "Then shall you know, when you follow on to know the Lord."

4. Then *what will be the natural effects of this spiritual manifestation?* The first effect will be *humility*. If a man says, "I have had such-and-such spiritual communications, I am a great man"—he has never had any communications at all. For "God has respect unto the humble, but the proud He knows *afar off."* He does not want to come near the proud to know them and will never give them any visits of love. It will give a man *happiness,* for he must be happy who lives near to God. Again—it will give a man *holiness*. A man who has not holiness has never had this

manifestation. Some men profess a great deal—but do not believe any man unless you see that his deeds answer to what he says. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." He will not bestow His favors upon the wicked. While He will not cast away a perfect man, neither will He respect an evil doer. Thus there will be three effects of nearness to Jesus, all beginning with the letter "h"—humility, happiness, and holiness. May God give them to us!

II. Now for the second point—AN INTERESTING INQUIRY. Judas said, "How is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us and not unto the world?" How was this inquiry suggested and how was it answered?

First, it was suggested by *ignorance*. Poor Judas thought—"How can Jesus manifest Himself to us and not to the world? Why, if He comes down again, the world will see Him as well as we; how can He do it? Suppose He appears in a chariot of fire, or descends in a cloudy pillar—if we see Him, the world must see Him, too." So, poor thing, he very ignorantly said, "How can it be, Lord?" Perhaps, too, the question was put by reason of his *great kindness*. "Ah, Lord," he said, "how can it be that You will manifest Yourself to us and not unto the world?" He was slightly an Arminian—he wanted it all to be given to everybody! And he said, "How is it that You will manifest Yourself to us and not unto the world?" "O Lord," he said, "I wish it were for everybody! I wish it were—my benevolence bids me wish it." Ah, my beloved, we never need be more benevolent than God is! Some say, "If all sinners were saved, it would glorify God more." Certainly God knows better than we do how many sinners will glorify Him and we had better leave the number to Him and not get to meddling with what we have no business with! It says in Scripture, "Fools will be meddling." And fools they are who go meddling with what is no concern of theirs. But however this was, Judas said, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us and not unto the world?" Perhaps, again, it was *love to His Master* that made him put the question. "O Lord, I thought You would come and be King over all the world. And now it appears that You are only to be King over some." He wished Christ's dominion might be universal. He wanted to see every heart the Savior's throne. He desired everyone to bow to Him and a very just and laudable wish it was. And so he asked Christ, "How can it be, Lord, that You will not conquer all?" Jesus never answered the question. It was right to ask it, but we shall never get the solution of it till we get up yonder; perhaps not there!

Yet again—perhaps the question was proposed by *admiration*. "Oh," he said, "how is it that You will manifest to *us* and not unto the world?" Why, he might have said of himself, "What am I? What is my brother, Peter, here; nothing but a fisherman! What is John; nothing but a fisherman! And as for Matthew, he was a publican and cheated hundreds. And Zaccheus, how many widows' houses did he devour! And yet You say You

will manifest Yourself unto *us,* and not unto the world? There stands Mary the sinner—what did she do that You should manifest Yourself to her? And there is Mary Magdalene—she had seven devils. Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto *us,* and not unto the world?" Is not this a question we have often had to ask of our own souls?—

"Pause, my soul, adore and wonder;
Ask, O why such love to me?"

And the only answer we could give was—

"Grace has put me in the number
Of the Savior's family."

Come to me, and ask me, "Sir, why am I a Christian? Why does God love *me?"* I must reply, "Because He does love you." "But why does He love me?" The only answer I can give you again is, "Because He would love you"; for it is written, "He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy." Surely we might admiringly stand here and say, "Lord. Why, Lord, why do You manifest Yourself unto *us* and not unto the world?" "Yes," but some would say, "because you are better than the world. That is the reason. A fine lot better by nature, certainly!" Better than the world by nature? Why, some of us were rather worse! There are some of you here who once indulged in every form of vice—who would blush to stand up here and tell the sins you have committed! But God has manifested Himself to you as He does not unto the world. Surely we shall have a perpetual cause of wonder in the doings of Sovereign grace.

But *what is the answer?* Why does Christ manifest Himself to some as He does not unto the world? The question was not answered, for it was unanswerable. Our Lord went on to say—"If a man loves Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him." He did not tell him why He would manifest Himself unto them and not unto the world. I have often been asked this question myself—"You say God manifests Himself to some, and not to others—can you tell me why?" Well, Jesus Christ did not, and I cannot be expected to do it any more than He did! But I will ask you whether you have any objection to it. Is it not enough that He should do so? He has declared that He has "power over the clay, to make of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor." And if anyone finds fault, He says, "Who are you, O man? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, why have You made me thus?" What man shall ask of his father, "Why have you begotten me?" "Am I not God, and can I not do what I will with My own?" "But," says the objector, "is it not unjust for God to manifest Himself to one and not to the other?" God replies—"Do you charge Me with injustice? In what respect? Do I owe you anything? Bring the bill, and I will pay it. Do I owe you divine grace? Then grace would not be grace! It would be a debt. If I owe you grace, you shall have

it." "But why should my brother have it? He is equally as bad as I." "Surely," replies the King, "I may give as I please."

You have two beggars at your door—have you not a right to turn one away and give the other something? And can I not do as I will with my own? "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy and to whom I will I give it." "Well," says the objector, "suppose I ask and plead for it, shall I not have it?" "Yes, you shall," says *God*, for so the promise runs—"Everyone that asks receives and he that seeks finds and to him that knocks it shall be opened." "But I cannot have it unless it is written that I shall have it." "Yes, but if you ask, it is written that you shall ask. And the means are as much ordained as the end—you could not ask unless I inclined you. And now do not talk to Me of injustice. I ask you to find the passage in My word where I ever promised to give grace to everyone. Vile wretch! Have you not rebelled against Me? Your doom is to be sent to hell forever. Do you not deserve it?" "Yes." "Then who are you that dare to accuse Me of injustice? If I have 50 men on a scaffold to be hanged, have I not a right to pardon which I will and give the punishment to all the rest? Will you not yield to it?" "No," says the objector, "I will never yield to it." "Then, my friend, expect not salvation till you do." Is there a man here who kicks against divine sovereignty? It is a testing doctrine. And if he does not receive it, it shows that his pride is not out of him. If we do but preach divine sovereignty, some will say, "That man is an Antinomian and a hyper." We disdain your slander and remind you that the accusation might more properly be made against yourself. It is *you* that are the Antinomian, in rebelling against divine sovereignty! But a man who receives the doctrine of sovereignty will go to the throne of God, saying—

"Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer—
But if I perish I will pray,
And perish only there."

And now, what do you say to this, my friends? I know what some would say. They would cry, "Nonsense! We believe religion is a thing very good to keep people in order. But as to these manifestations and these ecstasies, we do not believe in them." Very well, beloved. I have just proved the truth of what the text says; He does not manifest Himself unto the world. And you have proved, yourself, that you are one of the world because you have not any manifestations. But there are some Christians here who say, "We do not know much about these manifestations." No, I know you do not. The Church has been getting, for the last few years, into a lean, starved state. God has sent very few preachers who would preach up these special things, and the Church has been getting lower and lower. And what would become of us, I cannot tell, if there were not saved a little salt, which God has scattered over the putrefying mass. Some of us have been living on low ground, when we might have

been standing on high places. We have been tarrying in the valley of Baca, when we might as well have been living on the top of Carmel. I would not choose to dwell in a valley, if I might build my house on the delectable mountains. O Christian! Up this morning! Let your feet be shod with light once more! Trip lightly across the plain of trouble—get to the side of Calvary—ascend to the very summit! And from Calvary, I tell you—you can see across the plain as far as heaven, itself! If you can but get to Pisgah's top, you shall sing—

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green."

And, by God's grace, your spirit shall become like the chariots of Amminadib! Seek, my brothers and sisters, such spiritual manifestations, if you have never experienced them. And if you have been privileged to enjoy them, seek more of them, for what is there that can so certainly make life happy and so fit you for the sky, as these revelations of Jesus Christ? Oh, you who despise what we enjoy, from the depths of my soul I pity you!. Take heed, lest the first revelation you have of Christ is when He shall be revealed in flaming fire—taking vengeance on His enemies!

If He is not revealed in mercy, He will be in justice. God give you grace to see Him on Calvary before you see Him on Sinai. To behold Him as the Savior of sinners before you see Him as the Judge of the quick and dead. God bless you, and lead you back to these manifestations constantly! Amen. Amen. Amen.

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THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
NO. 30

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 17, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"The power of the Holy Spirit."
Romans 15:13.

POWER is the special and peculiar prerogative of God, and God alone. "Twice have I heard this, that power belongs unto God" (Psa 62:11). God is God—and power belongs to Him. If He delegates a portion of it to His creatures, yet still it is *His* power. The sun, although he is "like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber and rejoices as a strong man to run his race," yet has no power to perform his motions except as God directs him. The stars, although they travel in their orbits and none could stay them, yet have neither might nor force except that which God daily infuses into them. The tall archangel, near His throne, who outshines a comet in its blaze, though he is one of those who excel in strength and hearkens to the voice of the commands of God, yet has no might except that which his Maker gives to him. As for Leviathan, who so makes the sea to boil like a pot that one would think the deep were hoary—as for Behemoth, who drinks up Jordan at a draught and boasts that he can snuff up rivers. As for those majestic creatures that are found on earth, they owe their strength to Him who fashioned their bones of steel and made their sinews of brass. And when we think of *man*—if he has might or power—it is so small and insignificant that we can scarcely call it such. Yes, when he is at his greatest—when he sways his scepter, when he commands hosts, when he rules nations—still the power belongs to God. And it is true, "Twice have I heard this, that power belongs unto God." This exclusive prerogative of God is to be found in each of the three persons of the glorious Trinity. The Father has power—for by His word were the heavens made, and all the host of them. By His strength all things stand, and through Him they fulfill their destiny. The Son has power—for like His Father, He is the Creator of all things—"Without Him was not anything made that was made," and, "by Him all things consist." And the Holy Spirit has power. It is concerning the power of the Holy Spirit that I shall speak this morning. May you have a practical exemplification of that attribute in your own hearts—when you shall feel that the influence of the Holy Spirit is being poured out upon me—so that I am speaking the words of the living God to your souls! And may it be bestowed upon you when you are feeling the effects of it in your own spirits.

We shall look at the power of the Holy Spirit in three ways this morning. First, *the outward and visible displays of it;* second, *the inward and spiritual manifestations of it;* and third, *the future and expected works thereof*. The power of the Spirit will thus, I trust, be made clearly present to your souls.

I. First, then, we are to view the power of the Spirit in the OUTWARD AND VISIBLE DISPLAYS OF IT. The power of the Spirit has not been dormant—it has exerted itself. Much has already been done by the Spirit of God—more than could have been accomplished by any being except the infinite, eternal, Almighty Jehovah, of whom the Holy Spirit is one person. There are four works which are the outward and manifest signs of the power of the Spirit—creation works, resurrection works, works of attestation or of witness and works of grace. Of each of the works I shall speak very briefly.

1. First, the Spirit has manifested the omnipotence of His power in *creation works,* for though not very frequently in Scripture, yet sometimes creation is ascribed to the Holy Spirit, as well as to the Father and the Son. The creation of the heavens above us is said to be the work of God's Spirit. This you will see at once by referring to the sacred Scriptures, Job 26:13—"By His Spirit He has garnished the heavens, His hand has formed the crooked serpent." All the stars of heaven are said to have been placed aloft by the Spirit and one particular constellation called the "crooked serpent" is specially pointed out as His handiwork. He looses the bands of Orion. He binds the sweet influences of the Pleiades and guides Aeturus with his sons. He made all those stars that shine in heaven. The heavens were garnished by His hands, and He formed the crooked serpent by His might. So also in those continued acts of creation which are still performed in the world. As the bringing forth of man and animals, their birth and generation, these are ascribed also to the Holy Spirit. If you look at the 104th Psalm, at the 29th and 30th verses, you will read, "You hide Your face, they are troubled. You take away their breath they die and return to their dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created and You renew the face of the earth." So you see that the creation of every man is the work of the Spirit—and the creation of all life and all flesh—*existence* in this world is as much to be ascribed to the power of the Spirit as the first garnishing of the heavens, or the fashioning of the crooked serpent.

And if you will look in the 1st chapter of Genesis, you will see there more particularly set forth that peculiar operation of power upon the universe which was put forth by the Holy Spirit. You will then discover what was His special work. In the 2nd verse of the 1st chapter of Genesis, we read, "And the earth was without form and void. And darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." We know not how remote the period of the creation of this

globe may be—certainly many millions of years before the time of Adam. Our planet has passed through various stages of existence and different kinds of creatures have lived on its surface, all of which have been fashioned by God. But before that era came, wherein man should be its principal tenant and monarch, the Creator gave up the world to confusion. He allowed the inward fires to burst up from beneath and melt all the solid matter so that all kinds of substances were commingled in one vast mass of disorder. The only name you could give to the world then was that it was a chaotic mass of matter. What it should be, you could not guess or define. It was entirely without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep. The Spirit came and stretching His broad wings, bade the darkness disperse and as He moved over it, all the different portions of matter came into their places and it was no longer "without form and void." It became round like its sister planets and moved, singing the high praises of God—not discordantly as it had done before—but as one great note in the vast scale of creation. Milton very beautifully describes this work of the Spirit in thus bringing order out of confusion, when the king of glory, in His powerful word and Spirit, came to create new worlds—

"On heavenly ground they stood. And from the shore
They viewed the vast immeasurable abyss
Outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild,
Up from the bottom turned by furious winds
And surging waves, as mountains, to assault
Heaven's height and with the center mix the pole.
'Silence you troubled waves and you deep, peace,'
Said then the omnificent word. Your discord end.
Then on the watery calm
His brooding wings, the Spirit of God outspread
And vital virtue infused and vital warmth
Throughout the fluid mass."

This, you see, then, is the power of the Spirit. Could we have seen that earth all in confusion, we would have said, "Who can make a world out of this?" The answer would have been, "The power of the Spirit can do it. By the simple spreading of His dove-like wings He can make all the things come together. Upon that there shall be order where there was nothing but confusion." Nor is this all the power of the Spirit. We have seen some of His works in creation. But there was one particular instance of creation in which the Holy Spirit was more especially concerned, viz., the formation of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though our Lord Jesus Christ was born of a woman, and made in the likeness of sinful flesh, yet the power that begat Him was entirely in God the Holy Spirit—as the Scriptures express it, "The power of the Highest shall overshadow you." He was begotten as the Apostles' Creed says, of the Holy Spirit. "That holy Thing which is born of you shall be called the Son of the Highest." The corporeal frame of the Lord Jesus Christ was a masterpiece of the Holy

Spirit. I suppose His body to have excelled all others in beauty. To have been like that of the first man, the very pattern of what the body is to be in heaven, when it shall shine forth in all its glory! That fabric, in all its beauty and perfection, was modeled by the Spirit. In His book were all the members written when as yet there were none of them. He fashioned and formed Him. And here, again, we have another instance of the creative energy of the Spirit.

2. A second manifestation of the Holy Spirit's power is to be found in the *resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ*. If you have ever studied this subject, you have, perhaps, been rather perplexed to find that sometimes the resurrection of Christ is ascribed to Himself. By His own power and Godhead He could not be held by the bond of death, but as He willingly gave up His life, He had power to take it again. In another portion of Scripture you find it ascribed to God the Father—"He raised Him up from the dead." "Him has God the Father exalted." And many other passages of similar import, but, again, it is said in Scripture that Jesus Christ was raised by the Holy Spirit. Now all these things were true. He was raised by the Father because the Father said, "Loose the Prisoner—let Him go. Justice is satisfied. My law requires no more satisfaction—vengeance has had its due—let Him go." Here He gave an official message which delivered Jesus from the grave. He was raised by His own majesty and power because He had a right to come out and He felt He had and therefore "burst the bonds of death—He could be no longer held of them." But He was raised by the Spirit as to that energy which His mortal frame received, by which it rose again from the grave after having lain there for three days and nights. If you need proofs of this, you must open your Bibles again, 1 Peter 3:18—"For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but quickened by the Spirit." And a further proof you may find in Romans 8:11—(I love, sometimes, to be textual, for I believe the great fault of Christians is that they do not search the Scriptures enough, and I will make them search them when they are here if they do not do so anywhere else)—"But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you."

The resurrection of Christ, then, was effected by the agency of the Spirit and here we have a noble illustration of His omnipotence. Could you have stepped, as angels did, into the grave of Jesus and seen His sleeping body, you would have found it cold as any other corpse. Lift up the hand, it falls by the side. Look at the eye—it is glazed. And there is a death-thrust which must have annihilated life. See His hands. The blood distils not from them—they are cold and motionless. Can that body live? Can it start up? Yes. And be an illustration of the might of the Spirit! For when the power of the Spirit came on Him, as it was when it fell upon the

dry bones of the valley—"He arose in the majesty of His divinity and bright and shining, astonished the watchmen so that they fled away. Yes, He arose no more to die, but to live forever, king of kings and prince of the kings of the earth."

3. The third of the works of the Holy Spirit which have so wonderfully demonstrated His power, are *attestation works*. I mean by this—works of witnessing. When Jesus Christ went into the stream of baptism in the river Jordan, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him like a dove and proclaimed Him God's Beloved Son. That is what I style an attestation work. And when afterwards Jesus Christ raised the dead, when He healed the leper, when He spoke to diseases and they fled, when demons rushed in thousands from those who were possessed of them, it was done by the power of the Spirit. The Spirit dwelt in Jesus without measure and by that power all those miracles were worked. These were attestation works. And when Jesus Christ was gone, you will remember that master attestation of the Spirit when He came like a rushing mighty wind upon the assembled Apostles and cloven tongues sat upon them. And you will remember how He attested their ministry by giving them to speak with tongues as He gave them utterance. And how, also, miraculous deeds were worked by them. How they taught, how Peter raised Dorcas, how he breathed life into Eutychus, how great deeds were worked by the Apostles as well as their Master—so that "mighty signs and wonders were done by the Holy Spirit and many believed thereby." Who will doubt the power of the Holy Spirit after that? Ah, those Socinians, who deny the existence of the Holy Spirit and His absolute personality—what will they do when we get them on creation, resurrection and attestation? They must rush in the very teeth of Scripture. But mark—it is a stone upon which if any man falls he shall be bruised. But if it falls upon him, as it will do if he resists it, it shall grind him to powder! The Holy Spirit has omnipotent power, even the power of God, because He is God!

4. Once more, if we need another outward and visible sign of the power of the Spirit, we may look at the *works of grace*. Behold a city where a soothsayer has the power—who has given out himself to be some great one. A Philip enters it and preaches the word of God—straightway a Simon Magus loses his power and seeks for the power of the Spirit to be given to him, fancying it might be purchased with money! See, in modern times, a country where the inhabitants live in miserable wigwams, feeding on reptiles and the meanest creatures. Observe them bowing down before their idols and worshipping their false gods and so plunged in superstition, so degraded and debased, that it becomes a question whether they have souls or not! Behold a Moffat with the word of God in his hand. Hear him preach as the Spirit gives him utterance and accompanies that word with power. They cast aside their idols—they hate and abhor their former lusts. They build houses wherein they dwell. They become clothed

and in their right mind. They break the bow and cut the spear in sunder. The uncivilized become civilized. The savage becomes polite. He who knew nothing begins to read the Scriptures. Thus out of the mouths of Hottentots, God attests the power of His mighty Spirit! Take a household in this city—and we could guide you to many such—the father is a drunk. He has been the most desperate of characters. See him in his madness and you might just as well meet an unchained tiger as meet such a man. He seems as if he could tear a man to pieces who should offend him. Mark his wife; she, too, has a spirit in her and when he treats her ill, she can resist him. Many broils have been seen in that house and often has the neighborhood been disturbed by the noise created there.

As for the poor little children—see them in their rags and nakedness, poor untaught things. Untaught, did I say? They are taught and well taught in the devil's school, and are growing up to be the heirs of damnation! But someone whom God has blessed by His Spirit is guided to the house; he may be but a humble city missionary, perhaps, but he speaks to such a one. "O," he says, "come and listen to the voice of God." Whether it is by his own agency, or a minister's preaching, the word, which is quick and powerful, cuts to the sinner's heart; the tears run down his cheeks—such as had never been seen before. He shakes and quivers. The strong man bows down—the mighty man trembles—and those knees that never shook begin to knock together! That heart which never quailed before, now begins to shake before the power of the Spirit. He sits down on a humble bench by the penitent. He lets his knees bend, while his lips utter a child's prayer, but, while a child's prayer, a prayer of a child of God! He becomes a changed character. Mark the reformation in his house! That wife of his becomes the decent matron. Those children are the credit of the house, and in due time they grow up like olive branches round his table, adorning his house like polished stones. Pass by the house—no noise or broils, but songs of Zion! See him—no drunken revelry; he has drained his last cup. And now forswearing it, he comes to God and is His servant. Now, you will not hear at midnight the bacchanalian shout. But should there be a noise, it will be the sound of the solemn hymn of praise to God.

And now, is there not such a thing as the power of the Spirit? Yes! And these must have witnessed it and seen it. I know a village, once, perhaps, the most profane in England—a village inundated by drunkenness and debauchery of the worst kind, where it was almost impossible for an honest traveler to stop in the public house without being annoyed by blasphemy. A place noted for incendiaries and robbers. One man, the ringleader of all, listened to the voice of God. That man's heart was broken. The whole gang came to hear the gospel preached and they sat and seemed to reverence the preacher as if he were a God and not a man. These men became changed and reformed. And everyone who knows the

place affirms that such a change had never been worked but by the power of the Holy Spirit! Let the gospel be preached and the Spirit poured out and you will see that it has such power to change the conscience, to ameliorate the conduct, to raise the debased, to chastise and to curb the wickedness of the race, that you must glory in it. I say, there is nothing like the power of the Spirit; only let that come, and indeed, everything can be accomplished!

II. Now, for the second point, THE INWARD AND SPIRITUAL POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. What I have already spoken of may be *seen*. What I am about to speak of must be *felt* and no man will apprehend what I say with truth unless he has felt it. The other, even the infidel, must confess. The other, the greatest blasphemer cannot deny it, he speaks the truth. But this is what the one will laugh at as enthusiasm and what the other will say is but the invention of our fevered fancies. However, we have a more sure word of testimony than all that they may say. We have a witness within. We know it is the truth and we are not afraid to speak of the inward spiritual power of the Holy Spirit. Let us notice two or three things wherein the inward and spiritual power of the Holy Spirit is very greatly to be seen and extolled.

1. First, in that the Holy Spirit has *a power over men's hearts*. Now, men's hearts are very hard to affect. If you want to get at them for any worldly objective you can do it. A cheating world can win man's heart, a little gold can win man's heart, a trump of fame and a little clamor of applause can win man's heart. But there is not a minister breathing that can win man's heart, himself! He can win his ears and make them listen. He can win his eyes and fix those eyes upon him. He can win the attention, but the heart is very slippery. Yes, the heart is a fish that troubles all gospel fishermen to hold! You may sometimes pull it almost all out of the water—but slimy as an eel, it slips between your fingers and you have not captured it, after all. Many a man has fancied that he has caught the heart but has been disappointed. It would need a strong hunter to overtake the hart on the mountains. It is too fleet for human foot to approach. The Spirit, alone, has power over a *man's* heart. Do you ever try your power on a heart? If any man thinks that a minister can convert the soul, I wish he would try. Let him go and be a Sunday school teacher. He shall take his class, he shall have the best books that can be obtained, he shall have the best rules, he shall draw his rampart about his spiritual Sebastopol. He shall take the best boy in his class and if he is not tired in a week I shall be very much mistaken. Let him spend four or five Sabbaths in trying, but he will say, "The young fellow is incorrigible." Let him try another. And he will have to try another, another and another before he will manage to convert one. He will soon find, "It is not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." Can a minister convert? Can he touch the heart? David said, "Your hearts are as fat as

grease." Yes, that is quite true. And we cannot get through so much grease at all. Our sword cannot get at the heart—it is encased in so much fatness, it is harder than a nether millstone. Many a good old Jerusalem blade has been blunted against the hard heart. Man, a piece of the true steel that God has put into the hands of His servants, has had the edge turned by being set up against the sinner's heart. We cannot reach the soul. But the Holy Spirit can. "My Beloved can put in His hand by the hole in the door and my heart will move for sin." He can give a sense of blood-bought pardon that shall dissolve a heart of stone. He can—

"Speak with that voice which wakes the dead,
And bids the sinner rise—
And makes the guilty conscience dread
The death that never dies."

He can make Sinai's thunders audible. Yes, and He can make the sweet whisperings of Calvary enter into the soul. He has power over the heart of man! Yes, the glorious proof of the omnipotence of the Spirit is that He has rule over the heart!

2. But if there is one thing more stubborn than the heart it is *the will*. "My Lord, Will-be-Will," as Bunyan calls him in his "Holy War," is a fellow who will not easily be bent. The will, especially in some men, is a very stubborn thing and in all men, if the will is once stirred up to opposition, there is nothing can be done with them. *Free will* somebody believes in. *Free will* many dream of. Free will! Wherever is that to be found? Once there was free will in Paradise and a terrible mess, free will made there, for it spoiled all Paradise and drove Adam out of the garden! Free will was once in heaven but it drove the glorious archangel out and a third part of the stars of heaven fell into the abyss. I want nothing to do with free will—but I will try to see whether I have got a free will within. And I find I have. Very free will to evil but very poor will to that which is good. Free will enough when I sin, but when I would do good, evil is present with me and how to do that which I would, I find not. Yet some boast of free will. I wonder whether those who believe in it have any more power over persons' wills than I have. I know I have not any. I find the old proverb very true, "One man can bring a horse to the water, but a hundred cannot make him drink." I find that I can bring you all to the water and a great many more than can get into this Chapel. But I cannot make you drink. And I don't think a hundred ministers could make you drink. I have read old Rowland Hill, Whitefield and several others to see what they did. But I cannot discover a plan of turning your wills. I cannot coax you. And you will not yield by any manner of means. I do not think any man has power over his fellow creature's will—but the Spirit of God has. "I will make them willing in the day of My power." He makes the unwilling sinner so willing that he is impetuous after the gospel! He who was obstinate, now hurries to the cross. He who laughed at Jesus, now hangs

on His mercy. And he who would not believe, is now made by the Holy Spirit to do it, not only willingly, but eagerly. He is happy, is glad to do it, rejoices in the sound of Jesus' name and delights to run in the way of God's commandments. The Holy Spirit has power over the will!

3. And yet there is one thing more which I think is rather worse than the will. You will guess what I mean. The will is somewhat worse than the heart to bend but there is one thing that excels the will in its evil and that is the *imagination*. I hope that my will is managed by divine grace. But I am afraid my imagination is not at times. Those who have a fair share of imagination know what a difficult thing it is to control. You cannot restrain it. It will break the reins. You will never be able to manage it. The imagination will sometimes fly up to God with such a power that eagles' wings cannot match it. It sometimes has such might that it can almost see the king in His beauty and the land which is very far off. With regard to myself, my imagination will sometimes take me over the gates of iron, across that infinite unknown to the very gates of pearl and discovers the blessed Glorified. But if it is potent, one way, it is also another. For my imagination has taken me down to the vilest kennels and sewers of earth. It has given me thoughts so dreadful, that while I could not avoid them, yet I was thoroughly horrified at them! These thoughts will come and when I feel in the holiest frame, the most devoted to God and the most earnest in prayer, it often happens that *that* is the very time when the plagues breaks out the worst. But I rejoice and think of one thing—that I can cry out when this imagination comes upon me. I know it is said in the Book of Leviticus when an act of evil was committed, if the maiden cried out against it, then her life was to be spared. So it is with the Christian. If he cries out, there is hope. Can you chain your imagination? No. But the power of the Holy Spirit can. Ah, it shall do it and it does do it at last. It does it even on earth.

III. But the last thing was THE FUTURE AND DESIRED EFFECTS—for after all, though the Holy Spirit has done so much, He cannot say, "It is finished." Jesus Christ could exclaim concerning His own labor—"It is finished." But the Holy Spirit cannot say that. He has more to do—and until the consummation of all things, when the Son, Himself, becomes subject to the Father, it shall not be said by the Holy Spirit, "It is finished." What, then, has the Holy Spirit to do?

1. First, he has to *perfect us in holiness*. There are two kinds of perfection which a Christian needs—one is the perfection of justification in the person of Jesus. And the other is the perfection of sanctification worked in him by the Holy Spirit. At present, corruption still rests even in the breasts of the regenerate. At present the heart is partially impure. At present there are still lusts and evil imaginations. But, oh, my soul rejoices to know that the day is coming when God shall finish the work which He has begun—and He shall present my soul, not only perfect in Christ, but

perfect in the Spirit, without spot or blemish, or any such thing. And is it true that this poor depraved heart is to become as holy as that of God? And is it true that this poor spirit, which often cries, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this sin and death?" shall get rid of sin and death? I shall have no evil things to vex my ears and no unholy thoughts to disturb my peace? Oh, happy hour! May it be hastened! Just before I die, sanctification will be finished. But not till that moment shall I ever claim perfection in myself. But at that moment when I depart, my spirit shall have its last baptism in the Holy Spirit's fire. It shall be put in the crucible for its last trying in the furnace. And then, free from all dross and fine like a wedge of pure gold, it shall be presented at the feet of God without the least degree of dross or mixture. O glorious hour! O blessed moment! I think I long to die even if there were no heaven—if I might but have that last purification and come up from Jordan's stream most white from the washing. Oh, to be washed white, clean, pure, perfect! Not an angel more pure than I shall be—yes, not God, Himself, more holy! And I shall be able to say, in a double sense, "Great God, I am clean—through Jesus' blood I am clean—through the Spirit's work I am clean, too!" Must we not extol the power of the Holy Spirit in thus making us fit to stand before our Father in heaven?

2. Another great work of the Holy Spirit which is not accomplished is *the bringing on of the latter-day glory*. In a few more years—I know not when, I know not how—the Holy Spirit will be poured out in a far different style from the present. There are diversities of operations. And during the last few years it has been the case that the diversified operations have consisted in very little pouring out of the Spirit. Ministers have gone on in dull routine, continually preaching, preaching, preaching—and little good has been done. I do hope that perhaps a fresh era has dawned upon us and that there is a better pouring out of the Spirit even now. For the hour is coming and it may be even now, when the Holy Spirit shall be poured out again in such a wonderful manner that many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased—the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the surface of the great deep—when His kingdom shall come and His will shall be done on earth even as it is in heaven! We are not going to be dragging on forever like Pharaoh with the wheels off his chariot. My heart exults and my eyes flash with the thought that very likely I shall live to see the out-pouring of the Spirit when, "The sons and the daughters of God, again, shall prophecy and the young men shall see visions and the old men shall dream dreams." Perhaps there shall be no miraculous gifts—for they will not be required. But yet there shall be such a miraculous amount of holiness, such an extraordinary fervor of prayer, such a real communion with God and so much vital religion and such a spread of the doctrines of the cross that

everyone will see that verily the Spirit is poured out like water and the rains are descending from above. For that let us pray—let us continually labor for it and seek it of God.

3. One more work of the Spirit which will especially manifest His power—*the general resurrection*. We have reason to believe from Scripture that the resurrection of the dead, while it will be effected by the voice of God and of His word, (the Son), shall also be brought about by the Spirit. That same power which raised Jesus Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies. The power of the resurrection is perhaps one of the finest proofs of the works of the Spirit. Ah, my friends, if this earth could but have its mantle torn away for a little while, if the green sod could be cut from it and we could look about six feet deep into its bowels, what a world it would seem! What would we see? Bones, carcasses, rottenness, worms, corruption, and you would say, "Can these dry bones live? Can they start up?" "Yes, in a moment! In the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the dead shall be raised." He speaks—they are alive! See them scattered—bone comes to his bone! See them naked—flesh comes upon them! See them still lifeless—"Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain!" When the wind of the Holy Spirit comes, they live and they stand upon their feet an exceeding great army.

I have thus attempted to speak of the power of the Spirit and I trust I have shown it to you. We must now have a moment or two for practical inference. The Spirit is very powerful, Christian! What do you infer from that fact? Why, that you never need distrust the power of God to carry you to heaven! O how that sweet verse was laid to my soul yesterday!—

"His tried Almighty arm
Is raised for your defense.
Where is the power can reach you there
Or what can pluck you thence?"

The power of the Holy Spirit is your bulwark and all His omnipotence defends you. Can your enemies overcome omnipotence? Then they can conquer you. Can they wrestle with Deity and hurl Him to the ground? Then they might conquer you, for the power of the Spirit is our power—the power of the Spirit is our might.

Once again, Christians, if this is the power of the Spirit, *why should you doubt anything?* There is your son. There is that wife of yours for whom you have supplicated so frequently—do not doubt the Spirit's power. "Though He tarry, wait for Him." There is your husband, O holy woman! And you have wrestled for his soul. And though he is ever so hardened and desperate a wretch and treats you ill, there is power in the Spirit and O, you who have come from barren churches with scarcely a leaf upon the tree, do not doubt the power of the Spirit to raise you up! For it shall be a "pasture for flocks, a den of wild asses," open, but deserted, until the Spirit is poured out from on high! And then the parched ground shall be made a pool and the thirsty land springs of water. Then

in the habitations of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And, O you members of Park Street! You who remember what your God has done for you especially—never distrust the power of the Spirit! You have seen the wilderness blossom like Carmel. You have seen the desert blossom like the rose. Trust Him for the future. Then go out and labor with this conviction—the power of the Holy Spirit is able to do anything! Go to your Sunday school. Go to your tract distribution. Go to your missionary enterprise! Go to your preaching in your rooms with the conviction that the power of the Spirit is our great help!

And now, lastly, to you sinners: what is there to be said to you about this power of the Spirit? Why, to me, there is some hope for some of you. *I* cannot save you—*I* cannot get at you. I make you cry sometimes—you wipe your eyes and it is all over. But I know my Master can. That is my consolation. Chief of sinners, there is hope for you! This power can save you as well as anybody else! It is able to break your heart, though it is an iron one. It can make your eyes run with tears though they have been like rocks, before. His power is able, this morning, if He wills, to change your heart, to turn the current of all your ideas, to make you at once a child of God, to justify you in Christ! There is power enough in the Holy Spirit. He is able to bring sinners to Jesus—He is able to make you willing in the day of His power. Are you willing this morning? Has He gone so far as to make you desire His name, to make you wish for Jesus? Then, O sinner, while He draws you, say, "Draw me, I am wretched without You!" Follow Him, follow Him and while He leads, tread in His footsteps and rejoice that He has begun a good work in you, for there is an evidence that He will continue it even unto the end.

And, O desponding one! Put your trust in the power of the Spirit. Rest on the blood of Jesus, and your soul is safe, not only now, but throughout eternity! God bless you, my hearers. Amen.

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THE DESIRE OF THE SOUL IN SPIRITUAL DARKNESS
NO. 31

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 24, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"With my soul have I desired You in the night."
Isaiah 26:9.

NIGHT appears to be a time peculiarly favorable to devotion. Its solemn stillness helps to free the mind from that perpetual din which the cares of the world will bring around it. And the stars looking down from heaven upon us shine as if they would attract us up to God. I know not how you may be affected by the solemnities of midnight, but when I have sat alone musing on the great God and the mighty universe, I have felt that, indeed, I could worship Him, for night seemed to be spread abroad as a very temple for adoration, while the moon walked as high priest amid the stars! The worshippers and I, myself, joined in that silent song which they sang unto God—"Great are You, O God! Great in Your works. When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained, what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?" I find that this sense of the power of midnight not only acts upon religious men but there is a certain poet, whose character—a man very far from understanding true religion—one whom I may, I suppose, justly style an infidel, a libertine of the worst order and yet he says concerning night in one of his poems—

"Tis midnight on the mountains' brown,
The cold round moon shines deeply down.
Blue roll the waters, blue the sky
Spreads like an ocean hung on high,
Bespangled with those isles of light,
So wildly, spiritually bright.
Who ever gazed upon them shining,
And turning to earth without repining,
Nor wish'd for wings to flee away,
And mix with their eternal ray?"

Even with the most irreligious person, a man farthest from spiritual thought, it seems that there is some power in the grandeur and stillness of night to draw him up to God. I trust many of us can say, like David, "I have thought upon You continually, I have mused upon Your name in the night watches and with desire have I desired You in the night." But I leave that thought altogether. I shall not speak of natural night at all, although there may be a great deal of room for poetic thought and expression. I shall address myself to two orders of persons and shall en-

deavor to show what I conceive to be the meaning of the text. May God make it useful to you both. First, I shall speak to *confirmed Christians,* and from this text I shall bring one or two remarks to bear upon their case, if they are in darkness; second, I shall speak to *newly awakened souls* and try, if I can, to find some of them who can say, "With my soul have I desired You in the night."

I. I am about to address this text to the more confirmed believer. And the first fact I shall bring out from it—the truth of which I am sure he will very readily admit—is THE CHRISTIAN HAS NOT ALWAYS A BRIGHT SHINING SUN—*that he has seasons of darkness and of light*. True, it is written in God's Word, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." And it is a great truth that religion—the true religion of the living God—is calculated to give a man happiness below as well as bliss above. But, notwithstanding, experience tells us that if the course of the just is "as the shining light, that shinning more and more unto the perfect day," yet sometimes that light is eclipsed. At certain periods clouds and darkness cover the sun and he beholds no clear shining of the daylight but walks in darkness and sees no light. Now there are many who have rejoiced in the presence of God for a season. They have basked in the sunshine God has been pleased to give them in the earlier stages of their Christian career. They have walked along the "green pastures" by the side of the "still waters" and suddenly—in a month or two—they find that glorious sky is clouded—instead of "green pastures" they have to tread the sandy desert. In the place of "still waters" they find streams brackish to their taste and bitter to their spirits. They say, "Surely, if I were a child of God, this would not happen." Oh, say not so, you who are walking in darkness! The best of God's saints have their nights. The dearest of His children have to walk through a weary wilderness. There is not a Christian who has enjoyed perpetual happiness—there is no believer who can always sing a song of joy! It is not every lark that can always carol. It is not every star that can always be seen. And not every Christian is always happy.

Perhaps the king of saints gave you a season of great joy at first because you were a raw recruit and He would not put you into the roughest part of the battle when you had first enlisted. You were a tender plant and He nursed you in the hothouse till you could stand severe weather. You were a young child and therefore He wrapped you in furs and clothed you in the softest mantle. But now you have become strong and the case is different. Italian holidays do not suit Roman soldiers. And they would not agree with Christians. We need clouds and darkness to exercise our faith, to cut off self-dependence and make us put more faith in Christ—and less in evidence, less in experience, less in frames and feelings. The best of God's children—I repeat it again for the comfort of those who are suffering depression of spirits—have their nights! Sometimes it is a night over the whole church at once. And I fear we have very much of that night now. There are times when Zion is under a cloud,

when the whole fine gold becomes dim and the glory of Zion is departed. There are seasons when we do not hear the clear preaching of the Word; when the doctrines are withheld; when the glory of the Lord God of Jacob is dim; when His name is not exalted; when the traditions of men are taught instead of the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. And such a season is that when the whole church is dark. Of course each Christian participates in it. He goes about and weeps and cries, "O God, how long shall poor Zion be depressed? How long shall her shepherds be 'dumb dogs that cannot bark?' Shall her watchmen be always blind? Shall the silver trumpet sound no more? Shall not the voice of the Gospel be heard in her streets?" Oh, there are seasons of darkness for the entire church! God grant we may not have to pass through another! But that starting from this period on, the sun may rise never to set, till, like a sea of glory, the light of brilliance shall spread from pole to pole!

At other times, this darkness over the soul of the Christian rises from *temporal distresses*. He may have had a "misfortune" as it is called—something has gone wrong in his business, or an enemy has done something against him. Perhaps death has struck down a favorite child—bereavement has snatched away the darling of his bosom—or the crops are blighted. The winds refuse to bear his ships homeward. A vessel strikes upon a rock, another founders, all goes ill with him and, like a gentleman who called to see me this week, he may be able to say, "Sir, I prospered far more when I was a worldly man than I have done since I have become a Christian—for, since then, everything has appeared to go wrong with me. I thought," he said, "that religion had the promise of this life as well as of that which is to come." I told him, Yes, it had. And so it should be in the end. But he must remember there was one great legacy which Christ left His people. And I was glad he had come in for a share of it—"In the world you shall have tribulation. In Me you shall have peace." Yes! You may be troubled about this, you may be saying, "Look at So-and-So—see how he spreads himself like a green bay tree. He is an extortioner and wicked man, yet everything he does prospers." You may even observe his death and say, "There are no bands in his death." They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Ah, beloved! You are come into the sanctuary of God this morning and now shall you understand their end! God has set them in slippery places and He casts them down to destruction! Better to have a Christian's days of sorrow than a worldling's days of mirth. Better to have a Christian's sorrows than a worldling's joys. Ah, happier to be chained in a dungeon with a Paul than reign in the palace with an Ahab. Better to be a child of God in poverty than a child of Satan in riches. Cheer up, then, you downcast spirit, if this is your trial. Remember that many saints have passed through the same, and the best and most eminent believers have had their nights.

"But oh," says another, "you have not described my night, sir. I have not much amiss in business. And I would not care if I had—but I have a

night in my spirit. O sir," says one, "I have not a single evidence of my Christianity! I was a child of God, I know. But something tells me that I am none of His, now. There was a season when I flattered myself that I knew something about godliness and God. But now I doubt whether I have any part or lot in the matter. Satan suggests that I must dwell in endless flames. I see no hope for me. I am afraid I am an hypocrite. I think I have imposed on the church and upon myself also. I fear I am none of His. When I turn over God's Scriptures there is no promise. When I look within, corruption is black before me. Then while others are commending me, I am accusing myself of all manner of sin and corruption. I could not have thought that I was half so bad. I am afraid there cannot have been a work of divine grace in my heart, or else I should not have so many corrupt imaginations, filthy desires, hard thoughts of God—so much pride, so much selfishness and self-will. I am afraid I am none of His!" Now, that is the very reason why you *are* one of His; that you are able to say that, for God's people pass through the night. They have their nights of sorrow. I love to hear a man talk like that. I would not have him do so always. He ought at times to enter into "the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free." But I know that frequently bondage will get hold of the spirit. But you say, "Surely no one ever suffers like that!" I confess I do, myself, constantly—and very often there are times when I could not prove my election in Jesus Christ, nor my adoption, though I rejoice that for the most part I can cry—

"A debtor to mercy alone
Of covenant mercy I sing."

Yet at other seasons I am sure the meanest lamb in Jesus' fold I reckon ten thousand times more in advance than myself! And if I might but sit down on the meanest bench in the kingdom of heaven and did but know I was in, I would barter everything I had—and I do not believe there ever existed a Christian yet who did not now and then doubt his interest in Jesus. I think, when a man says, "I never doubt," it is quite time for us to doubt *him.* It is quite time for us to begin to say, "Ah, poor soul, I am afraid you are not on the road at all, for if you were, you would see so many things in yourself and so much glory in Christ more than you deserve, that you would be so much ashamed of yourself, as even to say, 'It is too good to be true.' "

2. The first part, then, is fully established by *experience* that Christians very frequently have their nights. But the second thing here is that *a Christian's religion will keep its color in the night.* "With my soul have I desired You in the night." What a mighty deal of silver-slipper religion we have in this world. Men will follow Christ when everyone cries "Hosanna! Hosanna!" The multitude will crowd around the Man, then, and they will take Him by force, and make Him a king when the sun shines, when the soft wind blows. They are like the plants upon the rock which sprang up and for a little while were green—but when the sun had risen with fervent heat they straightway withered away. Demas and Mr. Hold-the-

World and a great many others are very pious people in easy times. They will always go with Christ by daylight and will keep in company so long as fashion gives religion the doubtful benefit of its patronage. But they will not go with Him in the night! There are some goods whose color you can only see by daylight—and there are many professors, the color of whom you can only see by daylight. If they were in the night of trouble and persecution you would find that there was very little in them. They are good by daylight but they are bad by night! But, beloved, do you not know that the best test of a Christian is the night? The nightingale, if she would sing by day when every goose is cackling, would be reckoned no better a musician than the wren. A Christian, if he only remained steadfast by daylight when every coward is bold, what would he be? There would be no beauty in his courage, no glory in his bravery. But it is because he can sing at night—sing in trouble—sing when he is driven well near to despair—it is *this* which proves his sincerity! It has its glory in the night. The stars are not visible by daylight, but they become apparent when the sun is set. There is full many a Christian whose piety did not burn much when he was in prosperity. But it will be known in adversity. I have marked it in some of my brothers and sisters now present, when they were in deep trial not long ago. I had not heard them discourse much about Christ before, but when God's hand had robbed them of their comfort, I remember that I could discern their religion infinitely better than I could before. Nothing can bring our religion out better than that. Grind the diamond a little and you shall see it glisten. Do but put a trouble on the Christian and his endurance of it will prove him to be of the true seed of Israel!

3. A third remark from this to the confirmed Christian is—*all that the Christian needs in the night is his God*. "With *desire* have I desired *You* in the night." By day there are many things that a Christian will desire besides his Lord. But in the night he needs nothing but his God. I cannot understand how it is unless it is to be accounted for by the corruption of our spirit, that when everything goes well with us we are setting our affection, first on this object, and then on another, and then on another. And that desire which is as insatiable as death, and as deep as hell never rests satisfied. We are always wanting something, always desiring something else. But if you place a Christian in trouble, you will find that he does not need gold, then—that he does not need carnal honor, then—he wants his God! I suppose he is like the sailor—when he sails along smoothly, he loves to have fair weather and wants this and that to amuse himself with on deck. But when the winds blow, all that he needs is the haven! He does not desire anything else. The biscuit may be moldy, but he does not care. The water may be brackish, but he does not care. He does not think of it in the storm. He only thinks about the haven! It is just so with the Christian—when he is going along smoothly, he wants this and that comfort. He is aspiring after this position, or is wanting to obtain this and that elevation. But let him once doubt his interest in

Christ—let him once get into some soul-distress and trouble, so that it is very dark—and all he will feel then is, "With desire have I desired You in the night." When the child is put upstairs to bed, it may lie while the light is there and look at the trees that shake against the window and admire the stars that are coming out. But when it gets dark and the child is still awake, it cries for its parent. It cannot be amused by anything else. So in daylight will the Christian look at anything. He will cast his eyes round on this pleasure and on that! But, when the darkness gathers, it is, "My God! My God! Why have You forsaken me? O why are You so far from me and from the word of my roaring?" Then it is—

"Give me Christ or else I die!
These can never satisfy."

4. But now one more remark before I leave my address to confirmed saints. *There are times when all the saints can do is to desire*. We have a vast number of evidences of piety—some are practical, some are experimental, some are doctrinal. And the more evidences a man has of his piety, the better, of course. We like a number of signatures to make a deed more valid, if possible. We like to invest property in a great number of trustees in order that it may be all the safer and so we love to have many evidences. Many witnesses will carry our case at the bar better than a few—and so it is well to have many witnesses to testify to our piety. But there are seasons when a Christian cannot get any. He can get scarcely one witness to come and attest his godliness. He asks for good works to come and speak for him. But there will be such a cloud of darkness about him that his good works will appear so black that he will not dare to think of their evidences. He will say, "True, I hope this is the right fruit. I hope I have served God, but I dare not plead these works as evidences." He will have lost assurance and with it his enjoyment of communion with God. "I have had that fellowship with Him," perhaps he will say, and he will summon that communion to come and be an evidence. But he has forgotten it and it does not come, and Satan whispers it is a fancy. And the poor evidence of communion has its mouth gagged so that it cannot speak. But there is one witness that very seldom is gagged and one that I trust the people of God can always apply, even in the night. And that is, "I have *desired* You—I have desired You in the night." "Yes, Lord, if I have not believed in You, I have *desired* You. And if I have not spent and been spent in Your service, yet one thing I know and the devil cannot beat me out of it, I have *desired* You—that I do know—and I have desired You in the night, too, when no one saw me, when troubles were round about me."

Now, my beloved, I hope there are many of you here this morning who are strong in faith. You do not, perhaps, need what I have said. But I will advise you to take this cordial and if you do not need to drink it now, put it up in a small vial and carry it about with you till you do. You do not know how long it may be before you are faint. And as Mr. Great-Heart gave Christiana a bottle of wine to take with her, that she might drink

when she was fatigued, so you take this and do not laugh at a poor despised believer because he is not so strong as yourself. You may need this yourself some day. I tell you there are times when a Christian will be ready to creep into a mouse hole if he might but get into heaven—when he would be glad to throw anything away to get into the smallest crevice to escape from his fears. There are times when the meanest evidence seems more precious than gold; when the very least ray of sunlight is worth all the riches of Peru, and when a drop of comfort is more sweet than a whole heaven may have been at other seasons. You may be brought into the same condition, so take this passage with you and have it ready—have it ready to plead at the throne—"With desire have I desired You in the night."

II. The second part of my sermon is to be occupied by speaking to NEWLY AWAKENED SOULS. And as I have made four remarks to confirmed Christians, I will now endeavor to answer three questions to those who are newly awakened.

The first question they would ask me is this—*How am I to know that my desires are proofs of a work of grace in my soul?* Some of you may say, "I think I can go so far as the text—I have desired God. I know I have desired to be saved. I have desired to have an interest in the blood of Jesus, but how am I to know that it is a desire sent of God and how can I tell whether it will end in conversion?" Hear me, then, while I offer one or two tests.

1. First, you may tell whether your desires are of God by their *constancy*. Many a man, when he hears a stirring sermon, has a very strong desire to be saved. But he goes home and forgets it. He is as a man who sees his face in a glass, goes away and straightway forgets what manner of man he is. He returns again—once more the arrow sticks hard in the heart of the king's enemy. He goes home, only to extract the arrow and his goodness is as the morning cloud. And as the early dew, it passes away. Has it been so with you? Have you had such a desire? Will tomorrow's business take it away? Are you wanting Christ today? But will you despise Him tomorrow? Then I am afraid your desires are not of God. They are merely the desires of a naturally awakened conscience, just the stirrings of mere nature and they will go as far as nature can go and no farther. But if your desires are constant ones, take comfort. How long have they lasted? Have you been desiring Christ this last month, or these last three or four months? Have you been seeking Him in prayer for a long season? And do you find that you are anxious after Christ on the Monday as well as on the Sunday? Do you desire Him in the shop when the intervals of business allow you to do so? Do you seek Him in the night—in the solemn loneliness, when no minister's voice breaks on your ears—when no truth is smiting your conscience? Is it but the hectic flush of the consumption that has come upon your cheek? Which is not the mark of health, or is it the real heat of a true desire which marks a healthy soul? Are you desiring God constantly? I admit there will be vari-

ations even to our more sincere desires, but a certain measure of constancy is essential to their real value as evidences of a divine work.

2. Again—you may discern whether they are right or wrong by their *efficacy*. Some persons desire heaven very earnestly but they do not desire to leave off drunkenness—they desire to be saved but they do not desire salvation enough to shut their shops up on Sunday morning, or to bridle their tongues, and leave off speaking ill of their neighbors. They desire salvation, but they do not desire it enough to come, sometimes, on the weekday to hear the Gospel. You may tell the truthfulness of your desires by their efficacy. If your desires lead you into real "works meet for repentance," then they come from God. Wishes, you know, are nothing unless they are carried out. "Many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able" "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Seeking will not do—there must be *striving*. Our prophet here informs us that while he desired God in the night, that desire was very efficacious. For, in the 8th verse he declares, "In the way of Your judgments, O Lord, we have waited for You." This desire made me wait for Your judgments. How many do I hear say I am waiting for God, it is all I do—there I lie at the pool of Bethesda and one of these days an angel will come and stir the pool. Stop! How do you know you are not deceiving yourself? There is a friend waiting for me to tea—I will step into the room. There is no kettle on the fire—there is not a bit for me to eat. "Sir, we have been waiting for you." But there is nothing ready in the house! I do not believe them. They could not have been waiting for me, or else they would have been ready! And waiting for God always implies being *ready*. Says a man, "I am waiting for God," but he is not ready for God at all—he still keeps on his drunkenness—the house is still not swept! He is as worldly as ever. He is waiting—yes—but waiting implies being ready. And nobody is waiting that is not ready. You are not waiting for the coach until you have your coat and hat on and are looking out the door for it. And you are not waiting for God until you are ready to go with God. No man ought to say, I am waiting for God.

No, beloved, it is generally God who is waiting for us, rather than any of us waiting for Him! No sinner can be beforehand with Him. But the prophet waited "in the way of God's judgments"—that is, waited in the right place—waited in the House of God—waited under the sound of the Gospel. And then this desire led him to seek. "With my spirit within me will I seek You." It led him to seek after God. Oh, the poor pitiful desires of some of you are very little good. An old writer says, "Hell is paved with good intentions." I was not aware that there was any pavement at all—because it has no bottom—but at the same time I believe that the sides of the pit are hung round with good intentions. And men will feel themselves pricked and goaded from side to side with good designs that they once formed but never carried out—children that were strangled at birth—desires that never were brought into living acts—desires that sprang up like the mushroom in the night and like the fungus, were

swept away! Like smoke from the chimney that stopped as soon as the fire had gone out. Oh, brothers and sisters, if these are your desires, they are not practical, they do not come of God. But if your desires have made you give up your drunkenness—have compelled you to renounce your theater-going—have compelled you to seek God with full purpose of heart—have brought you to give up one lust and another—take comfort, you are in the right road if your desires are practical desires!

3. Again—you can tell these desires by their *urgency*. Ah, you want to be saved, some of you, but it must be this day next week. But when the Holy Spirit speaks, He says, *"Today* if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." It must be now or never! "Today give me grace. *Today* give me mercy. *Today* give me pardon." Some of you hope to be saved before you die, before the pit of hell closes on you. You hope Jesus Christ will look down upon you in some years to come. You have not set down how many years, I suppose. But it is always in the distant hazy future. But the true desire is *now*. Does the poor man who stands upon the scaffold with a rope round his neck say, "Pardon me in a year's time?" No, he is afraid he shall the next minute be launched into eternity! He who feels his danger will cry, "Now!" He who wants Christ, really, will cry, "Now!" He who is spiritually awakened will cry out, "Now or never!" What? Sinner, will it do to postpone salvation? Does your heart tell you it will do by-and-by? What? When the fire is just coming through the boards of your little chamber? What? When your ship has struck upon the rock and is filling? Yes, she is filling, while the fire at the other end is rushing up. And fire and water together are seeking your destruction. Will you say, "Tomorrow"? Why, you may be dead before tomorrow's sun has risen! Tomorrow? Where is it? In the devil's calendar? It is not written in any book on earth. Tomorrow? It is some fancied islet in the far off sea that the mariner has never reached. Tomorrow? It is the fool's desire—which he never shall gain. Like a will-o-wisp it dances before him, but only lands him in the marshes of distress. Tomorrow? There is no such thing! It is God's. If there is such a day, ours it cannot be. Tillotson well remarks—"To be always intending to live a new life but never to find time to set about it—this is as if a man should put off eating and drinking and sleeping, from one day and night to another, till he is starved and destroyed." But you say, "If I have desired God, why have I not obtained my desire before now? Why has not God granted my request?"

In the first place, *you have hardly a right to ask the question*. For God has a right to grant your petition or not as He pleases! And far be it from man to say to God, "What are You doing?" He is Sovereign and has power to do what He wills. But since your anxiety has dictated the question, let my anxiety attempt to answer it. Perhaps God has not granted your desire because He wishes your own profit thereby. He designs to show you more of the desperate wickedness of your heart, that in future you may fear to trust it. He wants you to see more of the blackness of darkness and of the horrible pit of sin—that like a burnt child you may shun the

fire forever. He lets you go down into the dungeon that you may prize liberty the better when it comes. And He is keeping you waiting, moreover, that your longings may be quickened. He knows that delay will fan the desire and that if He keeps you waiting, it will not be a loss to you, but will gain you much because you will see your necessity more clearly, seek Him more earnestly, cry more bitterly and your heart will be more in earnest after Him! Besides, poor soul, God keeps you waiting, perhaps, in order that He may display the riches of His grace more fully to you at the last. I believe that some of us who were kept by God a long while before we found Him, loved Him better, perhaps, than we would have done if we had received Him directly. And we can preach better to others, we can speak more of His loving-kindness and tender mercy. John Bunyan could not have written as he did if he had not been dragged about by the devil for many years. Ah, I love that picture of dear old Christian! When I first read that book and saw the old woodcut in it of Christian carrying the burden on his back, I felt so interested for the poor fellow that I thought I should jump with joy when, after the poor creature had carried his burden so long, he at last got rid of it! Ah, beloved, God may make you and me carry the burden for a long time till He takes it off that we may leap all the higher with joy when we do get deliverance, for depend upon it, there is no poor penitent who loves mercy as well as he who has been ferrying for it for a season. Perhaps that is the reason why God keeps you waiting.

One more thought here. *Perhaps it has already come*. I think some of you are pardoned and you do not know it. I think some of you are forgiven, though you are expecting something wonderful as a sign which you will never receive. Persons have got the strangest notions in the world about conversion. I have heard persons tell the strangest tales you could imagine about how they were converted—though, of course, I did not believe them! And I fancy some of you think you will have a kind of electric shock—that a sort of galvanism, or something or other, will pass through you, such as you never had before. Do not be expecting any miracles! If you will not think you are pardoned till you get a vision, you will have to wait many a year! Some people fancy they are not pardoned because they have never heard a voice in their ears. I would be very sorry to have my salvation dependent on a text of Scripture applied to my heart. I would be afraid that the devil had applied it, or that it was the wind whistling behind me. I want something more sure than that! Perhaps you are forgiven and you do not yet know it. God has spoken the tidings of mercy to your spirit and you have not yet heard it, because you are saying, "It cannot be that." If you could but sit down and think of this—"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief," I think you would find that you, after all, are not excluded! There is no great need for any of these miraculous things that you are reckoning upon. God may have given them to some of His people, but He has never *promised* them. Perhaps,

then, the question may be answered by saying, "The pardon is there, but you do not know it." Oh, may God speak loudly in your soul, that you may know really and certainly that He has forgiven you!

But there is one more serious inquiry—and it is, "*Will God grant my desire at last?"* Yes, poor soul, verily He will. It is quite impossible that you should have desired God and should be lost, if you have desired Him with the desire I have described. Suppose that you should go down into the chambers of the lost with the desire still in your spirit—when you entered within the gates you would have to say, "I desired mercy of God and He would not give it to me—I sought grace at the hands of Jesus and He would not give it." You know what would be said at once? Satan would be so pleased. "Ah," he would say, "here is a sinner that perished praying—God has not kept His promise, for He said, 'Whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved'—and here is one that did it and he is lost!"

Ah, how they would howl for joy in hell! They would sing a blasphemous song against the Almighty God—that one poor desiring soul should be there! I tell you one thing—I have heard many wicked things in my life—I have heard many men swear and blaspheme God. I have trembled at their speech but there is one thing I never did hear a man say yet and I think God would scarcely permit any man to perpetrate such a lie—I never heard even a drunken man say, "I sincerely sought God with full purpose of heart and yet He has not heard me and will not answer me, but has cast me away." I scarcely think it possible—although I know that men can be infinitely wicked—that any man could utter such an abominable lie as that! At any rate, I can say I never heard it. And I believe there are some of you who can say, "I have been young and now am old, yet have I never seen one penitent sinner who could say, in despair, 'I am not saved. I have sought God and He will not hear me, He has cast me away from His face and will not give me mercy.'" And, I think, as long as you live you will not meet a case. Then why should *you* be the first? Why, poor penitent, should *you* be the first? Do you think you are a chosen mark for all the arrows of the Almighty? Has He set you for a butt against which He will direct all the thunderbolts of His vengeance? Are you to be the first instance in which mercy fails? Are you to be the one who shall first out-do the infinity of love? Oh, say not so! Despair is mad, but for one instant, gather up your reason, you despairing one. Would God wish to see you damned? Has He not said, "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but would rather that he should turn to Me and live"? Do you think it would be a pleasure to the Almighty to have your blood? Oh, far be it from you to conceive it! Do you not think that He loves to pardon? Has he not said, Himself, He delights in mercy? And is it not written, "As the heavens are higher than the earth so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts"? What advantage would it be for God to destroy your soul? Would it not be more to His honor to save you? Ah, assuredly—because you would sing His praise in heaven, would you not? Yes, but remember,

the best argument I can use with you is this—Do you suppose that God would give His Son to die for sinners, and yet would not save sinners? It is written in the Scriptures that, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," and you are a sinner. You feel that you are a sinner—you know it; then He came to save you! Only believe that. As a poor penitent you have a right to believe it. If you were a Pharisee, you would not have that right. But as a penitent, humble, contrite soul—you have a right to believe in Jesus! The Pharisee has none, for it is never written that He came to save the righteous, and if he believed He did, he would believe a lie.

But every man and woman who is a sinner, every man and woman who lays claim to that title, also has a right to believe that Christ died for them! And not only so but it is true. He came into the world for a certain purpose and what He came for He will do. He came into the world to save sinners and now it is written, "Whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. He who believes not shall be damned." When, last Friday, I had the honor of preaching to many a thousand persons in the open air—such an assembly as I never dreamed of seeing, and such a vast number as I could scarcely have fancied would have met for any religious purpose—I noticed a most singularly powerful echo, constantly taking up the last words of my sentences, and sending them back, as if some great giant voice had spoken to confirm what I had said. When I had repeated the words, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved," my echo said, "Saved!" And when I proceeded, "He who believes not shall be damned," I heard the echo gently say, "Damned!" I think this morning I hear that echo—"He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." And the saints above cry, "Saved!" Listen! How they sing before the throne of God! Listen! How your glorified parents and your immortalized relatives cry, "Saved!" Hear you not the echo, as it echoes from the blue sky of heavens—"Saved!"?

But, oh, doleful thought, when I utter those words, "He who believes not shall be damned," there comes up that dread word—"Damned!"—from the place where there are "hollow groans and sullen moans, and shrieks of tortured ghosts." God grant that you may never know what it is to be damned! God give you grace to believe now! Remember, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

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THE NECESSITY OF INCREASED FAITH
NO. 32

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 1, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"And the apostles said unto the Lord, 'Increase our faith.'"
Luke 17:5

VERILY if the apostles said this, one and all of us had need take up the prayer. If the twelve mightiest in the army of the Lord of hosts had need of such a supplication, what shall *we* say who are but the interior soldiers—the feeblest saints? If you hope to win the day, does it not well become us to pray, "Increase our faith"?

It is a matter of dispute as to the occasion when these words were uttered. Some think that we must look at the connection of the chapter for the explanation. Jesus Christ had been teaching His disciples that if their brother should trespass against them seven times a day and seven times a day turned again to them saying, I repent, they were to forgive him. Some say that constrained the apostles to say, "Increase our faith." They conceived it to be so hard a duty to incessantly pardon and constantly to forgive, that they felt unable to accomplish it without a large increase of faith. Others think—very possibly with greater truth—that the prayer was offered when the apostles endeavored to cast out the evil spirits from the poor demoniac and failed in the attempt. "And they said to Jesus, why could not we cast him out? And He said, verily, if you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say unto this sycamore tree, be you plucked up by the root and be you planted in the sea and it would obey you." Then they said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." However, whatever the occasion in this particular instance, we shall always find good enough occasion for presenting the prayer—and I know not but this morning may be a season when each of us may have special necessity to put it up to God, "Increase our faith." Proceeding at once to the subject, the first thing we shall consider is *the object of their solicitude*. It was their "faith." Secondly, *the desire of their hearts*—"Increase our faith." And then thirdly, *the person on whom they trusted to strengthen their faith*—"They said to the Lord, increase our faith."

I. First, then, THE OBJECT OF THEIR SOLICITUDE WAS THEIR FAITH. Faith is of the utmost importance to a Christian. There is nothing of which we should have a greater and a more earnest concern than our faith. I shall endeavor to show you this from seven or eight reasons and may God press them to your hearts and send them so home that every one of us may become deeply anxious as to whether we have a real vital faith which unites us to the Lamb and brings salvation to our souls.

1. We ought, my friends, to be extremely careful of our faith—both of its rightness and of its strength First of all—when we consider *the position which faith occupied in salvation*. Faith is the salvation grace. We are not saved by love. But we are saved by grace and we are saved by faith. We are not saved by courage; we are not saved by patience. We are saved by faith. That is to say, God gives His salvation to faith and not to any other virtue. It is nowhere written—he that loves shall be saved. It is nowhere recorded that a patient sinner shall be saved. But it is said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved."

Faith is the vital part of salvation. If a man lacks faith, he lacks everything; "Without faith it is impossible to please God." If a man has true faith—however little he has of any other virtue, that man is secure; but supposing it possible for a man to possess every virtue in the world, let him be as much a Christian in his exterior as the apostle Paul, himself; let him be as earnest as a seraph; let him be as diligent in the service of his Master as you could conceive even an angel on high to be, still, "without faith"—and God's word declares—"it is impossible to please God." Faith is the saving grace—it is the connecting link between the soul and Christ. Take that away and all is gone. Remove faith, you have sawn through the ship's keel and she must sink. Take away faith, you have taken away my shield and I must be slain. Remove faith and Christian life becomes a nonentity—it is extinct at once, for, "The just shall live by faith"—and without faith how could they live at all? Consider then, that since faith is so important in salvation, it becomes each of us more earnestly to inquire whether we have faith or not. O, my brethren, there are a thousand shams in the world—a thousand imitations of faith. But there is only one true vital saving faith. There are scores of *notional* faiths—a faith which consists in holding a sound creed, a faith which bids men believe a lie by wrapping them up with assurances of their safety when they are still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. There is a faith which consists in presumptuously trusting to ourselves. There are scores of false faiths—but there is only one true one. Oh, as you wish to be saved at last—as you would not be self-deceived and go marching to damnation with your eyes shut—take your faith in your hands this morning and see whether it is genuine sterling coin! We ought to be more careful of our faith than of anything else. True, we ought to examine our conduct; we ought to search our works; we ought to try our love, but above all, our faith—for if faith is wrong, all is wrong. If faith is right, we may take that as the touchstone of our sincerity. "He that believes on the Son of God has eternal life abiding in him."

2. Secondly—be anxious about your faith, *for all your graces hang upon it*. Faith is the root grace—all other virtues and graces spring from it. Tell me of love—how can I love Him in whom I do not believe? If I do not believe that there is a God, and that He is the rewarder of all that diligently seek Him, how can I possibly love Him? Tell me of patience—how can I exercise patience unless I have faith? Faith looks to the recompense

of the reward—she says that "All things are working together for our good." She believes that from our distresses the greater glory shall spring and therefore she can endure. Tell me of courage—but who can have courage if he has not faith? Take what virtue you will and you will see that it depends on *faith*. Faith is the silver thread upon which the pearls of the graces are to be strung. Break that and you have broken the string—the pearls lie scattered on the ground. Nor can you wear them for your own adornment. Faith is the mother of virtues. Faith is the fire which consumes the sacrifice. Faith is the water which nurtures the root. Faith is the sap which imparts vitality to all the branches. If you have not faith, all your graces must die. And in proportion as your faith increases so will all your virtues, not all in the same proportion, but all in some degree. The man of little faith is the man of little love. The man of great faith is the man of great affection. He that has great faith in God could give himself to die for God. He who has little faith in Him would shrink at the stake because his love would be feeble. Have care of your faith, for on that your *virtue* depends. And if you would cultivate things that are goodly, "things that are lovely, things that are of good repute," things that are honorable to yourself, and pleasing to God, guard well your faith, for on your faith all things must rest.

3. Thirdly—Take heed of your faith, because *Christ thinks much of it*. There are three things in the New Testament which are called precious. One of them you know—the precious blood of Christ. Another is the exceedingly great and precious promises. And faith has the honor of being the third thing—"To them that have obtained like precious faith." So that faith is one of God's three precious things. It is one of the things which He values above all others. I was astonished yesterday when I met with an idea of an old divine concerning the honor which God puts on faith—says he, "Christ takes the crown off His own head to put it on Faith's head." Mark you how often our Lord says, "Your faith has *saved* you." Now it is not faith that saves—it is Christ that saves. "Your faith has *healed* you," says Christ. Now faith did not heal, it was Christ that healed, but Christ did uncrown Himself to crown Faith. He took the royal diadem of salvation from His own head, and placed it on the brow of Faith and therein He made Faith "the king of kings"—for it wears the crown which the king of kings, alone, can wear—"the crown of salvation." Do you not know that we read, "We are justified by faith." Now, in one sense this is not the fact, for the matter of justification is the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. We are justified by Christ, but Christ arrays faith in His own royal garments, and renders it truly illustrious. Jesus Christ always puts faith in the seat of honor. When that poor woman came whose daughter was ill, He said, "O woman, great is your faith!" He might have said, "Woman, great is your love," for it was great love that made her force her way through the crowd and speak on her daughter's behalf. Or, "Great is your patience," for when He called her, "dog," she still stuck to Him and would not depart. He might have said, "Great is

your courage," for she said, "Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs." Or, He might have said, "Great is your wisdom." For she was a wise woman to extract sweets out of the bitters and to say, "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs." But He overlooks all that and says, "Great is your *faith."* Well, if Christ thinks so much of faith, ought we not to esteem it most highly? Is it possible to think too highly of that jewel which Christ reckons to be the most valuable? If He sets faith in the forefront of the forehead of virtue, and if He regards it as the choicest gem in the crown of the Christian, will it not awaken us to see whether we have it or not, for if we have it, we are rich—rich in faith and promises, but if we possess it not, whatever we have, we are poor—poor in this world and poor in the next.

4. Next, Christian, take good care of your faith, for remember, *faith is the only way whereby you can obtain blessings*. If we want blessings from God, nothing can fetch them down except faith. Prayer cannot draw down answers from God's throne except it is the earnest prayer of the man who believes. Faith is the ladder on which my soul must walk to ascend to heaven. If I break that ladder, how can I ever approach my God? Faith is the angelic messenger between the soul and heaven. Let that angel be withdrawn, I can neither send prayer up nor receive the answers down. Faith is the telegraphic wire which links earth and heaven—on which God's blessings move so fast that before we call, He answers and while we are yet speaking He hears us! But if that telegraphic wire of faith is snapped, how can we receive the promise? Am I in trouble? I can obtain help for trouble by faith. Am I beaten about by the enemy? My soul on that dear refuge leans by faith. But, take faith away—in vain I call on God. There is no road between my soul and heaven. In the deepest winter, faith is a road on which the horses of prayer may travel—yes, and all the better for the biting frost! But blockade the road and how can we communicate with our great king? Faith links me with divinity. Faith clothes me with the robes of Deity. Faith engages on my side the omnipotence of Jehovah. Faith gives me the might of God, for it ensures that power on my behalf. It gives me courage to defy the hosts of hell. It makes me march triumphant over the necks of my enemies. But without faith how can I receive anything of the Lord? Let not him that wavers—who is like a wave of the sea—expect that he will receive anything of God! O then, Christians, watch well your faith! For with it you can win all things, however poor you are—but without it you can obtain nothing. It is said of Midas, that he had the power to turn everything into gold by the touch of his hand. And it is true of faith—it can turn everything into gold. But destroy faith, we have lost our all. We are miserably poor, because we can hold no fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

5. Next, my friends take care of your faith perpetually, *because of your enemies*. For if you do not need faith when you are with friends, you will require it when you have to deal with your foes. That good old warrior,

Paul, once led the Ephesians into the armory and after he had shown them the shoes they were to wear, the belt, the breastplate, the helmet and the sword, he solemnly said, "Above all take the shield of *faith*." Even if you forget the helmet, be quite sure of the shield, for if your helmet should be off, you may ward off a blow with the shield and save it from your head. You had better put on the "shoes of peace and the breastplate of righteousness," but if you omit one of them, take care that you have "the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." Well, now, faith makes a man very mighty when he deals with enemies. If a man believes he is right, only taking it in a natural point of view—bring that man before princes and kings, for the sake of truth, how lion-like will he be! He will say, "I cannot yield, I must not, for I have the truth on my side." Yes, though others may style it dogged obstinacy, it is a true nobility of soul which bids a man declare, "I will not yield."

Much stronger is true spiritual faith. It has taken the martyr to the stake and enabled him to sing when the flames have girdled him. It has led another to the sea. And like he of whom we read in the old martyrologies, it has helped even the aged matron to cry, "Christ is all yet!" Faith has quenched the violence of the flames, shut the mouth of lions and out of weakness it has made us strong. It has overcome more enemies than the whole host of conquerors. Tell me not of the victories of Wellington. Mention not the battles of Napoleon. Tell me of what FAITH has done! Oh, if we should erect a monument to the honor of faith, what various names should we carve upon the mighty pedestal! We should inscribe, here, "The lion's den." There, "The battle of the leopards." Here we should have recorded how faith divided the Red Sea. And there, how faith smote the Midianites. And there, how Jael slew Sisera by faith. What conflicts of faith should we have to engrave? O, Faith, your banner high shall wave! Your escutcheon is most glorious! Great are you and full of victories! With you, O faith, I cast the gauntlet to the world, secure of victory. Give me a child to fight with and *without faith*—like poor Peter before the little maid, I should tremble and deny my Master. But that same Peter, *with faith*, fears not to stand before a frowning Sanhedrin—to speak of his Master amid the scoffing of the high priests!

Mary, Queen of Scots, said she was, "more afraid of John Knox's prayers and faith than she was of an army of ten thousand men." And a sensible enemy may well tremble when such invincibles are at war with him. I should not like to have a man of faith opposing me. Tell me the world hates me and I will rejoice at it. But tell me that a man of faith has determined to crush me and I have need to tremble—for there is a potency in that man's arm—his blows strike hard. And when he does smite, he smites home, as with a rod of iron. Tremble, foes of God, for faith must overcome. And O you servants of the living God, guard well your faith, for by this shall you be victorious. And you shall stand like rocks, unmoved amid the storms, unshaken by the tempests of persecution.

6. And now for a sixth reason. Take care of your faith, because *otherwise you cannot well perform your duty*. Faith is the foot of the soul by which it can march along the road of the commandments. Love can make the feet move more swiftly. But faith is the foot which carries the soul. Faith is the oil enabling the wheels of holy devotion and of earnest piety to move well. Without faith the wheels are taken from the chariot and we drag along heavily. With faith I can do all things. Without faith I shall neither have the inclination nor the power to do anything in the service of God. If you would find the men who serve God the best, you will find them the men of the most faith. Little faith will save a man, but little faith cannot do great things. Poor Little-Faith could not have fought "Apollyon." No, it needed "Christian" to do that. Poor Little-Faith could not have slain "Giant Despair." It required "Great-Heart's" arm to knock that monster down. Little-Faith can get to heaven very surely but it often has to run and hide itself in a nutshell and to lose all but its jewels. If there are great battles and great works to do, there must be great faith! Assurance can carry mountains on its back—Little-Faith stumbles at a molehill. Great-Faith, like Behemoth, can "snuff' up Jordan at a draught—Little-Faith is drowned in a drop of rain. Little-Faith begins to think of going back at the slightest trouble. Great-Faith can build temples. She can pile castles. She can preach the gospel. She can proclaim Christ's name before enemies. She can do all things. And if you would be great, indeed, and serve your Master much, as I trust you will, you will seek increased faith! By so doing you will be more diligent in duty. O, you active Christians, be full of faith! You busy Christians, be sure to guard it! For once let that fall, what will you do? As Sunday school teachers, as preachers, as visitors of the sick, or whatever you have to do, rest assured that faith must be your strength and confidence. If that fails, where are you then?

Again—take care of your faith. For *only faith can comfort you in your troubles*. Yes, say some, this is about all we think of, the *uses of faith* to console us in our troubles. Now I never like to laugh at God's people because they desire comfort. I believe that it is a very great proof that they are children—that they like sweet things. If they did not, I should fear they were not God's children at all. But I hear ministers saying, "Ah, you are always saying you need comfort, you need comfort." Yes, to be sure, I say, they do. And they need it because they never get it from you, Sir! I believe God's people do need comfort, though, it is true, they want too much of it when they ought not to have it. But they require a promise very often and they ought to have it. Now faith is the best cordial to the soul. O, how faith will realize a promise at a time when there is great trouble coming! "Ah!" says faith, "God says, 'As your days so shall your strength be.'" "Ah!" says faith, "it is a rough road. The thorns are sharp. The flints are strewn about it, but then, 'your shoes shall be iron and brass.' " And faith looks at the strong old shoes and says, "I will even venture," and off she goes. Little-Faith sits murmuring in a corner—

Great-Faith is singing in the fire. "They shall praise Him aloud in their beds; they shall sing His high praise in the fire." Little-Faith stands desponding, mingling her tears with the flood. Great-Faith says, "When you pass through the river, I will be with you, the flood shall not overflow you. When you pass through the fire, you shall not be burned—neither shall the flames kindle upon you." Would you be comfortable and happy? Would you enjoy religion? Would you have the religion of cheerfulness and not that of gloom? Then seek more faith. You will be saved with ever so little faith but you will not be saved happily. You will be happy hereafter if you believe in the slightest degree. But you will not be happy here unless you fully, habitually and earnestly believe—believe strongly in the faithful promises of Jehovah, in all the glorious dignity of His person and in all the faithfulness and immutability of His grace. If you would be Christian larks and not Christian owls, seek to have more faith. If you love darkness and would fly about in it in gloom and misery, then be content with little faith. But if you would mount in sunshine and carol like the bird of day, then seek strong confidence!

One more reason; take care of your faith, my friends, for *it is very often so weak that it demands all your attention*. I do not know whether any of you feel that your faith is too strong. I never feel mine strong enough. It seems to be exactly strong enough to bear the day's troubles, but it would not stand cutting in the least degree with the plane. I could not afford to take the least atom off. It is just enough and no more. As for some of us, our faith is so weak that the least trouble threatens to devour it. The goat passes and nips its tender shoot, the winter chills and freezes it—it is almost ready to die. And my faith very often hangs upon the feeblest thread. It appears ready to expire. Take care of your faith, Christian, take care of your faith! Whatever you leave outside at night, do not leave that little child of faith. Whatever plant is exposed to the frost, be sure to put faith inside. Take care of faith, for it is generally so weak it needs well to have a good preservation.

Thus have I tried, as well as I can, this morning, to set forth the great necessity of looking to our faith. And our prayer must be, as it was that of the apostles, "Increase our faith."

II. This brings us, secondly, to consider THE HEART'S DESIRE OF THE APOSTLES. "Increase our faith." They did not say, "Lord keep our faith alive—Lord sustain it as it is at present," but, "Increase our faith" for they knew very well that it is only by *increase* that the Christian keeps alive at all. Napoleon once said, "I must fight battles and I must win them—conquest has made me what I am and conquest must maintain me." And it is so with the Christian. It is not yesterday's battle that will save me today. I must be going onwards. A wheel will remain erect as long as it moves, but when it begins to stand still, it falls. Christian men are saved by progress—constantly going onwards keeps the Christian alive. If it were possible for me to stop, I know not where my life would be. The Christian must be going onward. For the arrow will mount while

still it is in progress, but it stalls the moment the power stops that keeps it aloft. So the apostles said unto the Lord, "Increase our faith."

First—"Increase our faith," *in its extent*. The extent of what it will receive. Usually, when we commence the Christian life, faith does not grasp much—it only believes a few elementary doctrines. I find that many young converts have not gone much farther than believing that Jesus Christ died for sinners. By-and-by they get a little advanced and believe election. But there is very little beyond that they receive—and it is not until many years that they believe the entire gospel. Some of you, my hearers, and a great many that are not my hearers are miserable little cramped souls—you have learned a cast-iron creed and you will never move out of it. A certain somebody drew up five or six doctrines and said, "There are the doctrines of the Bible," and you believe these. But you do not want to have your faith increased—for you do not believe a great deal more that is in the Bible. I do not think I differ from any of my hyper-Calvinistic brothers and sisters in what I do believe, but I differ from them in what they do *not* believe. I do not believe any less than they do but I believe a little *more.* I think, as we grow, we shall have our belief increased. Not only are there a few cardinal doctrines that will be enough to steer our ship by, north, south, east, or west, but we shall begin to learn something about the north-west and north-east and that which lies *between* the four points! Many people, when they hear something a little contrary to what they have usually heard, say at once, "That is not sound." But who made *you* a judge of what is sound? And there are some little souls who set themselves up for princes in Israel and think every man must believe as they believe, or else he is decidedly wrong. And they will hold no Christian communication or fellowship with him. I am sure I may pray to the Lord for them—"Increase their faith!" Help them to believe a little more. Help them to believe there may be Christian Wesleyans—that there are good church people, and not only that Particular Baptists are very good sort of people, but that there are some of God's elect *everywhere*. I am sure I pray for all bigots, that they may have a little wider heart. I should like to stretch their hearts a little. But, no, they have reached the *ultima thule,* they have come to the last of the fortunate islands, there cannot be any shore beyond. It is dangerous for a mariner to spread his sails on untried seas. "Up to now," says pious Crisp—and therefore, many fancy, "up to now shall you go and no further." Dr. Gill declares just so much and who shall venture to say more. Or perhaps Calvin is made the standard and what business has any man to think a single thought beyond Calvin? Blessed be God, we have gone a little beyond that. And we can say, "Increase our faith." With all our admiration for these great standard divines, we are not prepared to shut ourselves up in their little iron cages. We say, "Open the door and let me fly—let me still feel that I am at liberty. Increase my faith and help me to believe a little more." I know I can say I have had an increase of faith in one or two respects within the last few months. I could not, for a long time, see

anything like the Millennium in the Scriptures. I could not much rejoice in the second coming of Christ, though I did believe it. But gradually my faith began to open to that subject and I find it now a part of my meat and drink, to be looking for, as well as hastening unto, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ! I believe I have only just begun to learn the A B Cs of the Scriptures and will constantly cry to the Lord, "Increase my faith, that I may know more and believe more and understand Your word far better." "Increase my faith," in its extent.

Next, "Increase my faith," *in its intensity*. Faith needs to be increased in its power, as well as in its extent. We do not wish to act as some do with a river, when they break the banks to let it spread over the pasture and so make it shallower. We wish, while it increases in surface, that it may increase likewise in its depth. Increase "the intensity of our faith!" Faith at first takes God's mercy with an open palm—as it increases, it holds it with her fingers and not more firmly. But when faith grows strong, ah, she takes it, as with an iron vice and grasps it—and death nor hell could rend a promise from faith's hand when faith is strong. The young Christian at first is not constant in his faith—a little wind comes and he shakes. When he gets to be an old Christian it will take old Boreas, with 50 of his winds, to move him. Do you not feel, my dear friends, that you need faith to be increased in its intensity? Would you not sing with Watts—

"Oh, that I had a stronger faith,
To look within the veil;
To credit what my Savior says,
Whose word can never fail"?

Your poor little faith cannot see many yards before it, for there are clouds of darkness all around. But strong faith can climb the hill that is called, "Clear," and from the top thereof can see the celestial city and the land that is very far off! Oh, may God increase your faith to such a degree that you may often have visions of heaven—that you may sweetly sing, as Moses might have done at the top of Pisgah—

"Oh, the transporting rapturous scene
That rises to my sight!
Sweet fields arrayed in living green,
And rivers of delight!"

I pray God that you may climb up there, bathe your eyes in splendor, plunge your soul in rivers of bliss and be thoroughly transported and carried away by visions of that state of beatitude which shortly shall be yours. Beloved, let me exhort you to cry to the Lord, "Increase my faith" in its power of realizing heaven and in every other way.

III. I have no time to dwell upon this, but must close up by very briefly mentioning THE PERSON TO WHOM THE APOSTLES ADDRESSED THEIR PRAYER. The apostles said to *the Lord,* "Increase our faith!" They went to the right person. They did not say to themselves, "I will increase my faith"—they did not cry to the minister, "Preach a comforting sermon and increase my faith." They did not say, "I will read such-and-such a

book and that will increase my faith." No, they said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." Faith's author can alone increase it! I could inflate your faith till it turned into presumption but I could not make it grow. It is God's work to feed faith, as well as to give it life at first. And if any of you desire to have a growing faith, go and take your burden this morning to God's throne, crying "Lord, increase our faith!" If you feel that your troubles have been increased, go to the Lord and say, "Increase our faith!" If your money is accumulating, go to the Lord and say, "Increase our faith"—for you will need more faith as you get more prosperity. If your property is diminishing, go to Him and say, "Increase our faith," so that what you lose in one scale, you may gain in the other. Are you sickly and full of pain this morning? Go to your Master and say, "Increase my faith," so that you may not be impatient, but be able to bear it well. Are you tired and weary? Go and supplicate, "Increase our faith!" Have you little faith? Take it to God and He will turn it into great faith. There is no hothouse for growing tender plants like a house that is within the curtains—the tabernacle of God—where the Shekinah dwells.

I have been speaking in very great pain. But I would, if possible, close by asking you who are Christians whether you do not think this prayer very necessary to your own state. Let each one ask himself—"Do not I need more faith?" My brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ, rest assured, you will never get too much of this precious grace. If you pay all the way to heaven, you will never have a penny to spare when you get to heaven's gate. If you live on faith your entire journey through, you will not have a pot of manna left. Pray, then, for an increase of faith. You need this church to stand, do you not? It can stand only in proportion as you are men and women of faith! I know I might exhort you to be men and women of prayer. But *faith* is the foundation stone—prayer comes next. Prayer without faith would be an empty mockery. It would win nothing of God. Do you want us to stand? Do you know how the world speaks of us—how the enthusiasm of the ranting people of Park Street are talked of? How is it to be kept up, except through your faith? How shall your minister's hands be held up, except by your faith and your prayers? Let faith be the Aaron! Let prayer be the Hur! And faith and prayer can hold up the hands of Moses, while the army below is fighting the enemy. Would you be kept from falling? You must be strong in faith. Little faith falls, strong faith stands. Would you win the day and reign in heaven with a starry crown more brilliant than you might otherwise expect? Then be you increased in faith! And would you honor God much and enter heaven, after having fought a good fight and won a crown? Then I will offer the supplication, "Increase the faith of my people," and put up the prayer, "Increase my faith."

But there are some of you, dear friends, who could not use this petition and dare not. What would it avail you if you did so? Seeing you have *no* faith, how could that be increased which has no existence? Rather, your first need is the possession of the simple germs of faith. Oh, my

hearers, I marvel what some of you do without the comforts which faith can alone afford! Some of you are very poor people—how do you manage to endure your toils and troubles without faith? Where is your comfort? I do not wonder at your going to get drunk, or rioting in the ale-house, if you have no other comfort in this world. When I have penetrated some of our back streets and seen the poverty of the people, I have thought, "If these people have no religion, what have these to comfort them? They are not like the rich man, who can indulge himself in every way—what have they got in this world worth living for?" I suppose they have some kind of happiness—what sort of a thing it is I cannot tell—it is to me a source of continual inquiry. And you rich men, what will you do without faith? You know that you must leave all your property behind you—surely this will make the idea of death dreadful to you. I cannot understand even your happiness, if you have any. I know this—

"I would not change my blest estate
For all the earth calls good or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."

But I want to ask you, what would you do in the next world without faith? Remember, you are standing now upon the edge of the vast gulf of an unknown future. Your soul stands quivering on the verge of the dark abyss—each time your pulse beats, your soul is brought nearer to eternity. Faith gives wings to the soul. But what will you do without wings? There is a narrow gulf dividing earth from heaven. The Christian flaps his wings and, borne upon them, he flies to heaven. But what will you do without wings? It will be a leap—a leap into the pit of hell, to sink forever, without the power of ever recovering yourself. If a Christian could sink on his journey to heaven, he would not sink far, for he would flap his wings and be up again! But there you will be, perpetually descending through that pit of hell that has no bottom—struggling to rise, but you cannot, for you have no wings. Once more—oh, unbelievers, what will you do without faith? For faith gives eyes to the soul. Faith gives us to see things that are not seen—it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The Christian, when he dies, will enter the land of death with his eyes open—by means of which, goodly hosts of angels shall cheer his vision. But you must die a blind and eyeless spirit. Unhappy is the lot of the blind in this present world, but how infinitely deplorable that eternal blindness which shall prevent a sight of the splendors of Paradise and shut out forever even the feeblest ray of joy or hope!

And, once more—faith is the hand of the soul. The Christian, when he dies, catches hold of Christ's garment and Christ bears him into heaven. A bright angel descends—I clasp that angel—and on his wings he wafts me up to bliss. But when the unbeliever dies, the angel would have a useless errand, for he has no hands. Suppose, O sinner, Christ is there, but you cannot even touch His garments, for you have no hands to do it

with! What will you do in the next world without hands? Do you think God will suffer such deformed souls in heaven, without hands and without eyes? No, not at all, but how could you get in without hands? You could not open the gates of heaven. What would you do? You would call on God for mercy—and if the mercy were held out to you, you have not hands with which to lay hold upon it! I do not understand how some of you are happy without religion. I do not know what you mean to do if you die without faith. Go home and think of what you will do if you die without religion—whether you intend to brazen it out before the face of the eternal—or tamely to submit. Sinner! You cannot enter into heaven without faith, but what have you made up your mind to do? Do you intend to tear down the gates of heaven? Do you think you have omnipotence enough to force your way through squadrons of cherubim and legions of angels and so to enter by force? Or what do you design to do? Do you intend to quietly lie down in beds of sulfur? Do you design to be willingly tossed perpetually in that brimstone lake where there is no bottom—where briny tears forever fall?

Will you do that? Will you make your bed in hell? Sirs, are you so besotted that you are content with such an eternal doom? Is your reason clean gone? Are your senses so unenlightened that you can thus cast yourselves away? Surely you have resolved to do something! What, then, will you do? Do you fancy that without faith you will enter heaven, when it is written, "Without faith it is impossible to please God"? And when God has said, "He that believes not shall be damned," do you think you can reverse the decree? Will you mount the throne of Jehovah, and forswear Jehovah Himself? Will you change His mandate and admit the unbeliever into heaven? No, you cannot! Tremble, then, unbeliever, tremble, for there awaits you nothing but "a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation." What will you do in the swellings of Jordan without faith to keep your heads above the waters? God give faith to those that have none! And as for others, may He increase their faith!

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A WISE DESIRE
NO. 33

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 8, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK

"He shall choose our inheritance for us."
Psalm 47:4.

THE Christian is always pleased and delighted when he can see Christ in the Scriptures. If he can but detect the footstep of his Lord and discover that the sacred writers are making some reference to Him, however indistinct or dark, he will rejoice—for all the scriptures are nothing except as we find Christ in them. St. Austin says, "The scriptures are the swaddling bands of the Man-Child, Christ Jesus, and were all intended to be hallowed garments in which to wrap Him." So they are. And it is our pleasant duty to lift the veil, or remove the garment of Jesus and so behold Him in His person, in His nature, or His offices. Now this text is concerning Jesus Christ—He it is who is to "choose our inheritance for us." He in whom dwells all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge is the great being who is selected as the Head of predestination—to choose our lot and our portion and fix our destiny. Verily, beloved, you and I can rejoice in this great fact, that our Savior chooses for us. For were we all to be assembled together in some great plain, as Israel was of old, to elect for ourselves a king, we would not propose a second candidate. There would be one who stands like Saul, the son of Kish, head and shoulders taller than all the rest, whom we would at once select to be our king and ruler of providence for us. We would not ask for some prudent sage or deeply taught philosopher. We would not choose the most experienced senior. Without a single moment's hesitation, directly we saw Jesus Christ, in the majesty of His person, we would say, in the words of the Psalmist, He who redeemed us, He who ransomed us, He who loved us—"*He* shall choose our inheritance for us."

I remember once going to a chapel where this happened to be the text, and the good man who occupied the pulpit was more than a little of an Arminian. Therefore, when he commenced, he said, "This passage refers entirely to our temporal inheritance. It has nothing whatever to do with our everlasting destiny—for," he said, "we do not need Christ to choose for us in the matter of heaven or hell. It is so plain and easy that every man who has a grain of common sense will choose heaven. And any person would know better than to choose hell. We have no need of any superior intelligence, or any greater being to choose heaven or hell for us. It is left to our own free will," he said, "and we have enough wisdom given us, sufficiently correct means to judge for ourselves," and therefore, as

he very logically inferred, "there was no necessity for Jesus Christ, or anyone, to make a choice for us. We could choose the inheritance for ourselves without any assistance." Ah, but my good brother, it may be very true that we *could*, but I think we should need something more than common sense before we *would* choose aright, for you must remember that it is not simply the choosing of heaven or hell—it is the choosing of pleasure on earth, of pain, of honor or of persecution. And very often the man is bewildered. If it were just simply hell that a man had to choose, none would prefer it.

But since it is *sin* which engenders hell and the *lust* which brings him on to punishment—*there* comes the difficulty, for by nature we are all inclined to follow the way which leads downwards. We are naturally willing to walk the road which leads to the pit of hell—we do not seek the pit, itself, but the road that leads to it—and were it not for sovereign grace, none of us would ever have followed the path to heaven! I am daily more and more convinced that the difference between one man and another is not the difference between his use of his will, but the difference of divine grace that has been bestowed upon him, so that if one man has his "inheritance in heaven," it will be because Christ chose his inheritance for him! And if another man has his place in hell, it will be because he chose his inheritance himself. We *do* need someone to choose for us in that matter; we need our Father to fix our eternal destiny and write our names in the Book of Life. Otherwise, if left to ourselves, the road to hell would be as naturally our choice as for a piece of inanimate matter to roll downwards, instead of assisting itself upwards.

However, to come at once to our text and leave every other person's observations alone, "He shall choose our inheritance for us." First, I shall speak of the text as being a *glorious fact*—"He *shall* choose our inheritance for us." And, secondly, I will speak of it as being *a very just and wise prayer*—"He shall choose our inheritance for us."

I. First, then, I shall speak of this as being A GLORIOUS FACT. It is a great truth that God does choose the inheritance for His people. It is a very high honor conferred upon God's servants, that it is said of them, "He shall choose their inheritance." As for the worldling, God gives him anything, but for the Christian, God selects the best portion, and chooses his inheritance for him. A good divine once said, "It is one of the greatest glories of the Church of Christ, that our mighty maker and our friend always chooses our inheritance for us." He gives the worldling husks. But he stops to find out the sweet fruits for His people. He gathers out the fruits from among the leaves, that His people might have the best food and enjoy the richest pleasures. Oh, it is the satisfaction of God's people to believe in this exalting truth that He chooses their inheritance for them. But since there are many who dispute it, allow me just to stir up your minds by way of remembrance by mentioning certain facts which will lead you to see clearly that, verily, God does choose our lot and apportions for us our inheritance.

And, first, let me ask, must we not all of us admit an overruling providence and the appointment of Jehovah's hands as to the means whereby we came into this world? These men who think that afterwards we are left to our own free will by choosing this or the other to direct our steps, must admit that our entrance into the world was not of our own will, but that God, there, had His hand upon us. What circumstances were those in our power which led us to elect a certain person to be our parent? Had we anything to do with it? Did not God, Himself, appoint our parents, native place and friends? Could He not have caused me to be born with the skin of the Hottentot, brought forth by a filthy mother who would nurse me in her "kraal," and teach me to bow down to Pagan gods, quite as easily as to have given me a pious mother who, each morning and night bends her knees in prayer on my behalf? Or, might He not, if He had pleased, have given me some profligate to have been my parent, from whose lips I might have early heard fearful, filthy and obscene language? Might He not have placed me where I would have had a drunken father, who would have confined me in a very dungeon of ignorance and brought me up in the chains of crime? Was it not God's providence that I had so happy a lot that both my parents were His children, and endeavored to train me up in the fear of the Lord? To whom do any of you owe your parentage—be it good, or be it bad? Is it not to be traced to the decree of God? Did not His predestination put you where you were? Was it not the Lord who appointed the place of your birth and the hour thereof?

Look again at your bodies; do you not see the doings of God there? How many children are born into the world deformed? How many come into it deficient in some one or other of their faculties? But look at yourself. You are, perhaps, comely in person, or if not, you have all your limbs. Your bones are well set and you are strong—must you not trace this up to God? Do you not see that He arranged the commencement of your life for you? You might have opened your career there, or there, or there. But He placed you there in that particular spot, without asking your leave. Did He turn to you and say, O clay! in what shape shall I fashion you? Or, did He who begat you ask you what you would be? No—He made you what He pleased and if you have now the possession of your faculties and limbs, you must acknowledge and confess that there was the decree of God in it. And, still further, how much of the finger of God must we discern in our temper and constitution? I suppose no one will be foolish enough to say that we are all born with the same natural temperament and constitution. I am sure there are some persons who differ a great deal from others, at least I should like to differ a little from them—some of those with whom you could not sit a single moment without feeling that you would rather stand in a shower of rain and get dripping wet than sit on a sofa by their side. Some persons are so exceedingly warm in their tempers that they actually burn a hole in their manners and conversation—they cannot speak without being cross, testy and angry. Now, although such persons often indulge their temper, we must al-

low that, in some measure, they are excusable. Perhaps they can trace it to the nature which their mother gave them, (as the worldly poet would say), or that temperament with which they were born. And there are others here who are naturally amiable—who have a kind, loving spirit—who are not so easily moved to wrath and passion—in whom there is not so much of that absurd pride which makes man exalt himself above his fellows. Who has formed them aright or fashioned them so well? Has not God done it and proved Himself a sovereign? And must we not see in this that God, in some way or other, has fixed our destiny from the very fact that the opening bud of life is entirely in His hands? It does seem rational that since God appointed the commencement of our existence, there should be some evidence of His control in the future parts of it!

But now a second observation: I will ask any sensible man, above all, any serious Christian here, whether there have not been certain times in his life when he could most distinctly see that, indeed, God did "choose his inheritance for him"? You are a young man—you are asked what will be your pursuit—you choose such-and-such a thing. You are about to be apprenticed to that peculiar trade—a misfortune happens—it cannot be done. Without your consent, or will, you are placed in another position. Your will was scarcely consulted. Your parents exercised some authority, while the hand of providence seemed to say to you, "it must be so"—and you could not help yourself. Take another case—you had established a house of business—suddenly there came a crushing misfortune which you no more could avoid than an ant could stop an avalanche. You were driven from your business and now you occupy your present position because there was nothing else to which you could betake yourself. Was not that the hand of God? You cannot trace it to yourself. You were positively compelled to change your plan. You were driven to it. Perhaps you once had friends on whom you depended. You had no thought of launching out into the world and being independent of the assistance of others. Suddenly, by a stroke of providence, one friend dies; then another; then another, and without your own volition, you were placed in such circumstances that like a leaf in the whirlpool, you were whirled round and round, and the employment you now follow, or the engagement that now occupies you, is not of your own choosing, but is that of God.

I do not know whether all of you can go with me here, but I think you must in some instance or other be forced to see that God has, indeed, ordained your inheritance for you. If you cannot, I can. I can see a thousand chances—as men would call them—all working together like wheels in a great piece of machinery, to fix me just where I am. And I can look back to a hundred places where, if one of those little wheels had run awry—if one of those little atoms in the great whirlpool of my existence had started aside—I might have been anywhere but here, occupying a very different position. If you cannot say this, I know I can with emphasis. I can trace God's hand back to the period of my birth through every step I have taken! I can feel that indeed God has allotted my inheritance

for me. Some of you are so willfully beclouded that you will not see the hand of God in your being, and will insist that all has been done by *your* will without providence; that you have been left to steer your own course across the ocean of existence; that you are where you are because your own hands guided the tiller, and your own arms directed the rudder. All I can say is, my own experience belies the fact. And the experience of many now in this place would rise in testimony against you and say, "Verily, it is not in man that walks to direct his steps." "Man proposes, but God disposes," and the God of heaven is not unoccupied, but is engaged in overruling, ordering, altering, working all things according to the good pleasure of His will!

A third fact let me mention: if you turn to the pages of inspiration and read the lives of some of the most eminent saints, I think you will be obliged to see the marks of God's providence in their histories too plainly to be mistaken. Take, for instance, the life of *Joseph*. There is a young man who from early life serves God. Read that life till its latest period when he gave commandment concerning his bones and you cannot help marveling at the wondrous dealings of providence. Did Joseph choose to be hated by his brothers? But yet, was not their envy a material circumstance in his destiny? Did he choose to be put into the pit? But was not the putting into the pit as necessary to his being made a king in Egypt as Pharaoh's dream? Did Joseph desire to be tempted by his mistress? He chose to reject the temptation, by God's grace, but did he choose the trial? No, God sent it! Did he choose to be put into the dungeon? No. And had he anything to do with the baker's dream, or with Pharaoh's? Can you not see, all the way through, from first to last—even in the forgetfulness of the butler, who forgot to speak of Joseph till the appointed time came, when Pharaoh would need an interpreter—that there was, verily, the hand of God? Joseph's brothers did just as they liked when they put him into the pit. Potiphar's wife followed the dictates of her own abandoned lust in tempting him. And yet, notwithstanding all the freedom of their will, it was ordained of God, and worked together for one great end—to place Joseph on the throne of Egypt! For as he said, himself, "You meant it for evil, but God intended it for good, that He might save your souls alive!" There was the ordinance of God's providence in it as clearly as there is light in the sun! Or take again the life of such a man as *Moses*. I suppose no one will deny that there was providence in his being placed in the ark, just in the particular spot where Pharaoh's daughter came to wash. And who will deny that it was providence that she would say, "Go and fetch me a woman to nurse this child," and his mother, Jochebed, should come to nurse him? I imagine that no one would consider that there was an absence of providence in the fact that the child was comely, that he grew in all the wisdom of Egypt, and that he had a mind capacious enough to receive knowledge. Nor will you deny the providence that led him to the side of Horeb's mountain, or to Jethro's daughter. Nor can you for an instant deny that there was providence

which afterwards brought him before king Pharaoh and helped him all his way through. The man was God's man. God seems to be stamped upon his brow in all his acts. In all the three forties of his life, whether the forty spent in the palace, the forty in the wilderness, or the forty that he was king in Jeshurun—in all this there seems to be so manifestly God overruling the man's acts, that you cannot help saying, "Here is the Almighty! Here is the hand of God in everything the man does!" And you turn from the history of Moses and say, "Truly God was in this place though I knew it not."

I might refer you to the life of *Daniel*, fraught with interest as it were, and in that book you would see how his steps were first of all sadly guided to Babylon by being carried captive. And yet from the degradation of his banishment, there arises the grandeur of Daniel's visions and Daniel's character is displayed in all its clearness! You must see that a wise hand was dealing with him and developing his virtues and his excellences. I shall not say more here, because I like you to refer to the scripture yourselves. Scripture is the best book of providence we have ever read; if anyone should ask me for a book of anecdotes illustrative of providence, I would refer him to the Bible.

There he might find the marvelous story of the woman who went out into a distant country and during her absence lost her inheritance. On a certain day she went to the king to ask him for it and just as she came there, Gehazi was telling the king concerning a woman whose son Elijah had raised to life—and he said, "O, my Lord! This is the woman and this is the son!" There were Gehazi and the king talking on the subject and the woman came in just at the moment. And yet there are some fools who call that a "chance." Why, sirs, it is an *appointment* as clearly as anything could be! And that is just one out of myriads of instances you could find in Scripture—where you can see God present in the affairs of man!

But as the Bible, after all, is the best proof of any doctrine we can advance, I beg to refer you to one or two texts. First, let me ask you to direct your attention to a passage in Isaiah 45:6, 7—"I am the Lord and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things." Now here is a most direct assertion of the power of God in everything—that He makes peace and that He makes evil—that he creates light and that he creates darkness. We may ask as the prophet did of old, "Is there evil in the city and the Lord has not done it?" Even providential evil is to be ascribed to God. And in some marvelous sense which we understand not and cannot comprehend, the ordinance of God has even reference to the sins of men—"He has made even the wicked for the day of His wrath." "The vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, even these shall show forth His praise." Good and evil in your condition you must ever regard as the work of God. Whatever your circumstances are this morning—are you sick, are you in poverty or are you much troubled—the evil as well as the good is the

work of God! And shall a man receive good at the hands of the Lord and shall he not in equal patience receive evil? Will you not take everything from God which He is pleased to give, seeing that He, Himself, asserts, "I create light, I create darkness. I make good and I make evil." Turn now to a passage in Job 14:5—"his days are determined, the number of his months are with You. You have appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." What a solemn thought! God has "appointed our bounds." One of the prophets says, "You have hedged up my way with thorns and made a wall so that I cannot find my paths." And that is first the truth in regard to man's life. The "bounds" of it are "appointed!" Man only walks within these "bounds." Out of these limits he cannot get. If this does not imply the hand of God in everything, I do not know what does. Turn now to a Proverb from the wise man—Proverbs 16:33—"The lot is cast into the lap but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." And if the disposal of the lot is the Lord's, whose is the arrangement of our whole life? You know when Achan had committed a great sin, the tribes were assembled and the lot fell upon Achan. When Jonah was in the ship, they cast lots and the lot fell upon Jonah. And when Jonathan had tasted the honey, they cast lots and Jonathan was taken. When they cast lots for an apostle who should succeed the fallen Judas, the lot fell upon Matthias and he was separated to the work. The lot is directed of God. And if the simple casting of a lot is guided by Him, how much more the events of our entire life—especially when we are told by our blessed Savior—"The very hairs of your head are all numbered: not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father." If it is so, if these hairs are counted; if an inventory is written of each one of them, and if the existence of each of these hairs is marked and mapped, how much more precious in the sight of the Lord shall our *lives* be? Take one more passage in Jeremiah 10:23—"O Lord I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walks to direct his steps." Jeremiah said, "I know" and he was an inspired man and that satisfies us. "I know."

I have sometimes, when quoting a passage out of the apostle Paul, been met by somebody replying that they really did not think Paul so great an authority as other Scripture writers. I was astonished at hearing of the following dialogue between two young persons. One remarked, "Mr. Spurgeon is too high in doctrine." Said her friend—"He is not higher than St. Paul." "No" she said, "But St. Paul was not quite right according to my opinion." I was very glad to sink in the same boat as Paul, for if Paul was not right in the view of poor pitiful creatures, verily Spurgeon should not care! I would rather be wrong with Paul, than right with anybody else because Paul was inspired! But will they cut out some of the Old Testament, too? Will they dare to accuse Jeremiah of mistake? Jeremiah says, "I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walks to direct his steps."

I may not have proved my point to any person who is an antagonist to this doctrine—but to you who believe, I do not doubt that I have some-

what confirmed it. Let me say one word. Perhaps some who hear me will say, "Then, sir, in the case of Christians, you make God the author of sin if you believe that their lives were ordained of Him!" I *never said so!* Prove that I said it and then I will come before your bar and try to excuse myself. But until you hear these lips say that God is the author of sin, go your way and prove, first of all, what it means to speak the truth. I have not asserted any such vile doctrine! But I will tell you who does say that God is the author of sin—and that is the man who does not believe in natural depravity—that man makes God the author of sin. I remember the case of a minister who most fearfully split on this rock. When a child had been doing something that was far from right, a friend said, "See there brother, there is original sin in the child. For at its early age see how it sins." "No" he said, "it is only certain powers God has placed in the child developing themselves. It is the nature which God has given it originally. It is one of God's perfect creatures."

These gentlemen make God the author of sin because they throw the nature upon God, whereas had we not fallen, everyone of us would have been born with a perfect nature. But since we have fallen, anything good in us is the gift of God, and that which is evil springs naturally from our parents, by carnal descent from Adam. I never said God was the author of sin! I thank you, sir—take the accusation yourself!

II. And now having thus spoken upon the doctrine, we shall have a few minutes concerning this as A PRAYER. "He shall choose our inheritance for us." Dry doctrine, my friends, is of little use. It is not the doctrine which helps us, it is our *assent to* the doctrine. And now I have been preaching, this morning, concerning God's ordaining our lives. Some do not like it. To them the truth of God will be of no service. But there are some of you, who if it were not the truth, would say you wish to have it so. You would say in your prayers, "You shall choose my inheritance for me."

First, "You shall choose my *mercies* for me." You and I, beloved, often get to choose our own mercies. God in His wisdom may have made one man rich. "Ah," says he at night, "would God I had not all this wealth to tease my mind and worry me. I believe any peasant who toils for me has far more rest than I have." Another who is a poor man wipes the hot sweat from his brow and says, "O my Father, I have asked You to give me neither poverty nor riches, but here am I so poor that I am obliged to toil incessantly for my bread. Would God I could have my mercies there among the rich." One has been born with abilities. He has improved them by education and this improvement of his natural powers has entailed upon him fearful responsibilities so that he has to exercise his thoughts and his brain from morning till night. Sometimes he sits down and says, "Now if I am not the most hard-worked of all mortals. Those who keep a shop can shut it up. But I am open at all times and I am always under this responsibility. What shall I do and how shall I rest myself?" Another who has to toil with his hands is thinking, "Oh, if I could

lead such a gentlemanly life as that minister. He never has to work hard. He only has to think and read—of course that is not hard work. He has, perhaps, to sit up till twelve o'clock at night to prepare his sermon, that is not work, of course. I wish I had his situation." So we all cry out about our mercies and want to choose our allotments. "Oh," says one, "I have health, but I think I could do without that if I had wealth." Another says, "I have wealth, but I could give all my gold to have a good constitution." One says, "Here am I stowed away in this dirty London. I would give anything if I could go and live in the country." Another, who resides in the country, says, "There is no convenience here, you have to go so many miles for the doctor and one thing and the other. I wish I dwelt in London." So that we are, none of us, satisfied with our mercies! But the true Christian says, or ought to say, "You shall choose my inheritance for me." High or low, rich or poor, town or country, wealth or poverty, ability or ignorance, "You shall choose my inheritance for me."

Again—we must leave to God the choice of our *employment*. "Oh," says the preacher—and I have been wicked enough to say so myself—"how would I like to have all my employment in the week that I might sit in the pew on the Sabbath, and hear a sermon and be refreshed." I am sure I would be glad to hear a sermon. It is a long time since I heard one. But when I do attend one, it always tires me—I want to be improving on it. How would I like to sit down and have a little of the feast in God's house, myself, instead of always being the serving man in God's household. Thank God! I can steal a crumb for myself sometimes. But then we fancy, O that I were not in that employment! O that like Jonah we might flee to Tarshish, to avoid going to that great Nineveh. Another is a Sunday school teacher. He says, "I would rather visit the sick than sit with those troublesome boys and girls. And then the teachers do not seem to be so friendly with me as they should be." The Sunday school teacher thinks he can do anything better than teach. But there is his friend who visits the sick coming down the stairs and he says, "I could teach little children, or preach a little but really I cannot visit the sick. There is nothing so hard and that requires so much self-denial." Another says, "I am a tract distributor; it is not easy work to have your tracts refused at this door, and then at another, and persons looking at you as if you came to rob them. I could stand up before the congregation and speak, but I cannot do this." And so we get to select our employments. Ah, but we ought to say, "You shall choose my inheritance for me," and leave our employment to God! "If there were two angels in heaven," said a good man, "supposing there were two works to be done, and one work was to rule a city, and the other to sweep a street crossing—the angels would not stop a moment to say which they would do. They would do whichever God told them to do. "Gabriel would shoulder his broom and sweep the crossing cheerfully, and Michael would not be a bit prouder in taking the scepter to govern the city." So it is with a true Christian.

But there is nothing that we more often want to choose than our *crosses*. None of us like crosses at all. But all of us think everybody else's trials lighter than our own. Crosses we must have. But we often want to be choosing them. "Oh," says one, "my trouble is in my family. It is the worst cross in the world—my business is successful—but if I might have a cross in my business and get rid of this cross in my family, I should not mind." Then, my beloved hearers, in reference to your mercies, your employments and your afflictions, say—"Lord, You shall choose my inheritance for me! I have been a silly child. I have often tried to meddle with my lot. Now I leave it. I cast myself on the stream of providence, hoping to float along. I give myself up to the influence of Your will." He that kicks and struggles in the water, they say, will be sure to sink. But he who lies still will, float—so with providence; he that struggles against it, goes down; but he who resigns everything to it, will float along quietly, calmly and happily.

Having thus spoken upon the extent of the surrender very briefly, I might hint at *the wisdom of it* and show you it is not only good for you to offer this prayer, but it is better for you than to control yourself. I might tell you that it is good for you to give yourself up to God's hands because He understands your needs. He knows your case and He will so pity your necessities that He will give you the best supplies. It is better for you than if you trusted in yourself, for if you had the choosing of your troubles or your employments, you would always have this bitter thought, "Now, I chose it, myself, and, therefore, I must blame my own folly."

But now another thought. *What was the cause of the Psalmist saying this?* How came he to be able to feel it? There are few Christians who can really affirm it and stand to it—"You shall choose my inheritance for me." I think the cause is to be found in this—that he had a true experience of God's wisdom. Poor David could indeed thank God for having chosen his inheritance for him for He had given him a very goodly one. He had put him in a king's mansion. He had made him conqueror over Goliath and had raised him to be ruler over a great people. David, by a practical experience, could say, "You shall choose my inheritance for me." Some of you cannot say it, can you? What is the reason? Because you have never witnessed divine guidance; you have never looked to see the hand that supplies your mercies. Some of us who have seen that hand in a few instances are obliged to say from the very force of circumstances—

"Here I raise my Ebenezer."

Then again—

"Here by Your help I've come."

I hope and trust in that same good pleasure which has guided me up to now, that it will bring me safely home.

Again—it was a *true faith* that made the Psalmist say he relied upon God. He knew Him to be worthy of his trust, so he said, "You shall choose my inheritance for me." And, again, it was *true love*, for love can trust—affection can put confidence in the one it loves. And since David

loved his God, he took the unwritten roll of his life, and he said, "Write what You will, my Lord." "You shall choose my inheritance for me."

I might finish, if I had time, by telling you the good effects that this produced upon the Psalmist's mind, and what it would produce upon yours; how it would bring a holy calm continually if you were always to pray this prayer, and how it would so relieve your mind from anxiety that you would be better able to walk as a Christian should. When a man is anxious he cannot pray; when he is troubled about the world, he cannot serve his Master—he is serving himself. If you could "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," beloved, "all things would then be added to you." What a noble Christian you would be—how much more honorable you would be to Christ's religion, and how much better you could serve Him.

And now you who have been meddling with Christ's business, I have been preaching this to you. You know you sometimes sing—

"'Tis mine to obey, 'tis His to provide,"

but you have been meddling with Christ's business, you have been leaving your own. You have been trying the "providing" part and leaving the "obeying" to somebody else. Now take the obeying part and let Christ manage the providing. Come then, brothers and sisters, doubting and fearful ones, come and see your Father's storehouse and ask whether He will let you starve while He has stored away such plenty in His garner! Come and look at His heart of mercy and see if that will ever fail! Come and look at His inscrutable wisdom and see if that will ever go amiss. Above all, look up there to Jesus Christ, your Intercessor, and ask yourself, "While He pleads, can my Father forget me?" And if He remembers even sparrows, will He forget one of the least of His poor children? "Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you." "He will never suffer the righteous to be moved."

This I have preached to God's children—and now one word to the other portion of this crowded assembly. The other day there was a very singular scene in the House of Commons. There is a certain enclosure there set apart for the members. Into this place a gentleman ignorantly strayed; by-and-by someone raised the cry, "A stranger in the house!" The sergeant of the house went up to him, took him by the shoulder, and reminded him that he had no business there—not being a member—not one of the elect—not having been elected by the country. The man, of course, looked very foolish, but as he had made a mistake, he was let go. Had he willfully strayed within the enclosure and taken a seat he might not have gotten off so easily. When I saw that, I thought, "A stranger in the house!" This morning is there not a stranger in the house? There are some here who are strangers to the subject we have been discussing—strangers to God—strangers to true religion. "There's a stranger in the house." It led me to think of that great "assembly and Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in heaven." And I thought of the people who, last Sabbath night, sat down at the Lord's Table to partake

of the Sacrament. And the idea struck me, "There's a stranger in the house." Now, in the House of Commons, a stranger cannot sit five minutes without being detected, for all eyes are so soon fixed upon him. But in Christ's Church—in this church—a stranger can sit in the house without being found out. Ah, there are strangers sitting here, looking as religious as other people—some that are not children, some that are not chosen—some that are not heirs of God. They are "strangers in the house." Shall I tell you what will happen, by-and-by? Though I cannot detect you under the cloak of your profession; though God's people may not find you out, the grim "sergeant of the house" is coming. Death is coming—and *he* will discover you! What will be the penalty of your intrusion, as a professor into Christ's Church? What will be your lot if you have been a stranger in His house, below, when you find that, though you may have sat for a little while in this House of Commons below, you cannot sit in the house of the Lord above? What will be your lot when it shall be said, "Depart you accused"? And you may exclaim, "Lord! Lord! Have we not eaten and drunk in Your presence, and taught in Your streets?" And yet He will say, "Verily, I never knew you!" "You are a stranger in the house!"—"Depart, accursed one!"

How can I tell who is a stranger in these pews, and who are strangers upstairs? Some of us are not strangers! "We are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God." To such of you as *are* strangers, I pray you think of it, and go to Christ's throne and beg Him that yet you may be His children, and numbered with His people. Then, after that, I will talk with you about my text, but not now. Now I bid you pray to God, "You shall choose my inheritance for me."

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PREACH THE GOSPEL
NO. 34

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 5, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory in; for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel."
1 Corinthians 9:16

THE greatest man of apostolic times was the apostle Paul. He was always great in everything. If you consider him as a sinner, he was *exceedingly* sinful. If you regard him as a persecutor, he was *exceedingly* mad against the Christians and persecuted them even unto strange cities. If you take him as a convert, his conversion was the most notable one of which we read, worked by miraculous power and by the direct voice of Jesus speaking from heaven—"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" If we take him simply as a Christian, he was an extraordinary one, loving his Master more than others and seeking more than others to exemplify the grace of God in his life. But if you take him as an apostle and as a preacher of the word, he stands out pre-eminently as the prince of preachers and a preacher to kings—for he preached before Agrippa, he preached before Nero Caesar—he stood before emperors and kings for Christ's name's sake. It was the characteristic of Paul that whatever he did, he did with all his heart. He was one of the men who could not allow one half of his frame to be exercised, while the other half was indolent. When he set to work, the whole of his energies—every nerve, every sinew—were strained in the work to be done, be it bad work or be it good. Paul, therefore, could speak from experience concerning his ministry because he was the chief of ministers. There is no nonsense in what he speaks. It is all from the depth of his soul. And we may be sure that when he wrote this, he wrote it with a strong unpalsied hand—"Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory in; for necessity is laid upon me, yes, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." Now, these words of Paul, I trust, are applicable to many ministers in the present day—to all those who are especially called—who are directed by the inward impulse of the Holy Spirit to occupy the position of gospel ministers. In trying to consider this verse, we shall have three inquiries this morning—First, *What is it to preach the gospel?* Secondly, *Why is it that a minister has nothing to glory in.* And thirdly, *What is that necessity and that woe of which it is written, "Necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel"?*

I. The first inquiry is, WHAT IS IT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL? There are a variety of opinions concerning this question and possibly among

my own audience—though I believe we are very uniform in our doctrinal sentiments—there might be found two or three very ready answers to this question—What is it to preach the gospel? I shall therefore attempt to answer it, myself, according to my own judgment, if God will help me. And if it does not happen to be the correct answer, you are at liberty to supply a better to yourselves at home.

1. The first answer I shall give to the question is this—*to preach the gospel is to state every doctrine contained in God's word and to give every truth its proper prominence*. Men may preach a part of the gospel. They may only preach one single doctrine of it. And I would not say that a man did not preach the gospel at all if he did but maintain the doctrine of justification by faith—"By grace are you saved through faith." I would put him down for a gospel minister, but not for one who preached the whole gospel. No man can be said to preach the whole gospel of God if he leaves out, knowingly and intentionally one single truth of the blessed God! This remark of mine must be a very cutting one and ought to strike into the consciences of many who make it almost a matter of principle to keep back certain truths from the people because they are afraid of them. In conversation a week or two ago with an eminent professor, he said to me, "Sir, we know that we ought not to preach the doctrine of election because it is not calculated to convert sinners!" "But," I said to him, "who is the man that dares to find fault with the truth of God? You admit, with me, that it is a truth of God, and yet you say it must not be preached? I dare not have said that thing. I would reckon it supreme arrogance to have ventured to say that a doctrine ought not to be preached when the all-wise God has seen fit to reveal it! Besides, is the whole gospel intended to convert sinners? There are some truths which God blesses to the conversion of sinners. But are there not other portions which were intended for the comfort of the saint? And ought not these to be a subject of gospel ministry as well as the others? And shall I look at one and disregard the other? No—if God says, 'Comfort you, comfort you, My people,' if election comforts God's people, then must I preach it." But I am not quite so sure that, after all, that doctrine is not calculated to convert sinners! The great Jonathan Edwards tells us that in the greatest excitement of one of his revivals he preached the sovereignty of God in the salvation or condemnation of man. He showed that God was infinitely just if He sent men to hell! That He was infinitely merciful if He saved any. And that it was all of His own free grace—and he said, "I found no doctrine caused more thought—nothing entered more deeply into the heart than the proclamation of that truth." The same might be said of other doctrines. There are certain truths in God's word which are condemned to silence. They, indeed, are not to be uttered, because, according to the theories of certain persons looking at these doctrines, they are not calculated to promote certain ends. But is it for me to judge God's truth? Am I to put His words in the scale and say, "This is good and that

is evil"? Am I to take God's Bible and sever it and say, "This is husk and this is wheat"? Am I to cast away any one truth and say, "I dare not preach it"? No—God forbid! Whatever is written in God's word is written for our instruction—and the whole of it is profitable—either for reproof, or for consolation, or for edification in righteousness. No truth of God's word ought to be withheld, but every portion of it preached in its own proper order!

Some men purposely confine themselves to four or five topics continually. Should you step into their chapel you would naturally expect to hear them preaching, either from this, "Not of the will of the flesh, but of the will of God," or else, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." You know that the moment you step in, you are sure to hear nothing but election and high doctrine that day! Such men also err quite as much as others, if they give too great prominence to one truth to the neglect of the others. Whatever is here to be preached, all in whatever name you please—write it high, write it low—the Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible, is the standard of the true Christian! Alas, alas, many make an iron ring of their doctrines and he who dares to step beyond that narrow circle is not reckoned orthodox. God bless heretics, then! God send us more of them! Many make theology into a kind of tread wheel consisting of five doctrines which are everlastingly rotated, for they never go on to anything else. There ought to be every truth preached. And if God has written in His word that, "He who believes not is condemned already," *that* is as much to be preached as the truth that "There is no condemnation to them that are in Jesus Christ." If I find it written, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself"—that man's condemnation is his own fault—I am to preach that as well as the next clause, "In Me is your help found." We ought, each of us who are entrusted with the ministry to seek to preach all truth. I know it may be impossible to tell you all of it. That high hill of truth has mists upon its summit. No mortal eye can see its pinnacle, nor has the foot of man ever trod it, but yet let us paint the mist if we cannot paint the summit! Let us depict the difficulty, itself, if we cannot unravel it! Let us not hide anything—if the mountain of truth is cloudy at the top—let us say, "Clouds and darkness are around Him." Let us not deny it. And let us not think of cutting down the mountain to our own standard because we cannot see its summit or cannot reach its pinnacle. He who would preach the gospel must preach all the gospel. He who would have it said he is a faithful minister must not keep back any part of Revelation!

2. Again—am I asked what it is to preach the gospel? I answer *to preach the gospel is to exalt Jesus Christ*. Perhaps this is the best answer that I could give. I am very sorry to see very often how little the gospel is understood, even by some of the best Christians. Some time ago there was a young woman under great distress of soul. She came to a very pious Christian man who said, "My dear girl, you must go home and pray."

Well, I thought within myself that is not the Bible way at all. It never says, "Go home and pray." The poor girl went home. She did pray and she still continued in distress. He said, "You must wait, you must read the Scriptures and study them." That is not the Bible way! That is not exalting Christ. I find a great many preachers are preaching that kind of doctrine. They tell a poor convicted sinner, "You must go home and pray and read the Scriptures; you must attend the ministry." And so on. Works, works, works—instead of, "By grace are you saved through faith,"

If a penitent should come and ask me, "What must I do to be saved?" I would say, "Christ must save you—believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." I would neither direct to prayer, nor reading of the Scriptures, nor attending God's house—but simply direct to faith—the naked faith on God's gospel! Not that I despise prayer—that must come *after* faith. Not that I speak a word against the searching of the Scriptures—that is an infallible mark of God's children. Not that I find fault with attendance on God's word—God forbid! I love to see people there. But none of those things are the way of salvation. It is nowhere written—"He that attends chapel shall be saved," or, "He who reads the Bible shall be saved." Nor do I read—"He that prays and is baptized shall be saved." But, "He who *believes"*—he who has a naked faith on the "Man, Christ Jesus"—on His Godhead, on His Manhood, is delivered from sin. To preach that faith, alone, saves is to preach God's truth! Nor will I for one moment concede to any man, the name of a gospel minister if he preaches anything as the plan of salvation except faith in Jesus Christ; faith, faith, nothing but faith in His name! But, most of us are very much muddled in our ideas. We get so much work stored into our brain, such an idea of merit and of doing worked into our hearts, that it is almost impossible for us to preach justification by faith clearly and fully. And when we do, our people won't receive it. We tell them, "Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." But they have a notion that faith is something so wonderful, so mysterious, that it is quite impossible that without *doing* something else, they can ever get it. Now, that faith which unites to the Lamb is an instantaneous gift of God and he who believes on the Lord Jesus is that moment saved, without anything else whatever!

Ah, my friends, do we not need more exalting Christ in our preaching and more exalting Christ in our living? Poor Mary said, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him." And she might say so, nowadays, if she could rise from the grave. Oh, to have a Christ-exalting ministry! Oh, to have preaching that magnifies Christ in His Person, that extols His divinity, that loves His Humanity! To have preaching that shows Him as prophet, Priest and King to His people! To have preaching whereby the Spirit manifests the Son of God unto His children—to have preaching that says, "Look unto Him and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Calvary preaching, Calvary theology, Calvary books, Calvary sermons! These are the things we need and in proportion

as we have Calvary exalted, and Christ magnified, the gospel is preached in our midst!

3. The third answer to the question is—*to preach the gospel is to give every class of character his due*. "You are only to preach to God's dear people if you go into that pulpit," said a deacon once to a minister. Said the minister, "Have you marked them all on the back, that I may know them?" What is the good of this large chapel if I am only to preach to God's dear people? They are few enough. God's dear people might be held in the vestry. We have many more here besides God's dear people and how am I to be sure, if I am told to preach only to God's dear people, that somebody else won't take it to himself? At another time someone might say, "Now, be sure you preach to sinners. If you do not preach to sinners, this morning, you won't preach the gospel. We shall only hear you once. And we shall be sure you are not right if you do not happen to preach to sinners this particular morning, in this particular sermon." What nonsense, my friends! There are times when the children must be fed and there are times when the sinner must be warned. There are different times for different objectives. If a man is preaching to God's saints—if it so happens that little is said to sinners—is he to be blamed for it? At another time when he is not comforting the saints, he should direct his attention specially to the ungodly! I heard a good remark from an intelligent friend of mine the other day. A person was finding fault with "Dr. Hawker's Morning and Evening Portions" because they were not calculated to convert sinners. He said to the gentleman, "Did you ever read 'Grote's History of Greece'?" "Yes." "Well, that is a shocking book, is it not? For it is not calculated to convert sinners." "Yes, but," said the other, "'Grote's History of Greece' was never meant to convert sinners." "No," said my friend, "and if you had read the preface to 'Dr. Hawker's *Morning and Evening Portion*,' you would see that it was never meant to convert sinners but to feed God's people! And if it answers its end the man has been wise though he has not aimed at some other end." Every class of person is to have his due. He who preaches solely to saints at all times does not preach the gospel; he who preaches solely and only to the sinner, and never to the saint does not preach the whole of the gospel. We have amalgamation here. We have the saint who is full of assurance and strong. We have the saint who is weak and low in faith. We have the young convert. We have the man halting between two opinions. We have the moral man. We have the sinner. We have the reprobate. We have the outcast. Let each have a word. Let each have a portion of meat in due season. Not at every season, but in *due* season. He who omits one class of character does not know how to preach the entire gospel. What? Am I to be put into the pulpit and to be told that I am to confine myself only to certain truths to comfort God's saints? I will not have it so! God gives men hearts to love their fellow creatures and are they to have no development for that heart? If I love the ungodly, am I to have no means of

speaking to them? May I not tell them of judgment to come, of righteousness and of their sin? God forbid I should so stultify my nature and so brutalize myself as to have a tearless eye when I consider the loss of my fellow creatures. Must I stand and say, "You are dead, I have nothing to say to you"? Must I preach, in effect, if not in words, that most damnable heresy that if men are to be saved they will be saved—that if they are not to be saved they will not be saved? So, then, they must sit still and do nothing whatever? And that it matters not whether they live in sin or in righteousness—some strong fate has bound them down with adamantine chains? And their destiny is so certain that they may live on in sin? I believe their destiny *is* certain—that as elect, they will be saved and if not elect, they are damned forever! But I do not believe the heresy that follows as an inference that therefore men are irresponsible and may sit still! That is a heresy against which I have always protested as being a doctrine of the devil and not of God at all!

We believe in destiny—we believe in predestination. We believe in election and non-election—but, notwithstanding that, we believe that we must preach to men, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, but believe not on Him and you are damned."

4. I had thought of giving one more answer to this question but time fails me. The answer would have been something like this—that to preach the gospel is not to preach certain truths *about* the gospel, not to preach *about* the people, but to preach *to* the people. To preach the gospel is not to talk about what the gospel is, but to *preach* it into the heart, not by your own might, but by the influence of the Holy Spirit—not to stand and talk as if we were speaking to the angel Gabriel and telling him certain things, but to speak as man to man and pour our heart into our fellow's heart. This I take it, is to preach the gospel and not to mumble some dry manuscript over on Sunday morning or Sunday evening. To preach the gospel is not to send a curate to do your duty for you. It is not to put on your fine gown and then stand and give out some lofty speculation. To preach the gospel is not, with the hands of a bishop, to turn over some beautiful specimen of prayer and then to go down again and leave it to some humbler person to speak. No. To preach the gospel is to proclaim with trumpet tongue and flaming zeal the unsearchable riches of Christ Jesus so that men may hear and understanding, may turn to God with full purpose of heart! This is to preach the gospel.

II. The second question is—How IS IT THAT MINISTERS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO GLORY? "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory in." There are some weeds that will grow anywhere. And one of them is pride. Pride will grow on a rock as well as in a garden. Pride will grow in the heart of a shoe-black as well as in the heart of an alderman. Pride will grow in the heart of a servant girl and equally as well in the heart of her mistress. And pride will grow in the pulpit. It is a weed that is dreadfully rampant. It needs cutting down every week or else we would

stand up to our knees in it! This pulpit is a shocking bad soil for pride. It grows terribly. And I scarcely know whether you ever find a preacher of the gospel who will not confess that he has the greatest temptation to pride. I suppose that even those ministers of whom nothing is said but that they are very good people and who have a city church, with some six people attending it, have a temptation to pride. But whether that is so or not, I am quite sure wherever there is a large assembly and wherever a great deal of noise and stir is made concerning any man there is a great danger of pride. And, mark you, the more proud a man is, the greater will be his fall at last. If people will hold a minister up in their hands and not keep hold of him, but let him go, what a fall he will have, poor fellow, when it is all over! It has been so with many. Many men have been held up by the arms of men, they have been held up by the arms of *praise* but not of *prayer*. These arms have become weak—and down they have fallen! I say there is temptation to pride in the pulpit. But there is no ground for it in the pulpit. There is no soil for pride to grow on. But it will grow without any. "I have nothing to glory in." But, notwithstanding, there often comes in some reason why we should glory, not real, but apparent only to ourselves!

1. Now, how is it that a true minister feels he has "nothing to glory in." First, *because he is very conscious of his own imperfections*. I think no man will ever form a more just opinion of himself than he who is called constantly and incessantly to preach. Some man once thought he could preach and on being allowed to enter the pulpit he found his words did not come quite so freely as he expected. In the utmost trepidation and fear, he leaned over the front of the pulpit and said, "My friends, if you would come up here it would take the conceit out of you all." I verily believe it *would* out of a great many, could they once try themselves whether they could preach. It would take their critical conceit out of them and make them think that after all it was not such easy work! He who preaches best, feels that he preaches worst. He who has set up some lofty model in his own mind of what eloquence should be and what earnest appeal ought to be, will know how much he falls below it. He, best of all, can reprove himself when he knows his own deficiency. I do not believe when a man does a thing well, that therefore he will glory in it. On the other hand, I think that he will be the best judge of his own imperfections and will see them most clearly. *He* knows what he ought to be—other men do not. They stare and gaze and think it is wonderful, when he thinks it is wonderfully absurd and retires wondering why he has not done better! Every true minister will feel that he is deficient. He will compare himself with such men as Whitefield, with such preachers as those of Puritan times and he will say, "What am I? Like a dwarf beside a giant, an anthill by the side of the mountain." When he retires to rest on Sunday night, he will toss from side to side on his bed because he feels that he has missed the mark, that he has not had that earnestness, that so-

lemnity, that death-like intenseness of purpose which became his position. He will accuse himself of not having dwelt enough on this point, or for having shunned the other, or not having been explicit enough on some certain subject, or expanded another too much. He will see his own faults, for God always chastises His own children at nighttime when they have done something wrong. We need not others to reprove us. God, Himself, takes us in hand. The most highly honored before God will often feel himself dishonored in his own esteem.

2. Again—another means of causing us to cease from all glory is the fact that God reminds us that all our gifts are borrowed. And strikingly have I, this morning, been reminded of that great truth—that *all our gifts are borrowed*—by reading in a newspaper to the following effect—"Last week, the quiet neighborhood of New Town was much disturbed by an occurrence which has thrown a gloom over the entire neighborhood. A gentleman of considerable attainment who has won an honorable degree at the university, has for some months been deranged. He had kept an academy for young gentlemen, but his insanity had obliged him to desist from his occupation, and he has for some time lived alone in a house in the neighborhood. The landlord obtained a warrant of ejectment, and it being found necessary to handcuff him, he was, by sad mismanagement compelled to remain on the steps, exposed to the gaze of a great crowd, until at last a vehicle arrived which conveyed him to the asylum. One of his pupils (says the paper) is Mr. Spurgeon."

The man from whom I learned whatever of human learning I have has now become a raving lunatic in the asylum! When I saw that, I felt I could bend my knees with humble gratitude, and thank my God that not yet had my reason reeled—not yet had those powers departed! Oh, how thankful we ought to be that our talents are preserved to us and that our mind is not gone! Nothing came nearer and closer to me than that. There was one who had taken all pains with me—a man of genius and of ability. And yet there he is! How fallen! How fallen! How speedily does human nature come from its high estate and sink below the level of the brutes! Bless God, my friends, for your talents! Thank Him for your reason! Thank Him for your intellect! Simple as it may be, it is enough for you, but if you lost it, you would soon mark the difference. Take heed to yourself lest in anything you say, "This is Babylon that I have built." Remember, both trowel and mortar must come from Him. The life, the voice, the talent, the imagination, the eloquence—all are the gifts of God! And he who has the greatest gifts must feel that unto God belongs the shield of the mighty, for He has given might to His people and strength to His servants!

3. One more answer to this question. Another means whereby God preserves His ministers from glorying is this—*He makes them feel their constant dependence upon the Holy Spirit*. Some do not feel it, I confess. Some will venture to preach without the Spirit of God, or without entreat-

ing Him. But I think that no man who is really commissioned from on high will ever venture to do so. He will feel that he needs the Spirit. Once, while preaching in Scotland, the Spirit of God was pleased to desert Me—I could not speak as usually I have done. I was obliged to tell the people that the chariot wheels were taken off, and that the chariot dragged very heavily along. I have felt the benefit of that ever since. It humbled me bitterly, for I could have crept into a nutshell, and I would have hidden myself in any obscure corner of the earth. I felt as if I should speak no more in the name of the Lord, and then the thought came, "Oh, you are an ungrateful creature—has not God spoken by you hundreds of times? And this once, when He would not do so, will you upbraid Him for it? No, rather thank Him that a hundred times He has stood by you—and, if once He has forsaken you, admire His goodness, that thus He would keep you humble." Some may imagine that lack of study brought me into that condition, but I can honestly affirm that it was not so. I think that I am bound to give myself unto reading and not tempt the Spirit by unthought-of effusions. Usually I deem it a duty to seek a sermon of my Master, and implore Him to impress it on my mind. But on that occasion, I think I had even prepared more carefully than I ordinarily do, so that unpreparedness was not the reason. The simple fact was this—"The wind blows where it wishes." And winds do not always blow hurricanes. Sometimes the winds themselves are still. And therefore, if I rest on the Spirit, I cannot expect I should always feel His power.

What could I do without the celestial influence, for to that I owe everything? By this thought, God humbles His servants. God will teach us how much we need it. He will not let us think we are doing anything ourselves. "No," He says, "you shall have none of the glory. I will take you down; are you thinking 'I am doing this'? I will show you what you are without Me." Out goes Samson. He attacks the Philistines. He fancies he can slay them; but they are on him. His eyes are out; his glory is gone because he trusted not in his God, but rested in himself!

Every minister will be made to feel his dependence upon the Spirit. And then will he, with emphasis, say as Paul did, "If I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory in."

III. Now comes the third question, with which we are to finish—WHAT IS THAT NECESSITY WHICH IS LAID UPON US TO PREACH THE GOSPEL?

1. First, *a very great part of that necessity springs from the call itself*—if a man is truly called of God to the ministry, I will defy him to withhold himself from it! A man who has really within him the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit calling him to preach cannot help it. He must preach. As fire within the bones, so will that influence be until it blazes forth. Friends may check him, foes criticize him, despisers sneer at him—the man is indomitable. He must preach if he has the call of Heaven. All earth might forsake him, but he would preach to the barren mountaintops! If he has

the call of heaven—if he has no congregation—he would preach to the rippling waterfalls and let the brooks hear his voice. He could not be silent. He would become a voice crying in the wilderness, "Prepare you the way of the Lord." I no more believe it possible to stop ministers than to stop the stars of heaven. I think it no more possible to make a man cease from preaching, if he is really called, than to stop some mighty waterfall by seeking, with an infant's cup, to drink its waters! The man has been moved of heaven, who shall stop him? He has been touched of God, who shall impede him? With an eagle's wings he must fly—who shall chain him to the earth? With seraph's voice he must speak, who shall stop his lips? Is not His word like a fire within me? Must I not speak, if God has placed it there? And when a man does speak as the Spirit gives him utterance, he will feel a holy joy akin to heaven. And when it is over, he wishes to be at his work again and longs to be once more preaching. I do not think young men are called of God to any great work who preach once a week and think they have done their duty. I think if God has called a man, He will impel him to be more or less constantly at it and he will feel that he must preach among the nations the unsearchable riches of Christ!

2. But another thing will make us preach—we shall feel that woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel. And that is *the sad destitution of this poor fallen world.* Oh, minister of the gospel! Stand for one moment and think of your poor fellow creatures! See them like a stream, rushing to eternity—ten thousand fly to their endless home each solemn moment! See the termination of that stream, that tremendous waterfall which dashes streams of souls into the pit of hell? Oh, minister, think of the fact that men are being damned each hour by thousands and that each time your pulse beats, another soul lifts up its eyes in hell, being in torments! Think how men are speeding on their way to destruction, how "the love of many waxes cold" and "iniquity does abound." I say, is there not a necessity laid upon you? Is it not woe unto you if you preach not the gospel? Take your walk one evening through the streets of London when the dusk has gathered and darkness veils the people. Mark you not yon profligate hurrying on to her accursed work? See you not thousands and tens of thousands annually ruined? Up from the hospital and the asylum there comes a voice, "Woe is unto you if you preach not the gospel." Go to that huge place built around with massive walls, enter the dungeons and see the thieves who have for years spent their lives in sin. Wend your way, sometimes, to that sad square of Newgate and see the murderer hanged. A voice shall come from each house of correction, from each prison, from each gallows, saying, "Woe is unto you if you preach not the gospel." Go to the thousand deathbeds and mark how men are perishing in ignorance, not knowing the ways of God! See their terror as they approach their Judge never having known what it was to be saved, not even knowing the way. And as you see them quivering before their

Maker, hear a voice, "Minister, woe is unto you if you preach not the gospel." Or take another course. Travel round this great metropolis and stop at the door of some place where there is heard the tinkling of bells, chanting and music—where the whore of Babylon has her sway and lies are preached for the truths of God! And when you come home and think of Popery and Puseyism, let a voice come to you, "Minister, woe is unto you if you preach not the gospel." Or step into the hall of the infidel where he blasphemes your Maker's name. Or sit in the theater where plays, libidinous and loose, are acted and from all these haunts of vice there comes the voice, "Minister, woe is unto you if you preach not the gospel." And take your last solemn walk down to the chambers of the lost. Let the abyss of hell be visited and stand and hear—

"The sullen groans, the hollow moans,
And shrieks of tortured ghosts!"

Put your ear at hell's gate and for a little while listen to the commingled screams and shrieks of agony, and feel the despair that shall never end. And as you come from that sad place with that doleful music still frightening you, you will hear the voice, "Minister! Minister! Woe is unto you if you preach not the gospel."

Only let us have these things before our eyes and we must preach. *Stop preaching? Stop preaching?* Let the sun stop shining and we will preach in darkness! Let the waves stop their ebb and flow and still our voice shall preach the gospel! Let the world stop its revolutions, let the planets stay their motion—we will still preach the gospel. Until the fiery center of this earth shall burst through the thick ribs of her brazen mountains we shall still preach the gospel! By God's grace, till the universal conflagration shall dissolve the earth and matter shall be swept away, these lips, or the lips of some others called of God shall still thunder forth the voice of Jehovah. We cannot help it. "Necessity is laid upon us, yes woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel."

Now, my dear hearers, one word with you: there are some persons in this audience who are verily guilty in the sight of God because they do *not* preach the gospel. I cannot think how, out of the fifteen hundred or two thousand persons now present within the reach of my voice, there are none who are qualified to preach the gospel besides myself. I have not so bad an opinion of you as to conceive myself to be superior in intellect to one half of you—or even in the power of preaching God's word. And even supposing I should be, I cannot believe that I have such a congregation that there are not among you many who have gifts and talents that qualify you to preach the word. Among the Scotch Baptists it is the custom to call upon all the brothers to exhort on the Sabbath morning. They have no regular minister to preach on that occasion, but every man preaches who likes to get up and speak. That is all very well, only, I fear, many unqualified brothers would be the greatest speakers, since it is a known fact that men who have little to say will often keep on the longest. And if I were chairman, I should say, "Brother, it is written, 'Speak to

edification.' I am sure you would not edify yourself and your wife. You had better go and try that, first, and if you cannot succeed, don't waste our precious time."

But still I say I cannot conceive but what there are some here this morning who are flowers "wasting their sweetness in the desert air, gems of purest ray serene," lying in the dark caverns of ocean's oblivion. This is a very serious question. If there is any talent in the church at Park Street, let it be developed! If there are any preachers in my congregation let them preach! Many ministers make it a point to check young men in this respect. Here is my hand, such as it is, to help anyone of you if you think you can tell to sinners what a dear Savior you have found. I would like to find scores of preachers among you—would to God that all the Lord's servants were prophets! There are some here who ought to be prophets, only they are half afraid—well, we must devise some scheme of getting rid of their bashfulness. I cannot bear to think that while the devil sets all his servants to work, there should be one servant of Jesus Christ asleep! Young man, go home and examine yourself; see what your abilities are, and if you find that you have ability, then try in some poor humble room to tell to a dozen poor people what they must do to be saved. You need not aspire to become absolutely and solely dependent upon the ministry, but if it should please God, even desire it. He that desires a bishopric desires a good thing!

At any rate seek in some way to be preaching the gospel of God. I have preached this sermon especially because I want to commence a movement from this place which shall reach others. I want to find some in my church, if it is possible, who will preach the gospel. And mark you, if you have talent and power, woe is unto you if you preach not the gospel!

But oh, my friends, if it is woe unto us if we preach *not* the gospel, what is the woe unto *you* if you hear and receive not the gospel? May God give us both to escape from that woe! May the gospel of God be unto us the savor of life unto life, and not of death unto death!

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GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE FURNACE
NO. 35

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 12, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction."
Isaiah 48:10.

WHEN traveling through the country you have often noticed that in different spots the old rocks peep out from under the soil as if they would let us know what earth's bones are made of, and what are the solid foundations of this globe; so in searching through the Scriptures you will find here instruction; here admonition; here rebuke, and here comfort—and very frequently you will discover the old doctrines, like old rocks, rising amid other matters. And when you least expect it you will find election, redemption, justification, effectual calling, final perseverance or covenant security introduced—just to let us see what the solid foundations of the gospel are—and what are those deep and mysterious truths on which the entire gospel system must rest! So in this text, for instance, when there seemed in the chapter little need of the mention of the doctrine of God's choosing His people—on a sudden the Holy Spirit moves the prophet's lips and bids him utter this sentiment, "I have chosen you." I have chosen you by My eternal, sovereign, distinguishing grace. I have chosen you in covenant purposes. I have chosen you according to My electing love. "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." Well, it is a good thing that they are sometimes mentioned when we least expect it. These are things which we are apt to forget. The tendency of the many in the present age is to slight all doctrinal knowledge and to say, "We care not whether a thing is true or not." This age is a superficial one. Few ministers plow deeper than the top soil. There are very few who come into the inward matter of the gospel and deal with the stable things of which our faith must rest. And, therefore, we bless and adore the Holy Spirit that He so frequently pens these glorious truths to make us recollect that there is such a thing as election, after all! "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." However, I am not going to dwell upon that, but after making one or two preliminary observations, I shall proceed to discuss the subject of the *furnace of affliction* being the place where God's chosen ones are continually found.

And the first observation I shall make will be this—*all persons in the furnace of affliction are not chosen.* The text says, "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction," and it implies that there may be, and there doubtless are some in the furnace who are not chosen. How many persons there are who suppose that because they are tried, afflicted and

tempted, therefore they are the children of God, whereas they are no such thing! It is a great truth that every child of God is afflicted but it is a lie that every afflicted man is a child of God! Every child of God will have some trial or other. But every man who has a trial is not necessarily an heir of heaven. The child of God may be in poverty—he frequently is. But we must not infer that therefore every man who is poor is a child of God—for many such are depraved and ruined, blaspheming against God and going far into iniquity. Many a child of God loses his property. But we are not, therefore, to conclude that every bankrupt or every insolvent is a vessel of mercy. Indeed, there is often some suspicion that he is not a child of God if his crops have blasted and mildew seizes his fields. But that does not prove his election, for multitudes who never were chosen of God have had the mildew and the blast as well as he! He may be calumniated. And his character may be slandered. But that may be the case with the most wicked worldling, also, for there have been men far from religious who yet have been slandered in politics or in literature. No tribulation ever proves us to be children of God unless it is sanctified by grace. But affliction is the common lot of all men—man is born to it even as the sparks fly upward. So you must not infer, because you happen to be troubled, because you are poor, or sick, or tried in your minds that, therefore, you are a child of God. If you do imagine so, you are building on a false foundation—you have taken a wrong thought—and you are not right in the matter at all. I would, this morning, if possible, disturb some of you who may have been laying a healing plaster to your souls when you have no right to do so. I would show you if I could, very plainly, that after all your suffering, you may yet, through much tribulation, enter the kingdom of hell! There is such a thing as through trial going to the pit of hell, for the road of the wicked is not always easy, nor are the paths of sin ever pleasant. There are trials in the pathway of the ungodly. There are troubles they have to suffer which are quite as acute as those of the children of God. Oh, trust not in your troubles, fix your thoughts on Jesus—make Him the only object of your trust and let the only test be this, "Am I one with Christ? Am I leaning upon Him?" If so, whether I am tried or not, I am a child of God! But let me be ever so much tried, "though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profits me nothing."

Many an afflicted man has never been a child of God. Many of you, no doubt, can remember persons in your lifetime whose afflictions made them worse, instead of better, and of a great many men it may be said, as Aaron said, "Behold, I put gold into the furnace and out of it came this calf." Many a calf comes out of the furnace. Many a man is put into the furnace and comes out worse—than he was before—he comes out a calf. Men passed through the fire in the days of the kings of Israel—when they passed through the fire to Moloch. But Moloch's fire did not purify or benefit them. On the contrary, it made them worse, it made them dedicated to a false god! We are also told in the Word of God how a certain class of people are put into the furnace, and get no good by it, and are

not the children of God. But, lest any should doubt what I have said, let them turn to the passage in the 22nd chapter of Ezekiel, verses 17-20—"And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Israel is to Me become dross: all they are brass and tin and iron and lead in the midst of the furnace. They are even the dross of silver. Therefore thus says the Lord God, Because you are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver and brass, and iron and lead and tin into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in My anger and in My fury, and I will leave you there and melt you." So you see there are some who feel the furnace who are none of the Lord's, some to whom there is no promise of deliverance, some who have no hope that thereby they are becoming more and more pure and more fit for heaven. On the contrary, God leaves them there as dross is left, to be utterly consumed. They have on earth the foretaste of hell, and the brand of the demon is set upon them in their afflictions even here. Let that thought be taken to heart by any who are building their salvation on false grounds. Afflictions are no proof of sonship, though sonship always ensures affliction.

But the second preliminary remark I would make is on the *immutability of God's love to His people*. "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." "I chose you before you were here. Yes, I chose you before you had a being and when all creatures lay before Me in the pure mass of creatureship and I could create or not create as I pleased. I chose and created you a vessel of mercy appointed unto eternal life—and when you, in common with the whole race, had fallen, though I might have crushed you with them and sent you down to hell, I chose you in your fallen condition and I provided for your redemption—in the fullness of time I sent My Son, who fulfilled My law and made it honorable. I chose you at your birth, when a helpless infant you did sleep upon your mother's breast. I chose you when you did grow up in childhood with all your follies and your sins. Determined to save you, I watched over your path when, as Satan's blind slave, you did sport with death. I chose you when, in manhood, you did sin against Me with a high hand. When your unbridled lusts dashed you on madly towards hell, I chose you then! When you were a blasphemer and a swearer and very far from Me, I chose you—even when you were dead in trespasses and sins—I loved you and your name was still kept in My book. The hour appointed came. I redeemed you from your sin. I made you love Me. I spoke to you and made you leave your sins and become My child and I then chose you over again. Since that hour how often have you forgotten Me! but I have never forgotten you. You have wandered from Me. You have rebelled against Me. Yes, your words have been exceedingly hot against Me and you have robbed Me of My honor—but I chose you even then! And now that I put you in the furnace, do you think My love is changed? Am I a summer friend fleeing from you in the winter? Am I one who loves you in prosperity and

casts you off in adversity? No, hearken to these, My words, you furnace-tried one—'I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction.'"

Think not, then, when you are in trouble that God has cast you off. Think He has cast you off if you never have any trials and troubles! But when in the furnace, say, "Did He not tell me this beforehand?"—

"Temptation or pain?—He told me no less—
The heirs of salvation, I know from His word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord."

O blessed reflection! Let it comfort us—His love does not change. It cannot be made to alter. The furnace cannot scorch us—not a single hair of our head can perish. We are as safe in the fire as we are out of it. He loves us as much in the depths of tribulation as He does in the heights of our joy and exultation. Oh, you who are beloved of friends, "When your father and mother forsake you, the Lord will take you up." You who can say, "He that ate bread with me has lifted up his heel against me"—"Though all men forsake you," says Jehovah, "yet will not I." O Zion, say not you are forgotten of God! Hear Him when He speaks—"Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I never forget you." "I have engraved you upon My hands. Your walls are continually before Me." Rejoice then, O Christian, in the second thought—that God's love does not fail in the furnace but is as hot as the furnace and still hotter.

And now to the subject, which is this—*God's people in the furnace*. And in discussing it, we shall first of all endeavor to prove the fact that *if you want God's people, you will find them in the furnace*. Secondly, we will try to show *the reasons why there is a furnace.* Thirdly, we will discuss *the benefits of the furnace,* and fourthly, *the comforts in the furnace*. And may God help us in so doing!

I. First, then, I state the fact that IF YOU WANT GOD'S PEOPLE—YOU MUST GENERALLY LOOK FOR THEM IN THE FURNACE. Look at the world in its primeval age when Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden. Behold, they have begotten two sons, Cain and Abel—which of them is the child of God? Yonder one who lies there smitten by the club, a lifeless corpse; he who has just now been in the furnace of his brother's enmity and persecution—that is the heir of heaven! A few hundred years roll on, and where is the child of God? There is one man whose ears are continually vexed with the conversation of the wicked, and who walks with God, even Enoch, and he is the child of God. Descend still further, till you come to the days of Noah. You will find the man who is laughed at, hissed at, hooted as a fool, a simpleton, an idiot—building a ship upon dry land, standing in the furnace of slander and laughter—that is Noah, the elect of God. Go on still through history. Let the names of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob pass before you and you may write upon all of them—"These were God's tried people." Then go down to the time when Israel went into Egypt. Do you ask me to find out God's people? I take you not to the palaces of Pharaoh. I do not ask you to walk through the

stately halls of Memphis, or go to the hundred-gated Thebes. I take you to none of the places decked with the splendor, the glories and dignity of monarchs! I take you to the brick kilns of Egypt. See yonder slaves smarting beneath the lash, whose cry of oppression goes up to heaven? The tally of their bricks is doubled and they have no straw wherewith to fashion them. These are the people of God. They are in the furnace!

As we follow on in the paths of history, where were God's family next? They were in the furnace of the wilderness suffering privation and pain. The fiery serpent hissed upon them. The sun scorched them, their feet were weary, they lacked water and bread failed them and was only supplied by a daily miracle. They were in no desirable position. But amidst them—for all are not Israel that are of Israel—were the *chosen ones*—those who were most in the furnace. Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, against whom the people took up stones to stone them—these were the sons of God! These were distinguished above their fellows as being elect out of the chosen nation. Still turn over the blessed pages, pass through Judges and come to the time of Saul and where was God's servant then? Where is the man whom the king delights to honor? Where is the man after God's own heart? He is in the furnace—wandering in the caves of Engedi, climbing the goat tracks, hunted like the partridge by a remorseless foe. And after his days where were the saints? Not in the halls of Jezebel, nor sitting at the table of Ahab. Behold, they are hidden by fifties in the cave and fed by bread and water. Behold yon man upon the mountaintop wrapping his shaggy garment around him.

At one time his dwelling is by the rippling brook where ravens bring him bread and flesh. At another time a widow is his host—whose only possessions are a little oil and a handful of meal—in the furnace Elijah stands, the remnant of God's chosen people! Take history through. There is no need for me to follow it up, otherwise I might tell you of the days of Maccabees, when God's children were put to death without number, by all manner of tortures till then unheard of. I might tell you of the days of Christ and point to the despised fishermen—to be laughed at and become persecuted Apostles. I might go on through the days of Popery and point to those who died upon the mountains or suffered in the plains.

The march of the army of God may be tracked by their ashes left behind them. The course of the ship of glory may be traced by the white sheen of sufferings left on the sea of time. Like as a comet when it dashes in its glory leaves a blaze behind it for a moment, so has the church left behind it blazing fires of persecution and trouble. The path of the just is scarred on earth's breast, the monuments of the church are the sepulchers of her martyrs! Earth has been plowed with deep furrows wherever they have lived. You will not find the saints of God where you do not find the furnace burning round about them. I suppose it will be so until the latest age. Until that time shall come when we shall sit under our own vine and our own fig tree, none making us afraid or daring to attempt it.

But we must still expect to suffer. Were we not slandered, were we not the butt of ridicule, we would not think ourselves the children of God. We glory that we stand prominent in the day of battle. We thank our enemies for all their shafts—for each one bears upon it proofs of our Father's love. We thank our foes for every stab—for it only cuts our armor and rattles on our mail—never reaching the heart. We thank them for every slander they have forged and for every lie they have manufactured—for we know in whom we have believed—and know that these things cannot separate us from His love. Yes, we take this as a mark of our being called, that we, as the sons of God, can suffer persecution for righteousness' sake.

It is a fact, I say, that you will find religion in the furnace. If I were asked to find religion in London, I proclaim the last place I should think of going to look for it would be in yon huge structure that exceeds a palace in glory, where you see men decked out in all the toys which the old harlot of Babylon, herself, once did love! I would go to a humbler place than that! I would not go to a place where they had the government to assist them and the great and the noble of the land to back them up. I should generally go among the poor, among the despised, where the furnace blazed the hottest. There I would expect to find saints—but not among the respectable and fashionable churches of our land. This is a fact, then, that God's people are often in the furnace.

II. And now, secondly. THE REASON FOR THIS. Why is it that God's children get there? Why does God see fit to put them in the furnace?

1. The first reason I have is this—*that it is the stamp of the covenant.* You know there are certain documents which, in order to be legal, must have a government stamp put upon them. If they have not this stamp, they may be written, but they will not be at all legal and cannot be pleaded in a court of law. Now we are told what the stamp of the covenant is. There are two stamps and for your information, allow me to refer you to the Book of Genesis 15:17—and there you will see what they are. When Abraham was lying down at night, a horror of darkness came upon him and God made a covenant with him and it is said, "And it came to pass, that when the sun went down and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace and a burning lamp that passed between the pieces." These two things were the stamps that made the covenant secure—"a burning lamp"—the light for God's people, light for their darkness, light to guide them all the way to heaven. And beside the lamp, "a smoking furnace"; shall I then wish you to rend the smoking furnace off? Do I wish to get rid of it? No, for that would invalidate the whole! Therefore will I cheerfully bear it, since it is absolutely necessary to render that covenant valid.

2. Another reason is this—*all precious things have to be tried.* You never saw a precious thing yet which did not have a trial. The diamond must be cut. And hard cutting that poor jewel has—were it capable of feeling pain—nothing would be more fretted and worried about than that diamond! Gold, too, must be tried. It cannot be used as it is dug up from the mine, or in grains as it is found in the rivers. It must pass through the

crucible and have the dross taken away. Silver must be tried. In fact, all things that are of any value must endure the fire. It is the law of nature. Solomon tells us so in the 17th chapter of Proverbs, the 3rd verse—he says, "The fining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold." If you were nothing but tin, there would be no need of the "fining pot" for you. But it is simply because you are valuable that you must be tried. It was one of the laws of God, written in the Book of Numbers, 31st chapter, 23rd verse—"Everything that may abide the fire, you shall make go through the fire and it shall be clean." It is a law of nature, it is a law of grace that everything that can abide the fire—everything that is precious—must be tried! Be sure of this—that which will not stand trial is not worth having. Would I choose to preach in this house if I thought it would not stand the trial of a large congregation, but might one of these days totter and break down? Would anyone forming a railway construct a bridge that would not stand a trial of the weight that might run across it? No, we have things that would stand the trial, otherwise we would think them of no value. That which I can trust one hour but find it break the next, when I need it most, is of little use to me. But because you are of value, saints, because you are gold, therefore you must be tried! From the very fact that you are valuable you must be made to pass through the furnace.

3. Another thought is this, *the Christian is said to be a sacrifice to God.* Now every sacrifice must be burned with fire. Even when they offered the green ears before the harvest, it is said the green ears must be dried with fire. They killed the bullock and laid it on the altar, but it was no sacrifice till they burned it. They slew the lamb, they laid the wood—but there was no sacrifice in the killing of the lamb till it was burned. Know you not, brothers and sister, we are offerings to God and that we are a living sacrifice unto Jesus Christ? But how could we be a sacrifice if we were not burned? If we never had the fire of trouble put about us, if we never were kindled—we would lie there without smoke, without flame, unacceptable to God! But because you are His sacrifice, therefore you must be burned. Fire must penetrate you and you must be offered as a whole burnt offering, holy and acceptable unto God.

4. Another reason why we must be put in the furnace is because *otherwise we should not be at all like Jesus Christ.* If you read that beautiful description of Jesus Christ in the Book of Revelation, you will find it says that, "His feet were like fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." The feet of Jesus Christ represent His humanity, the head, the divinity. The head of His Deity suffered not—as God He could not suffer. But, "His feet were like fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." How can we be like Christ, unless our feet, too, are burned in the furnace? If He walked through the flames, must not we do the same?—that, "in all things He might be like unto His brethren." We are, we know, to *be* like Christ in that august appearance when He shall come to be admired of all His saints. We are to be like He when we shall see Him as He is. And shall we

fear to be like He here? Will we not tread where our Savior tread? There is His footstep—shall not our foot fill the same place? There is His track—will we not willingly say—

"His track I see and I'll pursue
The narrow way, till Him I view"?

Yes! Onward, Christian! The captain of your salvation has gone through the dark valley before you—therefore, onward! Onward with boldness! Onward with courage! Onward with hope! That you may be like your Savior by participation in His sufferings.

III. And now WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE FURNACE? We are quite sure that all these reasons are not sufficient for God's trying His people unless there is some benefit to be derived from it.

1. Very simply and briefly, then, one benefit to be derived from the furnace is that *it purifies us*. I was very kindly shown, by some of the magistrates of Glasgow, one of the largest shipbuilding works I had ever seen. I saw them cast certain articles while I was present. I noticed them put the metal in the crucible and after subjecting it to an intense heat, I saw them pour it out like water into the molds—but first they removed the impurities from the top. But the scum would never have come on the top had it not been for the fire. They could not extract the dross if it had not been put in the furnace and melted! That is the benefit of the furnace to God's people. It melts, tries and purifies them. They get rid of their dross and if we can but get rid of that, we may be willing to suffer all the misery in the world. The man who is very badly diseased may stop a long while before he is willing that the doctor's knife shall be used upon him. But when death comes to his bedside, he will say at last, "Anything, physician! Anything, surgeon! If you can but get this disease away—cut as deep as you please." I confess I have the greatest antipathy to pain. But nevertheless, a greater pain will make one bear a less one to relieve it. And as sin is pain to God's people, as it is a weary torment, they will be willing, if necessary, to have their right hand cut off, or their right eye plucked out rather than having two eyes or two hands to be cast into hell. The furnace is a good place for you, Christian. It befits you. It helps you to become more like Christ and it is fitting you for heaven. The more furnace work you have, the sooner you will get Home. For God will not keep you long out of heaven when you are fit for it! When all the dross is burned and the tin is gone, He will say, "Bring here that wedge of gold. I do not keep My pure gold on earth. I will put it away with My crown jewels in the secret place of My tabernacle of heaven."

2. Another benefit of the furnace is that *it makes us more ready to be molded.* Let a blacksmith take a piece of cold iron, lay it on the anvil and bring down his heavy hammer with tremendous force to fashion it. There he is at work. Ah, Mr. Blacksmith, you will have many a hard day's work before you will make anything out of *that* bar of iron. "But," he says, "I mean to smite hard, to strike true and morning, noon and night, this hammer shall be always ringing on the anvil and on the iron." Ah, so it

may, Mr. Blacksmith, but there will be nothing come of it. You may smite it eternally while it is cold and you shall be a fool for your pains! The best thing you could do would be to place it in the furnace—then you might weld it—then you could melt it entirely and pour it into a mold and it would take any shape you pleased. What could our manufacturers do if they could not melt the metal they use? They could not make half the various things we see around us if they were not able to liquefy the metal and afterwards mold it. There could be no good men in the world if it were not for trouble. We could, none of us, be made useful if we could not be tried in the fire. Take me as I am, a rough piece of metal—very rough, stern and hard. You may tutor me in my childhood and use the rod. You may train me in my manhood and set the pains of the magistrate and the fear of the law before my eyes—but you will make a very sorry fellow of me with all your hitting and knocking! But if God takes me in hand and puts me in the furnace of affliction—and melts me down by trial—then He can fashion me like unto His own glorious image that I may, at last, be gathered with Him above! The furnace makes us fusible. We can better be poured out and molded and delivered unto the doctrines when we have been somewhat tried.

3. Then the furnace is very useful to God's people because *they get more light, there, than anywhere else*. If you travel in the neighborhood of Birmingham, or in other manufacturing districts, you will be interested at night by the glare of light which is cast by all those furnaces. It is labor's own honorable illumination. This may be an idea apart from the subject but I believe there is no place where we learn so much and have so much light cast upon Scripture as we do in the furnace. Read a truth in hope, read it in peace, read it in prosperity, and you will not make anything of it. Be put inside the furnace, (and nobody knows what a bright blaze is there who has not been there) and you will then be able to spell all hard words and understand more than you ever could without it!

4. One more use of the furnace—and I give this for the benefit of those who hate God's people—is that *it is useful for bringing plagues on our enemies*. Do you not remember the passage in Exodus 9:8-9—"The Lord said unto Moses and unto Aaron, 'Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it towards the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh, and it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast'"? There is nothing that so plagues the enemies of Israel as "handfuls of ashes of the furnace" that we are able to cast upon them! The devil is never more devoid of wisdom than when he meddles with God's people and tries to run down God's ministers. "*Run him down?"* Sir, you run him up! You will never hurt him by all you can say against him for "handfuls of the dust of the furnace" will be scattered abroad to bring plagues upon the ungodly throughout the land. Did any Christian ever suffer yet by persecution—really suffer by it? Does he ever *really* lose by it? No, it is quite the reverse. We gain by it. You remember the case of the

burning fiery furnace of Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego, and Nebuchadnezzar's dealings? You remember he commanded that the furnace should be heated seven times hotter than usual, and he told his brave men, his strongest ones, to bind these three men and cast them into the furnace. There they go! They have thrown three bound men into the fire, but before they have time to turn back, it is said the heat of the flames slew those men that cast them into the furnace! Nebuchadnezzar, himself, said, "Did we not cast three bound into the furnace? Behold I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire and the fourth is like the Son of God." Now, just mark these points—Nebuchadnezzar made a great blunder and heated the fire too hot. That is just what our enemies often do. If they would just speak the truth about us, and only tell our imperfections, they would then have enough to do. But, in their endeavors to cast down God's servants, they heat the fire rather too hot. They make what they say smell, as Rowland Hill said, too much like a lie, therefore nobody believes them. Instead of doing any hurt it just kills the men who would have cast us into the fire! I have noticed, sometimes, when there comes out a desperate article against any particular man, suppose the man is right, the person who writes the article is always damaged by it, but not the man who is thrown into the fire. It does the slandered man good!

All that has ever been said of me, as one of God's servants, has done me good—it has just burned the bonds of my obscurity and given me liberty to speak to thousands more! Moreover, to throw the Christian into the furnace is to put him into Christ's parlor, for lo, Jesus Christ is walking with him! Spare yourselves the trouble, O you enemies! If you wish to hurt us, spare yourselves the labor! You think that is the furnace. It is not—it is the gate of heaven. Jesus Christ is there and will you be so foolish as to put us just where we like to be? Oh, kind enemies, thus to render us threefold blessed! But, were you wise, you would say, "Let it alone. If the thing is of God, it will stand. If it is not of God, it will utterly fall." God's enemies receive more damage from "the ashes of the furnace" than in any other way. They are shots that kill wherever they go. Persecution damages our enemies—it cannot hurt us. Let them still go on, let them still fight—all their arrows fall back upon themselves. And as for anything of evil that is done against us, it is but small and light compared with the damage that is done to their own cause. This, then, is another blessing concerning the furnace—it hurts our enemies though it does not hurt us.

IV. And now, to wind up, let us consider THE COMFORTS IN THE FURNACE. Christians may say, "It is all well to tell us what good the furnace does, but we want some comfort in it."

1. Well, then, beloved, the first thing I will give you is the comfort of the text itself—ELECTION. Comfort yourself, you tried one, with this thought—God says, "I have *chosen* you in the furnace of affliction." The fire is hot, but He has *chosen* me. The furnace burns but He has *chosen*

me. These coals are hot, the place I love not, but He has *chosen* me. Ah, it comes like a soft gale assuaging the fury of the flame. It is like some gentle wind fanning the cheeks. Yes, this one thought arrays us in fireproof armor against which the heat has no power. Let affliction come—*God has chosen me*. Poverty, you may come in at the door—God is already in the house, and *He has chosen me*. Sickness, you may come, but I will have this by my side for a balsam—*God has chosen me*. Whatever it is, I know that He has chosen me!

2. The next comfort is *that you have the Son of Man with you in the furnace*. In that silent bedchamber of yours, there sits by your side one whom you have not seen but whom you love. And oftentimes when you know it not, He makes all your bed in your affliction and smoothes your pillow for you. You are in poverty. But in that lonely house of yours, that has nothing to cover its bare walls—where you sleep on a miserable pallet—do you know that the Lord of life and glory is a frequent visitor? He often treads those bare floors and putting His hands upon those walls, He consecrates them! Were you in a palace He might not come there. He loves to come into these desolate places where He may visit *you*. The Son of Man is with you, Christian. You cannot see Him, but you may feel the pressure of His hands. Do you not hear His voice? It is the Valley of the Shadow of Death—you see nothing, but He says, "Fear not, I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God." It is like that noble speech of Caesar's, "Fear not, you carry Caesar and all his fortune." Fear not, Christian! You carry Jesus in the same boat with you, and all His fortune! He is with you in the same fire; the same fire that scorches you, scorches Him; that which could destroy you, could destroy Him, for you are a portion of the fullness of Him that fills all-in-all. Will you not take hold of Jesus, then, and say—

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where He goes"?

Feeling that you are safe in His hands, will you not laugh even death to scorn, and triumph over the sting of the grave because Jesus Christ is with you?

Now, dear friends, there is another great furnace besides the one I have been talking of. There is a very great furnace, "The pile thereof is fire and much wood, the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, does kindle it." There is a furnace so hot that when the ungodly are cast into it, they shall be as the crackling of thorns under a pot. There is a burning so exceedingly fierce that all those tormented in its flames spend their time in "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." There is a furnace "where the worm dies not and where the fire is not quenched." Where it is I know not. I think it is not down here in the heart of the earth. It were a sad thought that earth has hell within her own heart! But I think that it is somewhere in the universe. The Eternal has declared, men and women, you who love not God—a few more years will set you on a journey through the vast unknown to find out where this place

is! Should you die Godless and Christless, a strong hand will seize you on your deathbed and irresistibly you will be borne along through the vast expanse of ether, unknowing where you are tending but with the dread thought that you are in the hand of a demon, who with an iron hand is bearing you most swiftly on. Down he plunges you! Ah, what a fall were that my friends! To find yourselves there in that desperate land of torments! May you never know it! Words cannot tell you of it now. I can but just call up a few dread horrible emotions. I can but picture it in a few short rough words—may you never know it!

Would you wish to escape—there is but one door! Would you be saved—there is but one way! Would you find entrance into heaven and escape from hell—there is but one road! The road is this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believes not shall be damned." To believe is to trust in Jesus. As an old divine used to say, "Faith is recumbence on Christ." But it is too difficult a word—he meant—*faith is lying down on Christ.* As a child lies on its mother's arms, so is faith. As the seaman trusts to his boat, so is faith. As the old man leans on his staff, so is faith. As I may trust, there is faith. Faith is to trust. Trust in Jesus, He will never deceive you—

"Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude!
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good!"

Thus may you escape that furnace of fire into which the wicked man must be cast. God bless you all, for His name's sake.

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WHAT ARE THE CLOUDS?
NO. 36

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 19, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"The clouds are the dust of His feet."
Nahum 1:3.

IT is possible for a man to read too many books. We will not despise learning, we will not undervalue erudition—such acquisitions are very desirable. When his talents are sanctified to God, the man of learning frequently becomes, in the hands of the Spirit, far more useful than the ignorant and the unlearned. But at the same time, if a man acquires his knowledge entirely from books, he will not find himself to be a very wise man. There is such a thing as heaping so many books on your brains that they cannot work—pouring such piles of type and letters and manuscripts and papers and prints and pamphlets and volumes and books and folios upon your weary head—that your brain is absolutely buried and cannot move at all. I believe that many of us, while we have sought to learn by books, have neglected those great volumes which God has given us. We have neglected to study this great book—the Bible! Moreover, we have not been careful enough students of the great volume of nature, and we have forgotten that other great book, the human heart. For my own part, I desire to be somewhat a student of the heart, and I think I have learned far more from conversation with my fellowmen than I ever did from reading. And the examination of my own experience, and the workings of my own heart, have taught me far more of humanity than all the metaphysical books I have ever perused. I like to read the book of my fellow creatures—nothing delights me so much as when I see a multitude of them gathered together or when I have the opportunity of having their hearts poured into mine, and mine into theirs. He will not be a wise man who does not study the human heart, and does not seek to know something of his fellows and of himself.

But if there is one book I love to read above all others, next to the book of God, it is the volume of nature. I care not what letters they are that I read, whether they are the golden spellings of the name of God up yonder in the stars, or whether I read, in rougher lines, His name printed on the rolling floods, or see it hieroglyphic in the huge mountain, the dashing waterfall, or the waving forest. Wherever I look abroad in nature, I love to discern my Father's name spelled out in living characters. And if we had

any fields a little greener than Moorfields, Smithfield, and Spafields, I would do as Isaac did—go into the fields at eventide and muse and meditate upon the God of nature! I thought in the cool of last evening I would muse with my God, by His Holy Spirit, and see what message He would give me. There I sat and watched the clouds, and learned a lesson in the great hall of nature's college. The first thought that struck me was this—as I saw the white clouds rolling in the sky, I thought I shall soon see my Savior mounted on the great white throne, riding on the clouds of heaven to call men to judgment! My imagination could easily picture the scene when the quick and the dead would stand before His great white throne and hear His voice pronounce their changeless destiny. I remembered, moreover, that text in the Proverbs, "He that observes the wind shall not sow and he that regards the clouds shall not reap." I thought how many a time myself and my brother ministers have regarded the clouds. We have listened to the voice of prudence and of caution; we have regarded the clouds; we have stopped when we ought to have been sowing because we were afraid of the multitude—or we refused to reap, and take in the people into our churches because some good brother thought we were too hasty about the matter.

I rose up and thought to myself—I will regard neither the clouds nor the winds, but when the wind blows a hurricane I will throw the seed with my hands, if perhaps the tempest may waft it still further! And when the clouds are thick, I will still reap and rest assured that God will preserve His own wheat, whether I gather it under clouds or in the sunshine. And then, when I sat there musing upon God, thoughts struck me as the clouds careered along the skies—thoughts which I must give to you this morning! I trust they were somewhat for my own instruction, and possibly they may be for yours. "The clouds are the dust of His feet."

I. Well, the first remark I make upon this shall be—*the way of God is generally a hidden one*. This we gather from the text, by regarding the connection, "The Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet." When God works His wonders, He always conceals Himself. Even the motion of His feet causes clouds to arise, and if these clouds are but "the dust of His feet," how deep must be that dense darkness which veils the brow of the eternal. If the small dust which He causes is of equal magnitude with our clouds—if we can find no other figure to image "the dust of His feet" than the clouds of heaven—then how obscure must be the motions of the Eternal One, how hidden and how shrouded in darkness! This great truth suggested by the text is well borne out by facts. The ways of God are hidden ones. Cowper did not say amiss when he sang—

"He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm."

His footsteps cannot be seen, for planted on the sea, the next wave washes them out. And placed in the storm, rioting as the air then is, every impression of His chariot wheels is soon erased. Look at God and at whatever He has deigned to do and you will always see Him to have been a hidden God. He has concealed Himself and all His ways have been veiled in the strictest mystery. Consider His works of salvation. How did He hide Himself when He determined to save mankind? He did not manifestly reveal Himself to our forefathers. He gave them simply one dim lamp of prophecy which shone in words like these, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." And for 4,000 years God concealed His Son in mystery, and no one understood what the Son of God was to be. The smoking incense clouded their eyes, and while it showed something of Jesus, it hid far more. The burning victim sent its smoke up towards the sky, and it was only through the dim mists of the sacrifice that the pious Jew could see the Savior.

Angels, themselves, we are told, desired to look into the mysteries of redemption, yet though they stood with their eyes intently fixed upon it until the hour when redemption developed itself on Cavalry, not a single angel could understand it. The most profound sage might have sought to find out how God could be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly, but he would have failed in his investigations. The most intensely pious man might meditate, with the help of that portion of God's Spirit which was then given to the prophets, on this mighty subject and he could not have discovered what the mystery of godliness was—"God manifest in the flesh." God marched in clouds, "He walked in the whirlwinds." He did not deign to tell the world what He was about to do—for it is His plan to gird Himself in darkness and "The clouds are the dust of His feet." Ah, and so it always has been in providence as well as grace. God never condescends to make things very plain to His creatures. He always does rightly, and therefore He wants His people always to believe that He does rightly. But if He showed them that He did so, there would be no room for their faith!

Turn your eyes along the pages of history, and see how mysterious God's dealings have been! Who would conceive that a Joseph sold into Egypt would be the means of redeeming a whole people from famine? Who would suppose that when an enemy came upon the land, it would be, after all, but the means of bringing glory to God? Who could imagine that a harlot's blood should mingle with the genealogy from which came the great Messiah, the Shiloh of Israel? Who could have guessed, much less could have compassed the mighty scheme of God? Providence has always been a hidden thing—

"Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill,

He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sovereign will."

And yet, beloved, you and I are always wanting to know what God is about. There is a war in the Crimea. We have had some great disasters at Sebastopol, and we are turning over the papers and saying, "Whatever is God doing here?" What did He do in the last war? What was the benefit of it? We see that even Napoleon was the means of doing good, for he broke down the aristocracy, and made all monarchs respect the future, the power, and the rights of the people. We also see what was the result even of that dread hurricane, that it swept away a pestilence which would have devoured full many more1 But we ask, "What is God doing with this world?" We want to know what will be the consequences. Suppose we should humble Russia, where would it end? Can Turkey be maintained as a separate kingdom? And ten thousand other questions arise! Beloved, I always think, "Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth," and—as a good old friend of mine says—"Let them crack themselves, too, if they like. We will not interfere." If the potsherds will go smashing one another, why, then, they must! We pray that old England may come off the safest of them all. But we are not much concerned to know the result. We believe that this war, as well as everything else, will have a beneficial tendency. We cannot see in history that this world ever went a step backwards. God is always moving it in its orbit. And it has always progressed even when it seemed retrograding.

Or, perhaps you are not agitated about providence in a nation. You believe that, there, God hides Himself. But then there are matters concerning yourself which you long to see explained. When I was in Glasgow I went over an immense foundry, one of the largest in Scotland—and there I saw a very powerful steam engine which worked all the machinery in the entire building. I saw in that foundry such numberless wheels running round, some one way, and some another; I could not make out what on earth they were all about! But, I daresay if my head had been a little wiser and I had been taught a little more of mechanics I might have understood what every wheel was doing, though really they seemed only a mass of wheels very busy running round and doing nothing! They were all, however, working at something. And if I had stopped and asked, "What is that wheel doing?" A mechanic may have said, "It turns another wheel." "Well, and what is that wheel doing?" "There is another wheel dependent upon that and that, again, is dependent on another." Then, at last, he would have taken me and said, "This is what the whole machinery is doing." Some ponderous bar of iron, perhaps, being grooved and cut, shaped and polished—"this is what all the wheels are effecting—but I cannot tell separately what each wheel is doing." All things are working

together for good. But what the things separately are doing, it would be impossible to explain.

Yet you, child of Adam, with your finite intellect, are continually stopping to ask, "Why is this?" The child lies dead in the cradle. Why was infancy snatched away? Oh, ruthless death, could you not reap ripe corn—why snatch the rosebud? Would not a chaplet of withered leaves become you better than these tender blossoms? Or you are demanding of providence, why have you taken away my property? Was I not left, by a parent, well-to-do, but some ravenous leech has swept all my substance away? It is all gone. Why this, O God? Why not punish the unjust? Why should the innocent be allowed to suffer thus? Why am I to be bereft of my all? Another says, "I launched into a business that was fair and honorable; I intended, if God had prospered me, to devote my wealth to Him. I am poor, my business never prospers. Lord, why is this?" And another says, "Here I am toiling from morning till night. And all I do, I cannot extricate myself from my business which takes me off so much from religion. I would rather live on less if I had more time to serve my God." Ah, finite one! Do you ask God to explain these things to you? I tell you, God will not do it, and God cannot do it—for this reason—you are not capable of understanding it! Should the ant ask the eagle where it dashes aloft in the skies? Shall leviathan be questioned by a minnow? These creatures might explain their motions to creatures, but the omnipotent Creator, the uncreated eternal cannot well explain Himself to mortals whom He has created! We cannot understand Him; it is enough for us to know that His way always must be in darkness, and that we must never expect to see much in this world.

II. This second thought is GREAT THINGS WITH US ARE LITTLE THINGS WITH GOD. What great things clouds are to us! There we see them sweeping along the skies! Then they rapidly increase till the whole firmament gathers blackness and a dark shadow is cast upon the world. We foresee the coming storm and we tremble at the mountains of cloud, for they are great. Great things are they? No, they are only the dust of God's feet! The greatest cloud that ever swept the face of the firmament was but one single particle of dust starting from the feet of the Almighty Jehovah. When clouds roll over clouds and the storm is very terrible, it is but the chariot of God, as it speeds along the heavens, raising a little dust around Him! "The clouds are the dust of His feet." Oh, could you grasp this idea, my friends, or had I words in which to put it into your souls, I am sure you would sit down in solemn awe of that great God who is our Father, or who will be our Judge. Consider that the greatest things with man are little things with God. We call the mountains great but what are they? They are but "the small dust of the balance." We call the

nations great and we speak of mighty empires, but the nations before Him are but as "a drop in the bucket." We call the islands great and talk of ours boastingly—"He takes up the isles as a very little thing." We speak of great men and of mighty—"The inhabitants of the earth in His sight are but as grasshoppers."

We talk of ponderous orbs moving millions of miles from us—in God's sight they are but little atoms dancing up and down in the sunbeam of existence! Compared with God there is nothing great! True, there are some things which are little with man that are great with God. Such are our sins which we call little but which are great with Him. And His mercies which we sometimes think are little, He knows are very great mercies towards such great sinners as we are. Things which we reckon great are very little with God. If you knew what God sometimes thought of our talk, you would be surprised at yourselves. We have some great trouble—we go burdened with it, saying, "O Lord God! What a great trouble I am burdened with." Why, I think God might smile at us, as we do sometimes at a little child who takes up a load too heavy for it (but which you could hold between your fingers) and staggers and says, "Father, what a weight I am carrying." So there are people who stagger under the great trouble which they think they are bearing; g*reat*, beloved? There are no great troubles at all—"The clouds are the dust of His feet." If you would but so consider them, the greatest things with you are but little things with God. Suppose, now, that you had all the troubles of all the people in the world, that they all came pouring on your devoted head—what are waterfalls of trouble to God?—"Drops in the bucket." What are whole mountains of grief to Him? Why, "He takes up the mountains as the dust of the balance." And He can easily remove your trials. Sit not down, then, you son of weariness and want and say, "My troubles are too great." Hear the voice of mercy—"Cast your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you, He will never allow the righteous to be moved."

You shall hear two Christians talk; one of them will say, "O my troubles and trials and sorrows, they are so great I can hardly sustain them! I do not know how to support my afflictions from day to day." The other says, "Ah, my troubles and trials are not less severe, but, nevertheless, they have been less than nothing. I could laugh at impossibilities and say they shall be done." What is the reason of the difference between these men? The secret is that one of them carried his troubles and the other did not. It does not matter to a porter how heavy a load may be if he can find another to carry it for him. But if he is to carry it all himself, of course he does not like a heavy load! So one man bears his troubles, himself, and gets his back nearly broken. But the other cast his troubles on the Lord. Ah, it does not matter how heavy troubles are if you can

cast them on the Lord! The heavier they are, so much the better, for the more you have got rid of and the more there is laid upon the Rock! Never be afraid of troubles. However heavy they are, God's eternal shoulders can bear them. He, whose omnipotence is testified by revolving planets, and systems of enormous worlds can well sustain you. Is His arm shortened, that He cannot save, or is He weary that He cannot hold you fast? Your troubles are nothing to God, for the very "clouds are the dust of His feet."

And this cheers me, I assure you, in the work of the ministry. For any man who has his eyes open to the world at large will acknowledge that there are many clouds brooding over England and over the world. I received lately a letter from a gentleman at Hull in which he tells me that he sympathizes with my views concerning the condition of the church at large. I do not know whether Christendom was ever worse off than it is now. At any rate, I pray God it never may be. Read the account of the condition of the Suffolk churches where the gospel is somewhat flourishing and you will be surprised to find that they have had scarcely any increase at all in the year. So you may go from church to church and find scarcely any that are growing. Here and there a chapel is filled with people. Here and there you find an earnest minister. Here and there an increasing church—here and there a good prayer meeting. But these are only like green spots. Wherever I have gone through England, I have been always grieved to see how the glory of Zion is under a cloud—how the precious saints of Zion, comparable to fine gold, have become like earthen pitchers—the work of the hands of the potter. It is not for me to set myself up as universal censor of the church but I must be honest and say that spiritual life and fire and zeal and piety seem to be absent in ten thousand instances! We have abundance of agencies, we have good mechanism, but the church nowadays is very much like a large steam engine without any fire—without any hot water in the boiler—without any *steam!* There is everything *but* steam, everything but life! England is veiled in clouds. Not clouds of infidelity. I care not one fig for all the infidels in England and I do not think it worth Mr. Grant's trouble to go after them. Nor am I afraid of Popery for old England. I do not think she will go back to that—I am sure she never will. But, I *am* afraid of this deadness, this sloth, this indifference that has come over our churches!

The church needs shaking, like the man on the mountaintop does when the cold numbs him into a deadly slumber. The churches are gone to sleep for lack of zeal, for lack of fire. Even those who hold sound doctrine are beginning to slumber. Oh may God stir the church up! One great black cloud only broken here and there by a few rays of sunlight seems to be hanging over the entire of this, our happy island! But, be-

loved, there is comfort, "for the clouds are the dust of His feet." He can scatter them in a moment. He can raise up His chosen servants who have only to put their mouth to the trumpet and one blast shall awaken the sleeping sentinels and startle the sleeping camp. God has only to send out, again, some evangelist, some flying angel and the churches shall start up once more and she who has been clothed in sackcloth shall doff her garments of mourning and put on a garment of praise, instead of the spirit of heaviness. The day is coming, I hope, when Zion shall sit, not without her diadem, crownless, but with her crown on her head she shall grasp her banner, take her shield and, like that heroic maiden of old who roused a whole nation, shall go forth conquering and to conquer! We hope this much, because "The clouds are the dust of His feet."

Yes, and what clouds rest on the world at large! What black clouds of Catholic superstition, Mohammedanism and idolatry; but what are all these things? We do not care about them at all, brothers and sisters. Some say that I am getting very enthusiastic about the latter-day glory and the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ. Well, I don't know. I get all the happier the more enthusiastic I am, so I hope I shall keep on at it, for I believe nothing so comforts a servant of God as to believe that his Master is coming! I hope to see Him. I should not be surprised to see Jesus Christ tomorrow morning. He *may* come then. "In such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes." He who learns to watch for Christ will never be surprised when He comes. Blessed shall that servant be, whom, when his Lord comes, He shall find busy about his duty. But some say He cannot come yet. There are so many clouds and so much darkness in the sky it cannot be expected that the sun will yet rise. Is that a fair reason? Do the clouds ever impede the sun? The sun moves on despite all the mists—and Jesus Christ can come, clouds or no clouds. We do not need light before He appears. He will come and give us light, afterwards—scattering the darkness with the glory of His own eyes. But you say, "How are these idolatrous systems to be cast down?" God could do it in a minute if He pleased! Religion never moves by years and weeks. Even false religions grow like mushrooms—much more, true ones. False religions attained colossal proportion in a very few years. Take the case of Mohammedanism—the new-born faith of Islam became the religion of millions in an incredible short period, and if a false religion could spread so quickly, shall not a true one run along like fire amidst the stubble when God shall speak the word? Clouds are but "dust of His feet."

A little while ago some of us were fretting about this Mormonism, and we said, "It will never be broken up." Some stupid fellows in America began to kill the poor Mormons, and so carve them into saints, which was

the very way to establish them! Christians trembled, and said, "What can this be? We shall have Sodom over again." But did you read the *Times* newspaper of Thursday last? You will there see a wonderful instance of how God can scatter the clouds, and make them dust of His feet. He has caused to come out of the ground, near Salt Lake, at Utah, thousands of crickets, and all kinds of noxious insects that devour the crops. Creatures that have not been seen in Utah before, with swarms of locusts, have made their appearance. And the people, being so far from civilized nations cannot, of course, carry much corn across the desert, so that they will be condemned to starve or else separate and break up. It seems to all appearance that the whole settlement of the Mormons must be entirely broken up and *that* by an army of caterpillars, crickets, and locusts!

III. Now, one more remark. "The clouds are the dust of His feet." Then we learn from that, that THE MOST TERRIBLE THINGS IN NATURE HAVE NO TERROR TO A CHILD OF GOD. Sometimes clouds are very fearful things to mariners. They expect a storm when they see the clouds and darkness gathering. A cloud, to many of us, when it forebodes a tempest, is a very unpleasant thing. But let me read my text and you will see what I mean by my remark that the most terrible things in nature are not terrible to the saints. "The clouds are the dust of HIS feet"—of God's feet. Do you not see what I mean? There is nothing terrible, now, because it is only the dust of my Father's feet. Did you ever know a child who was afraid of the dust of his father's feet? No. If the child sees the dust of his father's feet in the distance, what does he do? He rejoices because it is his father and runs to meet him! So the most awful things in nature, even the clouds, have lost all their terror to a child of God because he knows they are but the dust of his Father's feet. If we stand in the midst of the lightning storm, a flash tears apart yon cedar, or splits the oak of the forest. Another flash follows, and then another, till the whole firmament becomes a sea of flame. We fear not, for they are only the flashes of our Father's sword as He waves it in the sky. Listen to the thunder as it shakes the earth, causes the hinds to calve and discovers the forests. We shake not at the sound—

"The God that rules on high,
And thunders when He please,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas;
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our love."

We are not afraid, for we hear our Father's voice. And what favored child ever quaked at his Father's speech? We love to hear that voice. Although it is deep, bass, sonorous, yet we love its matchless melody for it

issues from the depths of affection. Put me to sea and let the ship be driven along—that wind is my Father's breath—let the clouds gather, they are the dust of my Father's feet! Let the waterspout appear from heaven, it is my Father dipping His hand in the laver of His earthly temple! The child of God fears nothing. All things are his Father's. And now divested of everything that is terrible, he can look upon them with complacency, for he says, "The clouds are the dust of His feet"—

"He drives His chariot through the sky,
Beneath His feet His thunders roar!
He shakes the earth, He veils the sky,
My soul, my soul, this God adore—
He is your Father and your love."

Fall down before His feet and worship Him, for He has loved you by His grace. You know there are many fearful events which may befall us. But we are never afraid of them if we are saints, because they are the dust of *His* feet. Pestilence may ravage this fair city once again. The thousands may fall and the funeral march be constantly seen in our streets. Do we fear it? No. The pestilence is but one of our Father's servants and we are not afraid of it, although it walks in darkness. There may be no wheat, the flocks may be cut off from the herd and the stall—nevertheless famine and distress are our Father's doings and what our Father does we will not view with alarm. There is a man there with a sword in his hand—he is an enemy and I fear Him. My father has a sword and I fear Him not. I rather love to see Him have a sword, because I know He will only use it for my protection.

But there is to come a sight grander, more terrific, more sublime, and more disastrous than anything earth has yet witnessed! There is to come a fire before which Sodom's fire shall pale to nothingness. And the conflagration of continents shall sink into less than nothing and vanity. In a few more years, my friends, Scripture assures us, this earth and all that is therein, is to be burned up. That deep molten mass which now lies in the bosom of our mother earth is to burst up—the solid matter is be melted down into one vast globe of fire. The wicked—shrieking, wailing, and cursing shall become a prey to these flames that shall blaze upward from the breast of earth. Comets shall shoot their fires from heaven. All the lightning shall launch their bolts upon this poor earth, and it shall become a mass of fire. But does the Christian fear it? No. Scripture tell us we shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air, and shall be forever with Him!

IV. To conclude. The fourth observation is ALL THINGS IN NATURE ARE CALCULATED TO TERRIFY THE UNGODLY MAN. Ungodly men and women now present in this place of worship, it is a very solemn fact that you are at enmity with God. Having sinned against God, God is angry

with you—not angry with you today, but angry with you every day, angry with you every hour and every moment! It is, moreover, a most sad and solemn fact that there is a day coming, ungodly man, when this anger of God will burst out and when God will utterly destroy and devour you! Now listen to me for a moment while I try to make all nature preach to you a solemn warning—and the wide world, itself, a great high priest—holding up its finger and calling you to flee for mercy to Jesus Christ, the King of kings! sinner, have you ever seen the clouds as they roll along the sky? Those clouds are the dust of the feet of Jehovah! If these clouds are but the dust, what is He, Himself? And then I ask you, O man, are you not foolish in the extreme to be at war with such a God as this? If "The clouds are the dust of His feet," how foolish are you to be His enemy! Do you think to stand before His majesty? I tell you, He will snap your spear as if it were but a reed. Will you hide yourself in the mountains? They shall be melted at His presence and though you cry to the rocks to hide you, they would fail to give you anything of concealment before His burning eyes.

O do but consider, my dear fellow creatures, you are at enmity with *God!* Would it not be folly if you were to oppose yourself to an angel? Would it not be the utmost stupidity if you were to commence a war even with Her Majesty, the Queen? I know it would, because you have no power to stand against them—but consider how much more mighty is the eternal God. Why, man, He could put His finger upon you at this moment and crush you as I could an insect! Yet this God is your enemy! You hate Him; you are at war with Him! Consider, moreover, O man, that you have grievously rebelled against Him. You have incensed His soul, and He is angry and jealous, and furious against every sinner.

Consider what you will do in that great day when God shall fall upon you! Some of you believe in a god that has no anger and no hatred towards the wicked. Such a god is not the God of Scripture! He is a God who punishes the ungodly. Let me ask the question of inspiration—Can you stand before His indignation? Can you abide the fierceness of His anger? When His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him, do you think, sinner, it will be a good thing to be in the hands of the Almighty who will tear you in sunder? Will you think it easy to lie down in hell with the breath of the eternal fanning the flames? Will you delight yourself to think that God will invent torments for you, sinner, to make your doom most cursed if you do not repent and turn to Him? What? Man! Are the terrors of Jehovah nothing to you? Do you not tremble and shake before the fierceness of His fury? Ah, you may laugh now. You may go away, my hearer, and smile at what I have said—but the day shall declare it—the hour is coming—and it may be soon—when

the iron hand of the Almighty shall be upon you; when all your senses shall be the gates of misery, your body the house of lamentation, and your soul the epitome of woe. Then you will not laugh and despise Him!

But now to finish up, let me just give you one word more, for, beloved, when we use these threats—why do we speak of them? It is but the word of the angel, who, pressing Lot upon the shoulder, said, "Look not behind you. Stay not in all the plain," and then pointing to the fire behind, said, "On! On, lest the fiery sleet overtake you and the hail of the eternal shall overwhelm you!" We only mentioned that fire behind that the Spirit might make you flee to the mountain lest you should be consumed. Do you ask where that mountain is? We tell you there is a cleft in the Rock of Ages where the chief of sinners may yet hide himself—"Jesus Christ for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven." And whoever here, this morning, is a sinner, we now invite to come to Christ. You Pharisees who do not acknowledge the title—I have no gospel to preach to you! You self-righteous, self-sufficient ones, I have nothing whatever to say to you except what I have said—the voice of threat. But, whoever will confess himself a sinner has the warrant this morning to come to Jesus Christ! Sinnership is the only title to salvation! If you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners, Christ died for you, and if you put your trust in Him, and believe that He died for you, you may rely upon Him and say, "Lord, I will be saved by Your grace." Your merits are good for nothing! You can get no benefit by them. Your own work is useless. You err like the man in the prison working the treadmill—you never get anything by it—grinding oyster shells without any benefit to yourself. Come to Jesus Christ! Believe in Him, and after you have, He will set you to working—working a new work! He will give you works, if you will have but faith—even faith is His gift.

O may He give it to you now, my hearers, for, "He gives liberally and upbraids not." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized—and you shall be saved"—by His grace!

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LAW AND GRACE
NO. 37

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 26, 1855, *BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,* AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Moreover the Law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound." Romans 5:20.

THERE is no point upon which men make greater mistakes than upon the relation which exists between the Law and the Gospel. Some men put the Law instead of the Gospel—others put the Gospel instead of the Law. Some modify the Law and the Gospel and preach neither Law nor Gospel—and others entirely abrogate the Law by bringing in the Gospel. Many there are who think that the Law is the Gospel and who teach that men, by good works of benevolence, honesty, righteousness and sobriety, may be saved. Such men do err. On the other hand, many teach that the Gospel is a Law—that it has certain commands in it by obedience to which men are meritoriously saved. Such men err from the Truth and understand it not. A certain class maintain that the Law and the Gospel are mixed and that partly by observance of the Law and partly by God's Grace men are saved. These men understand not the Truth and are false teachers! This morning I shall attempt—God helping me—to show you what is the design of the Law and then what is the end of the Gospel. The coming of the Law is explained in regard to its objectives—"Moreover the Law entered that the offense might abound." Then comes the mission of the Gospel—"But where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound."

I shall consider this text in two senses this morning. First, *as it respects the world at large and the entrance of the Law into it.* And then afterwards, *as respecting the heart of the convicted sinner and the entrance of the Law into the conscience.*

I. First, we shall speak of the text as CONCERNING THIS WORLD. The objective of God in sending the Law into the world was "that the offense might abound." But then comes the Gospel—for "where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound." First, then, in reference to the entire world. *God sent the Law into the world "that the offense might abound."* There was sin in the world long before God sent the Law. God gave His Law that the offense might be seen to be an offense—yes, and that the offense might abound exceedingly more than it could have done without its coming. There was sin long before Sinai smoked. Long before the mountain trembled beneath the weight of Deity and the dread trumpet sounded exceedingly loud and long, there had been transgression! And where that Law has never been heard, in heathen countries where that Word of God has never gone forth, there is still sin—because though men cannot

sin against the Law which they have never seen, yet they can all rebel against the Light of Nature, against the dictates of conscience and against that traditional remembrance of right and wrong which has followed mankind from the place where God created them. All men, in every land have consciences and, therefore, all men can sin. The ignorant heathen, who has never heard anything of a God, has just so much of the Light of Nature that in the things that are outwardly good or bad, he will discern the difference!

And though he foolishly bows down to sticks and stones he has a judgment which, if he used it, would teach him better. If he chose to use his talents, he might know there is a God. For the Apostle, when speaking of men who have only the Light of Nature, plainly declares that, "The invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom 1:20). Without a Divine Revelation, men can sin and sin exceedingly—conscience, nature, tradition and reason—being, each of them, sufficient to condemn them for their violated commandments.

The Law makes no one a sinner! All men are such in Adam and were so practically before its introduction. It entered that "the offense might *abound."* Now this seems a very terrible thought at first sight and many ministers would have shirked this text altogether. But when I find a verse I do not understand, I usually think it is a text I *should study*. And I try to seek it out before my heavenly Father—and then, when He has opened it to my soul—I reckon it my duty to communicate it to you, with the aid of the Holy Spirit. "The Law entered that the offense might abound." I will attempt to show you how the Law makes offenses "abound."

1. First of all, the Law tells us that *many things are sins which we would never have thought to be so if it had not been for the additional Light of God.*

Even with the Light of Nature and the light of conscience and the light of tradition, there are some things we would never have believed to be sins had we not been taught so by the Law. Now, what man by the light of conscience would keep holy the Sabbath? Suppose he never read the Bible and never heard of it? If he lived in a South Sea island, he might know there was a God, but not by any possibility could he find out that the *seventh* part of his time should be set apart to that God! We find that there are certain festivals and feasts among heathens and that they set apart days in honor of their fancied gods. But I would like to know where they could discover that there was a certain seventh day to be set apart to God, to spend the time in His House of Prayer. How could they, unless indeed, tradition may have handed down the fact of the original consecration of that day by the creating Jehovah? I cannot conceive it possible that either conscience or reason could have taught them such a command as this—"Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor; and do all your work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath

of the Lord your God, in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates." Moreover, if in the term, "Law," we comprehend the ceremonial ritual, we can plainly see that many things, in appearance quite indifferent, were by it constituted sins. The eating of animals that do not chew the cud and divide the hoof, the wearing of linsey-woolsey, the sitting on a bed polluted by a leper—with a thousand other things, all seem to have no sin in them. But the Law made them into sins and so made the offense to abound!

2. It is a fact which you can verify by looking at the workings of your own mind, *that Law has a tendency to make men rebel*. Human nature rises against restraint. I had not known lust except the Law had said, "You shall not covet." The depravity of man is excited to rebellion by the promulgation of laws. So evil are we that we conceive at once the desire to commit an act simply because it is forbidden. Children, we all know, as a rule, will always desire what they may not have and if forbidden to touch anything, will either do so when an opportunity serves, or will long to be able to do so. The same tendency any student of human nature can discern in mankind at large. Is, then the Law chargeable with my sin? God forbid! "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me and by it slew me" (Rom 7:8, 11). The Law is holy and just and good. *It* is not faulty but *sin* uses it as an occasion of offense and rebels when it ought to obey. Augustine placed the Truth of God in a clear light when he wrote—"The Law is not in fault, but our evil and wicked nature, even as a heap of lime is still and quiet until water is poured thereon, but then it begins to smoke and burn, not from the fault of the water, but from the nature and kind of the lime which will not endure it." Thus, you see, this is a second sense in which the entrance of the Law causes the offense to abound.

3. Yet again—the Law *increases the sinfulness of sin by removing all excuse of ignorance*. Until men know the Law, their crimes have at least a palliation of partial ignorance. But when the code of rules is spread before them, their offenses become greater because they become committed against the Light of God and knowledge. He who sins against conscience shall be condemned—of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who despises the voice of Jehovah, defies His sacred Sovereignty and willfully tramples on His commands? The more Light, the greater guilt—the Law affords that Light and so causes us to become double offenders. Oh, you nations of the earth who have heard the Law of Jehovah, your sin is increased and your offense abounds!

I think I hear someone say, "How unwise it must have been that a Law should come to make these things abound!" Does it not, at first sight, seem very harsh that the great Author of the world should give us a Law which will not justify but indirectly cause our condemnation to be greater? Does it not seem to be a thing which a gracious God would not re-

veal, but would have withheld? But, know you "that the foolishness of God is wiser than men." And understand that there is a gracious purpose even here! Natural men dream that by a strict performance of duty they shall obtain favor, but God says thus—"I will show them their folly by proclaiming a Law so high that they will despair of attaining unto it. They think that works will be sufficient to save them. They think falsely and they will be ruined by their mistake. I will send them a Law so terrible in its censures, so unflinching in its demands, that they cannot possibly obey it. They will be driven even to desperation and come and accept My mercy through Jesus Christ. They cannot be saved by the Law—not by the Law of Nature as it is—they have sinned against it. But yet I know they have foolishly hoped to keep My Law and think by works of the Law they may be justified. I have said, 'By the works of the Law no flesh living can be Justified.' Therefore I will write a Law—it shall be a black and heavy one—a burden which they cannot carry. And then they will turn away and say, 'I will not attempt to perform it. I will ask my Savior to bear it for me.'"

Imagine a case—Some young men are about to go to sea where I foresee they will meet with a storm. Suppose you put me in a position where I may cause a tempest before the other shall arise. Well, by the time the natural storm comes on those young men, they will be a long way out at sea and they will be wrecked and ruined before they can put back and be safe. But what will I do? Why, when they are just at the mouth of the river, I send a storm putting them in the greatest danger and precipitating them ashore so that they are saved. Thus did God. He sends a Law which shows them the roughness of the journey. The tempest of Law compels them to put back to the harbor of Free Grace and saves them from a most terrible destruction which would otherwise overwhelm them! The Law never came to save men. That never was its intention at all. It came on purpose to make the evidence complete that salvation by works is impossible and thus to drive the elect of God to rely wholly on the finished salvation of the Gospel! Now, just to illustrate my meaning, let me describe it by one more figure. You all remember those high mountains called the Alps. Well, it would be a great mercy if those Alps were a little higher. It would have been, at all events, for Napoleon's soldiers when he led his large army over and caused thousands to perish in the crossing!

Now, if it could have been possible to pile another Alps on their summit and make them higher than the Himalayas, would not the increased difficulty have deterred him from his enterprise and so have adverted the destruction of thousands? Napoleon demanded, "Is it possible?" "Barely possible," was the reply. "*Avancez*," cried Bonaparte! And the host were soon toiling up the mountainside. Now, by the Light of Nature it *does seem possible* for us to go over this mountain of works. But all men would have perished in the attempt—the path even of this lower hill being too narrow for mortal footsteps! God, therefore, puts another Law, like a mountain, on the top. And now the sinner says, "I cannot climb

over *that*. It is a task beyond Herculean might. I see before me a narrow pass, called the pass of Jesus Christ's Mercy—the pass of the Cross. I think I will wend my way there." But if it had not been that the mountain was too high for him, he would have gone climbing up and climbing up until he sank into some chasm, or was lost under some mighty avalanche, or in some other way eternally perished! But the Law comes that the whole world might see the impossibility of being saved by works!

Let us turn to the more pleasing part of the subject—the superabundance of Grace. Having bewailed the devastations and injurious deeds of sin, it delights our hearts to be assured that "Grace did much more abound."

4. *Grace excels sin in the numbers it brings beneath its sway*. It is my firm belief that the number of the saved will be far greater than that of the damned. It is written that in all things Jesus shall have the preeminence. And why is this to be left out? Can we think that Satan will have more followers than Jesus? Oh, no! For while it is written that the redeemed are a number that no man can number, it *is not* recorded that the lost are beyond numeration! True, we know that the visible elect are always a *remnant*, but then there are others to be added. Think for a moment of the army of infant souls who are now in Heaven. These all fell in Adam, but being all elect, were all redeemed and all regenerated and were privileged to fly straight from the mother's breasts to Glory! Happy lot, which we who are spared, might well envy! Nor let it be forgotten that the multitudes of converts in the millennial age will very much turn the scale. For then the world will be exceedingly populous and a thousand years of a reign of Grace might easily suffice to overcome the majority accumulated by sin during 6,000 years of its tyranny. In that peaceful period, when all shall know Him, from the least even unto the greatest, the sons of God shall fly as doves to their windows and the Redeemer's family shall be exceedingly multiplied!

What though those who have been deluded by superstition and destroyed by lust must be counted by thousands—Grace has still the preeminence. Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands. We admit that the number of the damned will be immense, but we do think that the two states of infancy and millennial glory will furnish so great a reserve of saints that Christ shall win the day. The procession of the lost may be long—there must be thousands and thousands of thousands—of those who have perished. But the greater procession of the King of kings shall be composed of larger hosts than even these. "Where sin abounded, Grace did much *more abound."* The trophies of Free Grace will be far more than the trophies of sin!

Yet again—Grace does *"much* more abound"—because a time shall come when the world shall be all full of Grace, whereas there has never been a period in this world's history when it was wholly given up to sin. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, there was still a display of Grace in the world. For in the Garden, at the close of the day, God said,

"I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her Seed; it shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel." And since that first transgression, there has never been a moment when Grace has entirely lost its footing in the earth. God has always had His servants on earth—at times they have been hidden by fifties in the caves, but they have never been utterly cut off! Grace might be low. The stream might be very shallow, but it has never been wholly dry. There has always been a salt of Grace in the world to counteract the power of sin. The clouds have never been so universal as to hide the day. But the time is fast approaching when Grace shall extend all over our poor world and be universal. According to the Bible testimony, we look for the great day when the dark cloud which has swathed this world in darkness shall be removed and it shall shine once more like all its sister planets. It has been for many a long year clouded and veiled by sin and corruption—but the last fire shall consume its rags and sackcloth! After that fire, the world in righteousness shall shine. The huge molten mass now slumbering in the bowels of our common mother shall furnish the means of purity! Palaces and crowns and peoples and empires are all to be melted down. And after like a plague house, the present Creation has been burned up entirely, God will breathe upon the heated mass and it will cool down again. He will smile on it as He did when He first created it, and the rivers will run down the new-made hills, the oceans will float in new-made channels—and the world will again be the abode of the righteous forever and forever! his fallen world will be restored to its orbit. That gem which was lost from the scepter of God shall be set again. Yes, He shall wear it as a signet about His arm. Christ died for the world—and what He died for, He will have. He died for the whole world and the whole world He will have when He has purified and cleansed it and fitted it for Himself—"Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound." For Grace shall be universal, whereas sin never was.

One more thought. Has the world lost its possessions by sin? It has gained far more by Grace. True, we have been expelled from a garden of delights where peace, love and happiness found a glorious habitation. True, Eden is not ours—with its luscious fruits, its blissful bowers and its rivers flowing o'er sands of gold—but we have, through Jesus, a fairer habitation! He has made us sit together in heavenly places—the plains of Heaven exceed the fields of Paradise in the always-new delights which they afford. The Tree of Life and the river from the Throne render the inhabitants of the celestial regions more than imaginable! Did we lose natural life and subject ourselves to painful death by sin? Has not Grace revealed an immortality for the sake of which we are too glad to die? Life lost in Adam is more than restored in Christ! We admit that our original robes were torn asunder by Adam, but Jesus has clothed us with a Divine Righteousness far exceeding in value even the spotless robes of created innocence! We mourn our low and miserable condition through sin, but we will rejoice at the thought that we are now more secure than be-

fore we fell. We are brought into closer alliance with Jesus than our standing could have procured us. O Jesus! You have won us an inheritance more wide than Adam ever lost by his folly! You have filled us a coffer with greater riches than our sin has ever lavished. Your Grace has overtopped our sins. "Grace does much more abound."

II. Now we come to the second part of the subject and that is THE ENTRANCE OF THE LAW INTO THE HEART. We have to deal carefully when we come to deal with internal things—it is not easy to talk about this little thing, the heart. When we begin to meddle with the Law of their soul, many become indignant, but we do not fear their wrath. We are going to attack the hidden man this morning. The Law entered their hearts that sin might abound, "but where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound."

1. The Law causes the offense to abound by *discovering sin to the soul*. When once God, the Holy Spirit, applies the Law to the conscience, secret sins are dragged to light, little sins are magnified to their true size and things apparently harmless become exceedingly sinful. Before that dread searcher of the hearts and trier of the reins makes His entrance into the soul, it appears righteous, just, lovely and holy. But when He reveals the hidden evils, the scene is changed. Offenses which were once styled peccadilloes, trifles, freaks of youth, follies, indulgences, little slips, etc.—then appear in their true color—as breaches of the Law of God deserving punishment.

John Bunyan shall explain my meaning by an extract from his famous allegory—"Then the Interpreter took Christian by the hand and led him into a very large parlor that was full of dust, because never swept, in which after he had reviewed it a little while, the Interpreter called for a man to sweep. Now when he began to sweep the dust began so abundantly to fly about, that Christian had almost therewith been choked. Then said the Interpreter to a damsel that stood by, 'Bring here water and sprinkle the room,' the which when she had done, it was swept and cleansed with pleasure. Then said Christian, 'What does this mean?' The Interpreter answered, 'This parlor is the heart of a man that was never sanctified by the sweet Grace of the Gospel. The dust is his original sin and inward corruptions that have defiled the whole man. He that began to sweep at first, is the Law. But she that brought the water and did sprinkle it, is the Gospel. Now, whereas you saw that as soon as the first began to sweep, the dust did so fly about that the room could not by him be cleansed, but that you were almost choked therewith, this is to show you that the Law, instead of cleansing the heart (by its working) from sin, does revive, (Rom 7:9), put strength into, (1 Cor 15:56) and increases it in the soul, (Rom 5:20). Even as it does discover and forbid it, for it does not give power to subdue. Again, as you saw the damsel sprinkle the room with water, upon which it was cleansed with pleasure, this is to show you that when the Gospel comes in, the sweet and precious influences thereof to the heart, then, I say, even as you saw the damsel lay

the dust by sprinkling the floor with water, so is sin vanquished and subdued and the soul made clean through the faith of it and consequently fit for the King of Glory to inhabit."

The heart is like a dark cellar full of lizards, cockroaches, beetles and all kinds of reptiles and insects which in the dark we see not. But the Law takes down the shutters and lets in the light and so we see the evil. Thus sin becoming apparent by the Law—it is written the Law makes the offense to abound.

2. Once again. *The Law, when it comes into the heart, shows us how very black with sin we are*. Some of us know that we are sinners. It is very easy to say it. The word, "sinner," has only two syllables in it and many there are who frequently have it on their lips but who do not understand it. They see their sin, but it does not appear exceedingly sinful till the Law comes. We think there is something sinful in it—but when the Law comes we detect its abomination. Has God's holy Light ever shone into your souls? Have you had the fountains of your great depravity and evil broken up and been wakened sufficiently to say, "O God I have sinned"? Now, if you have your hearts broken up by the Law, you will find the heart is more deceitful than the devil! I can say this of myself—I am very much afraid of mine—it is so bad. The Bible says, "The heart is deceitful above all things." The devil is one of the things—therefore, it is worse than the devil—"and desperately wicked." How many do we find who are saying, "Well, I trust I have a very good heart at the bottom. There may be a little amiss at the top, but I am very good-hearted at bottom." If you saw some fruit on the top of a basket that was not quite good, would you buy the basket because they told you, "Yes, but they are good at the bottom?" "No, no," you would say, "They are sure to be the best at the top and if they are bad there, they are sure to be rotten below." There are many people who live strange lives and some friends say, "He is good-hearted at the bottom. He gets drunk, sometimes, but he is very good-hearted at the bottom." Ah, never believe it. Men are seldom estimated better than they seem to be. If the outside of the cup or platter is clean, the inside may be dirty. But if the outside is impure, you may always be sure the inside is no better. Most of us put our goods in the window—we keep all our good things in the front and bad things behind. Let you and I, instead of making excuses about ourselves—about the badness of our hearts—if the Law has entered into our soul, bow down and say, "O the sin—O the uncleanness—the blackness—the awful nature of our crimes!" "The Law entered that the offense may abound."

3. The Law reveals the exceeding abundance of sin *by discovering to us the depravity of our nature*. We are all prepared to charge the serpent with our guilt or to insinuate that we go astray from the force of ill example—but the Holy Spirit dissipates these dreams by bringing the Law into the heart. Then the fountains of the great deep are broken up, the chambers of imagery are opened, the innate evil of the very essence of fallen

man is discovered. The Law cuts into the core of the evil—it reveals the seat of the malady and informs us that the leprosy lies deep within. Oh, how the man abhors himself when he sees all his rivers of water turned into blood and loathsomeness creeping over all his being! He learns that sin is no flesh wound but a stab in the heart. He discovers that the poison has impregnated his veins, lies in his very marrow and has its fountain in his inmost heart. Now he loathes himself and desires to be healed. Actual sin seems not half as terrible as inbred sin—and at the thought of what he is—he turns pale and gives up salvation by works as an impossibility!

4. Having thus removed the mask and shown the desperate case of the sinner, the relentless Law causes the offense to abound yet more by *bringing home the sentence of condemnation*. It mounts the Judgment Seat, puts on the black cap and pronounces the sentence of death. With a harsh unpitying voice, it solemnly thunders forth the words, "Condemned already." It bids the soul prepare its defense knowing well that all apology has been taken away by its former work of conviction. The sinner is, therefore, speechless—and the Law, with frowning looks—lifts up the veil of Hell and gives the man a glimpse of torment. The soul feels that the sentence is just, that the punishment is not too severe and that it has no right to expect mercy. It stands quivering, trembling, fainting and intoxicated with dismay until it falls prostrate in utter despair. The sinner puts the rope around his own neck, arrays himself in the attire of the condemned and throws himself at the foot of the King's Throne, with but one thought, "I am vile"—and with one prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

5. Nor does the Law cease its operations even here, for it renders the offense yet more apparent *by discovering the powerlessness occasioned by sin.* It not only condemns, but it actually kills. He who once thought that he could repent and believe at pleasure finds in himself no power to do either the one or the other!

When Moses smites the sinner, he bruises and mangles him with the first blow, but at a second or a third, he falls down as one dead. I have been in such a condition that if Heaven could have been purchased by a single prayer, I would have been damned, for I could no more pray then I could fly! Moreover, when we are in the grave which the Law has dug for us, we feel as if we cannot feel and we grieve because we cannot grieve! The dread mountain lies upon us which renders it impossible to stir hand or foot. And when we would cry for help, our voice refuses to obey us. In vain the minister cries, "Repent!" Our hard heart will not melt. In vain he exhorts us to believe—that faith of which he speaks seems to be as much beyond our capacity as the creation of a universe! Ruin is now become ruin, indeed! The thundering sentence is in our ears, "CONDEMNED ALREADY." Another cry follows it, "DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS." And a third, more awful and terrible, mingles its horrible warning, "*The wrath to come—the wrath to come*." In the opinion of the

sinner, he is now cast out as a corrupt carcass. He expects each moment to be tormented by the worm that never dies and to lift up his eyes in Hell! Now is Mercy's moment—and, by the Grace of God, we turn the subject from condemning Law to abounding Grace!

Listen, O heavy laden, condemned Sinner, while in my Master's name I speak of super abounding Grace. *Grace excels sin in its measure and efficacy*. Though your sins are many, mercy has many pardons. Though they excel the stars, the sands, the drops of dew in their number—one act of remission can cancel all! Your iniquity, though a mountain, shall be cast into the midst of the sea. Your blackness shall be washed out by the cleansing blood of your Redeemer's gore. Mark, I said your *sins* and I meant to say so, for if you are now a Law-condemned sinner, I know you to be a vessel of mercy by that very sign! Oh, hellish Sinners, abandoned Profligates, Outcasts from the company of sinners, themselves—if you acknowledge your iniquity—here is mercy, broad, ample, free, immense, INFINITE! Remember this, O sinner—

"If all the sins that men have done
In will, in word, in thought, in deed,
Since worlds were made, or time began,
Were laid on one poor sinner's head,
The stream of Jesus' precious blood
Applied, removes the dreadful load."

Yet again, Divine Grace excels sin in another thing. *Sin shows us its parent and tells us our heart is the father of it. But Grace surpasses sin there and shows the Author of Grace—the King of kings!* The Law traces sin up to our heart—Grace traces its own origin to God and—

"In His sacred breast I see
Eternal thoughts of love to me."

O Christian, what a blessed thing Grace is, for its source is in the everlasting mountains! Sinner, if you are the vilest in the world, if God forgives you this morning, you will be able to trace your pedigree to Him, for you will become one of the sons of God and have Him always for your Father! I think I see you, a wretched criminal, at the bar and I hear Mercy cry, "Discharge him! He is pallid, sick, maimed—heal him. He is of a vile race—lo, I will adopt him into My family." Sinner! God takes you for His son. What? Though you are poor, God says, "I will take you to be Mine forever. You shall be My heir. There is your fair Brother. In ties of blood He is one with you—Jesus is your actual Brother!" Yet how came this change? Oh, is not that an act of mercy? "Grace did much more abound"—

"Grace has put me in the number
Of the Savior's family."

Grace outdoes sin, for it lifts us higher than the place from which we fell!

And, again—"Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound." *Because the sentence of the Law may be reversed, but that of Grace never can*. I stand here and feel condemned, yet, perhaps I have a hope that I may be acquitted. There is a dying hope of acquittal still left. But when

we are justified there is no fear of condemnation. I cannot be condemned if I am once justified— I am *fully* absolved by Grace! I defy Satan to lay hands on me if I am a justified man. The state of justification is an invariable one and is indissolubly united to Glory. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, yes, rather, that is risen again who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or sword? No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Oh, poor condemned Sinner, does not this charm you and make you in love with Free Grace? And all this is YOURS! Your crimes, if once blotted out, shall never be laid to your charge again! The justification of the Gospel is no Arminian sham which may be reversed if you should in future turn aside. No. The debt once paid cannot be demanded twice—the punishment, once endured, cannot again be inflicted. Saved, saved, saved, entirely saved by divine Grace, you may walk without fear the wide world over!

And yet, once more—Just as sin makes us sick and grievous and sad, so does Grace make us *far more joyful and free*. Sin causes one to go about with an aching heart till he seems as if the world would swallow him and mountains hang above ready to drop upon him. This is the effect of the Law. The Law makes us sad. The Law makes us miserable. But, poor Sinner, Grace removes the evil effects of sin upon your spirit. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you shall go out of this place with a sparkling eye and a light heart. Ah, well do I remember the morning when I stepped into a little place of worship, as miserable almost as Hell could make me—being ruined and lost. I had often been at Chapels where they spoke of the Law, but I heard not the Gospel. I sat down in the pew a chained and imprisoned sinner! The Word of God came and I went out free! Though I went in miserable as Hell, I went out elated and joyful! I sat there black in sin. I went away whiter than driven snow! God had said, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be whiter than snow." Why not this be your lot, my Brothers and Sisters, if you now feel yourself a sinner? It is all He asks of you—to feel your need of Him. "The Law has entered that sin might abound." You are forgiven! Only believe it, Elect, only believe it—'tis the Truth that you are saved!

And now, lastly—poor Sinner, has sin made you unfit for Heaven? Grace shall render you a fit companion for seraphs and the just made perfect! You who are today lost and destroyed by sin, shall one day find yourself with a crown upon your head and a golden harp in your hand exalted to the Throne of the Most High! Think, O Drunkard, if you re-

pent, there is a crown laid up for you in Heaven! You most guilty, most lost and depraved, are you condemned in your conscience by the Law? Then I invite you, in my Master's name, to accept pardon through His blood! He suffered in your place! He has atoned for your guilt and you are acquitted!

You are an object of His eternal affection. The Law is but a schoolmaster to bring you to Christ. Cast yourself on Him! Fall into the arms of saving Grace! No works are required, no fitness, no righteousness, no doings. You are complete in Him who said, "It is finished."

"You debtors whom He gives to know,
That you ten thousand talents owe,
When humble at His feet you fall
Your gracious God forgives them all!
Slaves, that have borne the heavy chain
Of sin and Hell's tyrannical reign,
To liberty assert your claim
And urge the great Redeemer's name!
The rich inheritance of Heaven
Your joy, your boast, is freely given!
Fair Salem, your arrival waits
With golden streets and pearly gates.
Her blest inhabitants no more
Bondage and poverty deplore!
No debt, but love immensely great
Their joy still rises with the debt."

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STORMING THE BATTLEMENTS
NO. 38

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Go up upon her walls and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's."
Jeremiah 5:10.

WE have been talking very freely during this last week of "glorious victories," of "brilliant successes," of "sieges," and of "stormings." We little know what the dread reality is of which we boast. Could our eyes once behold the storming of a city, the sacking of a town, the pillage of the soldiery, the barbarous deeds of fury when the blood is up, and long delay has maddened souls—could we see the fields saturated with blood and soaked with gore—could we spend one hour among the corpses and the dying. Or if we could only let the din of battle and the noise of the guns reach our ears, we would not so much rejoice if we had anything of fellow feeling for others as well as for ourselves. The death of an enemy is to me a cause of regret as well as the death of a friend. Are not *all* my brethren? And does not Jesus tell me so? Are we not all made of one flesh? And has not God "made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth"? Let us, then, when we hear of slaughtered enemies, and of thousands that have fallen, cease to rejoice in their death! It would betray a spirit utterly inconsistent with the Christian religion, more akin to Mohammedanism, or to the fierce doctrines of Buddha—but not in the least to be brought into compatibility with the truths of the gospel of the glorious God. And yet with all that, far be it from me to check any gladness which this nation may experience, now that it hopes that the incubus of war may at last be removed. Clap your hands, O Britons! Rejoice, you sons of Albion! There is hope that your swords may yet be sheathed, that your men shall not be mown down as grass before the scythe, that the desolation of your hearths shall now be stayed. There is hope at last that the tyrant shall be humbled, and that peace shall be restored! With this view of it, let our hearts leap for joy and let us sing unto God who has gotten us the victory! Let us now rejoice that earth's wounds may be staunched—that her blood need not flow any longer and that peace may be established! We trust upon a lasting footing. This, I think, should be the Christian view of it. We should rejoice with the hope of better things. But we should lament over the awful death and terrible carnage—the extent of which we know not yet—but which history shall write among the black things. My earnest prayer is

that our brave soldiers may honor themselves as much by moderation in victory as by endurance of privation, and valor in attack. I have nothing more to say upon that subject whatever. I am now about to turn to a different kind of siege, another kind of sacking of cities.

Jerusalem had sinned against God. She had rebelled against the Most High, had set up for herself false gods, and bowed before them. And when God threatened her with chastisement, she built around herself strong battlements and bastions. She said, "I am safe and secure. What though Jehovah has gone away, I will trust in the gods of nations. Though the temple is cast down, yet we will rely upon these bulwarks and strong fortifications that we have erected." "Ah," said God, "Jerusalem, I will punish you. You are My chosen one, therefore will I chastise you. I will gather together mighty men and will speak unto them; I will bid them come unto you, and they shall visit you for these things; My soul shall be avenged on such a nation as this." And He calls together the Chaldeans and Babylonians, and says to those fierce men who speak in uncouth language, "Go up upon her walls and destroy. But make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's." Thus God used wicked men to be His scourge to chastise a still wicked nation who were yet the objects of His affection and love!

This morning I shall take my text and address it in four ways to different classes of men. First, I think this may be spoken by God of *His Church*. "Go up against her," says He to her enemies, "take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's." This may also be spoken to *many a Christian*. God often bids troubles and enemies go up against Christians to take away their battlements that are not the Lord's. This, also, may be spoken to *the young convert* who is trusting in himself and has not yet been brought low. God says to doubts and fears and convictions and to the law, "Go up against him; make not a full end: take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord's." And this also shall be spoken, at last, to the *impertinent sinner*, who, putting his trust in his own strength—he hopes by joining hand with hand to go unpunished—God shall say, at last, to His angels, "Go up against her." He will, however, in the last case, alter the next phrase—"make a full end; take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's."

I. First, then, I shall regard this text as spoken concerning THE CHURCH. God frequently says to the Church's enemies, "Go up against her, but make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's." God's Church is very fond of building walls which her God has not sanctioned. She is not content to trust in the arm of God, but she will add thereto some extraneous help which God utterly abhors. "Beautiful for situation—the joy of the whole earth—is Mount Zion upon the sides of the north, the city of the great king. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, even so is God round about His people, from henceforth, forevermore." But His people are not content with God's be-

ing round about them—they seek some other protection. The church has very often gone to king Jareb for help, or to the world for aid. And then God has said to her enemies, "Go up against her, but make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's. She shall not have them. I am her battlement. She is to have none other."

1. The first I may mention is this. *The Church of God has sometimes sought to make the government its battlements.* There was an ancient Church in Rome, a holy and pious Church of God whose members worshipped and bowed down before the God of Israel. But there was a certain wily monarch called Constantine who believed that should he turn Christian, he should thus secure the empire more firmly to himself, and put down sundry other commanders who were helped by the priests. In order to gain his own ends, and promote his own honor, he pretends to see a vision in the skies and professes to become a Christian. He makes himself the head of the church and leader of the faithful. The church fell into his arms, and then state and church became allied. What was the consequence of the Church of Rome becoming allied with the state? Why she has become a corrupt mass of impurity—such a disgrace to the world that the sooner the last vestige of her shall be swept away, the better! This was because she built up bulwarks that are not the Lord's, and God has said to her enemies, "Go up upon her walls." Yes, her apostasy is now so great that doubtless the Judge of all the earth shall make a "full end" of her and the prophecy of the Apocalypse shall be fulfilled—"Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning and famine, and she shall be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her."

There are true Protestant churches standing now that have made unholy alliances with governments. Christ testified, "My Kingdom is not of this world," and yet they have crouched at the feet of kings and monarchs. They have obtained state endowments and grants. And so they have become high and mighty and honorable and they laugh at those pure churches who will not buckle and commit fornication with the kings of the earth, but who stand out for the royal supremacy of the Savior and look only to Christ as the Head of the Church! They apply to us the epithets of "schismatics," "dissenters," and such-like, but I believe that God shall yet say of every state church, whether it be the church of England, Ireland, Scotland or of anywhere else, "Go up upon her walls and destroy; but make not a full end," for there are thousands of pious men in her midst; "take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's." Even now we see a stir throughout the world to take away these battlements. The holy and pious men in the Church of England have multiplied amazingly during the last few years. It is pleasing to see the great improvement in the Establishment. I think no class of Christians have made more speedy advances in reformation than they have. They have a stirring in their midst and are saying, "Why should we be under the govern-

ment any longer?" There are many clergymen who have said, "We have no wish whatever for this union—we would be glad to get away from all state control." I wonder why they do not do it and follow their convictions? They are saying, "Take away her battlements, they are not the Lord's." And if they do not take them away, themselves, we are advancing by slow degrees and, by the aid of heaven, we will take away their battlements for them one of these fine days, and they will wake and find that church taxes and tithes have ceased. They will find that they must stand or fall themselves—that God's Church is strong enough to stand, herself, without government. It will be a happy day for the Church of England—God bless her!

I love her—when those battlements are taken down, when the last stone of state patronage is thrown down, when the unneeded help of kings and princes shall be refused—then she will come out a glorious church—like a sheep from the washing! She will be the honor of our land, and we who now stand aloof from her will be far more likely to fall into her bosom, for her articles are the very marrow of truth, and many of her sons are the excellent of the earth. Oh, angel, soon blow your trumpet of war and give the command—"Go up upon her walls, make not a full end." She is one of My Churches, "take away her battlements. They are not the Lord's." The Lord has nothing to do with such a battlement, He hates it altogether—state alliance is obnoxious to the God of Israel! And when kings shall become real nursing fathers, they will, in another mode, afford the gold of Sheba, and the free will offering of their piety.

2. But there are other churches that are making battlements for themselves. These are to be found among us as well as other denominations. There are churches who make battlements out of *the wealth of their members.* It is a respectable congregation, a most respectable church—the members are mostly wealthy. They say, "We are a strong and wealthy church. Nothing can hurt us. We stand fast." But you will find wherever that idea possesses the mind, prayer meetings will be ill attended. They do not think it necessary to pray much to keep up the cause. "If a five pound note is needed," says a brother, "we can give it." They do not think it necessary to have a preacher to bring together the multitude—they are strong enough in themselves! They are a glorious corporation of quiet personages. They like to hear a drawing room preacher. They would think it beneath their dignity to enjoy anything which the populace could understand. That would be degradation to their high and honorable position! We know some churches now—it would be envious to point the finger at them—where wealth and rank are reckoned to be the first thing.

Now, we do love to have wealth and rank in our own midst—we always thank God when He has brought among us men who can do something for the cause of truth. We bless God when we see Zaccheus, who had abundance of gold and silver, giving some of his gifts to the poor of the

Lord's family. We like to see the princes and kings bringing presents and bowing before the King of all the earth. But if any church bows before the golden calf, there will go forth the mandate, "Go up upon her and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's." And down the church will come! God shall humble it; He will bring it down from its high position. He will say, "Though you sit on the rocks, and build your house among the stars of heaven, even there will I pluck you down, and this right hand shall reach you." God will not have His Church relying on man and putting trust in princes. "Cursed shall be such a one," He says. "He shall be like a shrub in the desert, he shall not see when good comes; his leaf shall wither, and he shall bring forth no fruit unto perfection."

3. There are some other churches relying upon *learning and erudition*. The learning of their ministers seems to be a great fort, bastion and castle. They say, for instance, "Why have these uneducated and unrefined preachers? Of what use are they? We like men of sound argument, men who give a large amount of biblical criticism, who can decide this, that, and the other." They rely upon their minister. He is their tower of strength. He is their all in all. He happens to be a learned man. They say, "What is the use for anyone to oppose him? See the amount of his learning! Why his enemies would be cut in pieces because he is so mighty and learned!"

Never let it be said that I have despised learning or true knowledge. Let us have as much as we can. We thank God when men of learning are brought into the church, when God renders then useful. But the church nowadays is beginning to trust too much to learning, relying too much on philosophy and upon the understanding of man instead of the word of God! I do believe a large proportion of professing Christians have their faith in the word of man and not in the word of God! They say, "Such-and-Such a divine said so. So-and-So beautifully explained that passage and it must be right." But whatever church shall do this, God will say, "Go up upon her walls and destroy; make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's."

4. But I think that the worst battlement the churches now have is an earthwork *of great and extreme caution*. It is held to be improper that certain obnoxious truths in the Bible should be preached! Sundry reasons are given why they should be withheld. One is because it tends to discourage men from coming to Christ. Another is because certain persons will be offended on account of these rough edges of the gospel. Some would say, "O keep them back! You need not preach such-and-such a doctrine. Why preach distinguishing grace? Why divine sovereignty? Why election? Why perseverance? Why effectual calling—these are calculated to offend the people—they cannot endure such truths of God! If you tell them about the love of Christ and the vast mercy of God and such like it will always be pleasing and satisfying. But you must never preach deep

searching law-work; you must not be cutting at the heart, and sending the lancet into the soul—that would be dangerous!" Hence most churches are shielding themselves behind an ignominious bulwark of extreme caution. You never hear their ministers spoken against; they are quite safe behind the screen; you will be very puzzled to know what are the real doctrinal views of our modern divines! I believe you will pick up in some poor humble chapel more doctrinal knowledge in half an hour than in some of your larger chapels in half a century!

God's Church must be brought once more to rely upon the pure truth, upon the simple gospel, the unalloyed doctrines of the grace of God. O may this church never have any bulwark but the promises of God! May He be her strength and shield! May His protection be over our head, and be our constant guard! May we never depart from the simplicity of the faith! And whether men hear, or whether they forbear, may we say—

"Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my soul with treacherous art—
I'll call them vanities and lies
And bind the gospel to my heart."

II. We shall now address the text to THE CHRISTIAN—THE REAL CHILD OF GOD. The true believer, also, has a proneness to do as the church does—to build up sundry "battlements," which "are not the Lord's" and to put his hope, his confidence, and his affection in something else besides the word of the God of Israel.

1. The first thing, dearly beloved, whereof we often make a fortress wherein to hide, is *the love of the creature*. The Christians' happiness should be in God and God, alone. He should be able to say, "All my springs are in You. From You and You, alone, I always draw my bliss." Christ in His person, His grace, His offices, His mercy, ought to be our only joy and our glory should be that "Christ is all." But beloved, we are too much inclined by nature to hew out for ourselves broken cisterns that hold no water! There is a drop or two of comfort somewhere in the bottom of the leaky pitcher and until it is dried up we do not believe it is broken at all. We trust in that sooner than in the fountain of living waters. Now whenever any of us foolishly make a battlement of the creature, God will say to afflictions—"Go up against her: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's." There is a father—he has a son. That son is as dear to him as his own flesh and blood. Let him take heed lest that child become too much his darling, lest he sets *him* in the place of the Most High God! Let him take heed lest he makes an idol of him for as sure as ever he does, God, by affliction, will say to the enemy, "Go up against him: take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord's." There is a husband. He dotes upon his wife, as he should do. The Scripture tells us that a man cannot love his wife too much—"Husbands love your wives, as Christ also loves the church"—and that is infinitely. Yet this man has proceeded to a foolish fondness and idolatry. God says, "Go

up against him and destroy; make not a full end: take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord's." We fix our love and affection on some dear friend of ours and there is our hope and trust. God says, "What? Though you take counsel together, you have not taken counsel of Me, and therefore, I will take away your trust. What? Though you have walked in piety, you have not walked with Me as you should. Go up against her, O death! Go against her, O affliction! Take away that battlement, it is not the Lord's. You shall live on Me—you shall not feed, like Ephraim, on the wind. You shall lean on My arm. You shall not trust in the staff of these broken reeds. You shall set your affections on things above and not on things on earth, for I will blast the joy of earth; I will send a blight upon your fair harvest; I will make the clouds obscure your sun, and you shall cry unto me, 'O God, You are my trust, my sun, my hope, my all.'"

Oh, what a mercy it is that He does not make a "full end," beloved! It may sometimes seem to be an end, but it is not a *full* end. There may be at times an end of our hopes, an end of our faith, an end of our confidence—but it is not a full end. There is a little hope left. There is just a drop of oil in the cruse—there is the handful of meal in the barrel—it is not yet the full end. Though He has taken away many joys and blasted many hopes. Though many of our fair flowers have been blighted, He has left something. One star will twinkle in the sky, one faint lamp glimmers from yonder distant cottage—you are not quite lost, O wanderer of the night; He has not made a full end, but He may do so unless we come to Him!

2. Once more. Many of us are too prone to make battlements out of our *past experience* and to rely upon that instead of confiding in Jesus Christ. There is a sort of self-complacency which reviews the past and says, "There I fought Apollyon. There I climbed the Hill Difficulty. There I waded through the Slough of Despond." The next thought is, "And what a fine fellow I am! I have done all this. Why, there is nothing can hurt me. No, no! If I have done all this, I can do everything else that is to be accomplished. Am I not a great soldier? Shall any make me afraid? No. I have confidence in my own prowess, for my own arm has won many a victory. Surely I shall never be moved." Such a man cannot but think lightly of the present. He does not need communion with Christ every day. No, he lives on the past. He does not care to have further manifestations of Jesus. He does not need fresh evidence. He looks at the old musty evidences. He makes past grace the bread of his soul, instead of using it as a seasoning to sweeten his meal. What does God say whenever His people do not need Him, but live on what they used to have of Him and are content with the love He once gave them? "Ah, I will take away your battlements." He calls out to doubts and fears—"Go up upon his walls and destroy; take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord's."

3. Then, again, we sometimes get to trusting too much to *evidence and good works*. Ralph Erskine did not say amiss when he remarked, "I have got more hurt by my good works than my bad ones." That seems something like antinomianism, but it is true. We find it so by experience. "My bad works," said Erskine, "always drove me to the Savior for mercy. My good works often kept me from Him, and I began to trust in myself." Is it not so with us? We often get a pleasing opinion of ourselves—we are preaching so many times a week, we attend so many prayer meetings. We are doing good in the Sunday school. We are valuable deacons, important members of the church—we are giving away so much in charity. And we say, "Surely I am a child of God—I must be. I am an heir of heaven. Look at me! See what robes I wear! Have I not, indeed, a righteousness about me that proves me to be a child of God?" Then we begin to trust in ourselves and say, "Surely I cannot be moved, my mountain stands firm and fast." Do you know what is the usual rule of heaven when we thus boast? Why the command is given to the foe—"Go up against him; make not a full end: take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord's." And what is the consequence? Why, perhaps God allows us to fall into sin, and down goes self-sufficiency! Many a Christian owes his falls to a presumptuous confidence in his graces. I conceive that no outward sin is more abhorred by God than this most wicked sin of reliance on ourselves. May none of you ever learn your own weakness by reading a black book of your own backslidings.

More to be desired is the other method of God when He sends the light of the Spirit into the heart and exposes our corruption. Satan comes roaring there, conscience begins calling out, "Man you are not perfect." All the corruptions burst up like a volcano that had slept for a little moment. We are taken into the dark chambers of imagery. We look at ourselves and say, "Where are my battlements gone?" We go to the hilltop and see the battlements are all gone. We go by the side of the city—they are all departed. Then we go again to Christ and say—

"I, the chief of sinners am,
Jesus died for me.
Nothing in my hands I bring;
Simply to your cross I cling."

heaven smiles again, for now the heart is right and the soul is in the most fitting position. Take care of your graces, Christians!

III. Now to bring the text to the young CONVERT, to the man in that state of our religious history which we call conversion to God. All men by nature build battlements for themselves to hide behind. Our father Adam gave us as a portion of our inheritance when we were born—high battlements—very high ones! And we are so fond of them that it is hard to part from them. There are different lines of them—multiplied walls of fortifications. And when Christ comes to storm the heart, to carry the city by

storm, to take it for Himself, there is a tearing down of all these different walls which protect the city.

1. In the forefront of the city of Mansoul frowns the wall of *carelessness*—an erection of Satanic masonry. It is made of black granite and mortals cannot injure it. Bring law, like a huge pickaxe, to break it—you cannot knock a single chip off. Fire your shells at it—send against it all the hot cannonballs that any of the ten great mortars of the commandments can fire and you cannot move it in the least. Bring the great battering ram of powerful preaching against it. Speak with a voice that might wake the dead and almost make Satan tremble—the man sits careless and hardened. At last a gracious God cries out—"Take away her battlements, they are not the Lord's." And at a glance, down crumbles the battlement! The careless man becomes tender-hearted, the soul that was hard as iron has become soft as wax. The man who once could laugh at gospel warnings and despise the preaching of the minister now sits down and trembles at every word. The Lord is in the whirlwind—now He is in the fire, yes, He is in the still small voice. Everything is now heard, for God has taken away the first battlement—the battlement of a hard heart and a careless life. Some of you have got as far as that—God has taken that away. I know many of you by the tears that glisten on your cheeks—those precious diamonds of heaven testify that you are not careless!

2. The first wall is surmounted, but the city is not yet taken—the Christian minister, under the hand of God, has to storm the next wall—that is the wall of *self-righteousness*. Many poor sermons get their brains knocked out in the attack. Many of them are bayoneted by prejudice in trying to storm that bastion. Thousands of good sermons are spent all in vain in trying to make it totter and shake, especially among you good moral people, children of pious parents and godly relations. How strong that wall is with you! It does not seem to be made of separate stones, but it is all one great solid rock. But you are guilty—you are depraved—you are fallen. Yes, you believe it and you pay a compliment to Scripture in so doing. But you do not *feel* it. You are the humble ones that stoop down—as you must because you cannot sit upright. But you are not the humble ones who stoop willingly and feel that you are less than nothing. You say so. You call yourself a beggar, but you know that you are "rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing," in your own opinion. How hard it is to storm this wall! It must be carried at the point of the bayonet of faithful warning. There is no taking it except by boldly climbing up with the shout of, "By grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God!" We have to use very rough words to get your self-righteousness down. Yes and when we think it is nearly overthrown, it is soon piled up again in the night. The devil appears and miners are soon out to repair all the breaches. We thought we had carried you by storm and proved you to be lost and ruined ones. But you

take heart and say, "I am not as bad as I seem. I think I am yet very good." We have, by the grace of God, to destroy that wall before we can get at your hearts.

3. Thus the double rampart is passed, but another still opposes our progress—Christ's warriors know it by the name of *self-sufficiency*. "Ah," says the man, "I see I am a lost and ruined sinner—my hope has deceived me. But I have another wall. I can make myself better. I can build and repair." So he begins piling up the wall, and sits down behind it; he makes the covenant of grace into a covenant of works. He thinks faith is a kind of work and that we are saved by it. He imagines we are to believe and repent, and that we thus earn salvation. He denies that faith and repentance are God's gifts, only, and sits down behind his self-sufficiency, thinking, "I can do all that."

Oh, blessed day when God directs His shots against that! I know I hugged that old idea a long while with my "cans," "cans," "cans." But I found my "cans" would hold no water and all I put in ran out. There came an election sermon. But that did not please me. There came a law sermon showing me my powerlessness. But I did not believe it. I thought it was the whim of some old experimental Christian, some dogma of ancient times that would not suit men now. Then there came another sermon, concerning death and sin. But I did not believe I was dead, for I knew I was alive enough, and could repent and set myself right by-and-by. Then there came a strong exhortation sermon. But I felt I could set my house in order when I liked, that I could do it next Tuesday as well as I could do it at once. So did I continually trust in my self-sufficiency. At last, however, when God really brought me to myself, He sent one great shot which shivered it all and, lo, I found myself utterly defenseless! I thought I was more than mighty angels and could accomplish all things. Then I found myself less than nothing. So, also, every truly convicted sinner finds that repentance and faith must come from God, that reliance must be placed alone on the Most High! And instead of looking to himself, he is forced to cast himself at the feet of sovereign mercy. I trust, with many of you, that two of the walls have been broken down. And now, may God in His grace break down the other and say to his ministers, "Go up upon their walls: take away their battlements, for they are not the Lord's."

Perhaps there are some here who have had their battlements taken away, lately, and they think God is about to destroy them. You think you will perish, that you have no goodness, no hope, no help—nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. Now hear you the last words, "make *not* a full end." God *would* make a "full end" of you if He did not take away your battlements, for you would then die inside the walls of self-sufficiency. But He says, "make not a full end." Rely, then, upon His power and grace, for He will not destroy you!

IV. Now, lastly, I must take this passage as it respects the UNGODLY AND THE SINNER AT LAST. How many there shall be at the last great day who will sit down very comfortably behind certain battlements that they have built! There is one man—a monarch—"I am irresponsible," he says. "Who shall ever bring anything to my charge? I am an autocrat—I give no account of my matters." Oh, he will find out at last that God is Master of emperors, and judge of princes when his battlements shall be taken away! Another says, "Cannot I do as I like with my own? What if God did make me, I shall not serve Him. I shall follow my own will. I have in my own nature everything that is good, and I shall do as my nature dictates. I shall trust in that and if there is a higher power, He will exonerate me because I only followed my nature." But he will find his hopes to be visionary and his "reason" to be foolish when God shall say, "The soul that sins, it shall die"—and when His thundering voice shall pronounce the sentence—"Depart you cursed, into everlasting fire."

Again, there is a company of men joined hand in hand and they think they will resist the Eternal. Yes, they have a plan for subverting the Kingdom of Christ! They say, "We are wise and mighty. We have fortified ourselves. We have made a covenant with death and a league with hell," Ah, they little think what will become of their battlements at the Last Great Day when they shall see them crumble and fall. With what fear and alarm will they then cry—"Rocks, hide us! Mountains, fall on us!"? What will they do when God's wrath goes forth as a fire in the day of His fierce anger, when He shall melt their hopes, and make them pass away' when He shall blast all their joy ,and compel them to stand naked before His presence? Then I picture to myself, in the Day of Judgment, a band of men who have said on earth, "We will trust in God's mercy. We do not believe in these religions at all—God is merciful and we will trust in mercy." Now suppose—it is impossible because their delusion will be dissipated at death—but suppose they, in the dread day of account, to be crouching in the fortress of uncovenanted mercy. The Judge opens His eyes upon their city, and says, "Angels! Go up upon their walls—*make a full end*—take away their battlements, they are not the Lord's." Then the angels go and demolish every stone of the bulwarks. They utterly cut off all hope of mercy. Each time they lay on the blow, they cry, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord! Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins! You are saved by grace through faith, but you trusted in naked mercy, you shall not have it, but you shall have naked justice and nothing else."

Then there is another party which built a castle of rites and ceremonies. On one side they have a huge piece of granite called, "baptism," and on another they have, "the Lord's supper," and in the middle, they have, "confirmation." They think what a glorious castle they have built! *"We* lost? No way—we paid tithe of mint, cummin and anise; we paid tithes of all we possessed; we know that grace is in ceremonies." Out comes the

Almighty, and with one word blasts their castle, simply saying, "Take away their battlements, for they are not the Lord's." Ungodly men and women! What will you do at last without battlements, without a rock to hide yourselves, without a wall behind which to conceal yourselves, when the storm of the terrible one shall be as a blast against the wall? How shall you stand when your hopes shall melt like airy dreams, like visions of the night that pass away when one awakes? What will you do when He despises your image, and when all your hopes are utterly gone?

Christians can go away with the reflection that *their battlements can never be taken away because they ARE the Lord's.* We rely upon the electing love of Jehovah—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; we trust in the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ, the Everlasting Son; we depend wholly upon the merits, blood, and righteousness of *Jehovah*—THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. We are confiding in the Holy Spirit! We confess that we are nothing of ourselves—that it is not of him that wills, or of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy; we do not acknowledge one scrap of the creature in our salvation, nor one atom of self. We rely entirely upon covenant love, upon covenant mercy, covenant oaths, covenant faithfulness, covenant immutability, and resting on these, we know our battlements cannot be taken away! Oh, Christian! Surrounded by these walls, we may laugh at all our foes! Can the devil touch us now? He shall only look upon us and despair! Can doubts and fears take away our battlements? No—they stand fast and firm, and our poor fears are but as straws dashed against the wall by the wind, for "though we believe not, yet He abides faithful"—and not all the temptations of a sinful world, or our own carnal hearts can separate us from the Savior's love! We have a city, the walls of which are mighty, the foundations of which are eternal; we have a God who says, "I the Lord do keep her, and do water her every moment, lest any hurt her. I will keep her day and night." Trust here, Christian—salvation shall God appoint for walls and bulwarks! And surrounded by these, you may smile at all your foes. But take heed you add nothing to them, for if you do, the message will be, "Take away the battlements, they are not the Lord's."

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HEAVEN AND HELL
NOS. 39, 40

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 4, 1855, *BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,* IN A FIELD, KING EDWARD'S ROAD, HACKNEY.

"And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 8:11, 12.

THIS is a land where plain speaking is allowed and where the people are willing to afford a fair hearing to anyone who can tell them that which is worth their attention. Tonight I am quite certain of an attentive audience, for I know you too well to suppose otherwise. This field, as you are all aware, is private property. And I would just give a suggestion to those who go out in the open air to preach—that it is far better to get into a field or a plot of unoccupied building ground than to block up the roads and stop business. It is, moreover, far better to be somewhere under protection, so that we can at once prevent disturbance.

Tonight I shall, I hope, encourage you to seek the road to heaven. I shall also have to utter some very sharp things concerning the end of the lost in the pit of hell. Upon both these subjects I will try and speak as God helps me. But I beseech you, as you love your souls, weigh right and wrong this night. See whether what I say is the truth of God. If it is not, reject it utterly and cast it away! But if it is, at your peril disregard it, for as you shall answer before God, the great judge of heaven and earth, it will go ill with you if the words of His servant and of His Scripture are despised!

My text has two parts. The first is very agreeable to my mind and gives me pleasure. The second is terrible in the extreme. But since they are both the truth, they must be preached. The first part of my text is, "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." The sentence which I call the black, dark and threatening part is this—"But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"

I. Let us take the first part. Here is a MOST GLORIOUS PROMISE. I will read it again—"Many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." I like that text because it tells me what heaven is and gives me a beautiful picture of it. It says it is a place where I shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. O what a sweet thought that is for the working man! He often wipes the hot sweat from his face and he wonders whether there is a land where he shall have to toil no longer. He scarcely ever eats a mouthful of bread that is not moistened with the sweat of his brow. Often he comes home weary and flings himself upon his couch, perhaps too tired to sleep. He says, "Oh, is there no land where I can rest? Is there no place where I can sit and, for once, let these weary limbs be still? Is there no land where I can be quiet?" Yes, you son of toil and labor—

"There is a happy land
Far, far, away"—

where toil and labor are unknown! Beyond yon blue sky there is a city, fair and bright—its walls are jasper and its light is brighter than the sun! There, "the weary are at rest and the wicked cease from troubling." Immortal spirits are yonder who never wipe sweat from their brow, for, "They sow not, neither do they reap." They have not to toil and labor—

"There on a green and flowery mount
Their wearied souls shall sit—
And with transporting joys recount
The labors of their feet."

To my mind, one of the best views of heaven is that *it is a land of rest*—especially to the working man. Those who have not to work hard, think they will love heaven as a place of service. That is very true. But to the working man, to the man who toils with his brain or with his hands, it must always be a sweet thought that there is a land where we shall rest. Soon this voice will never be strained again—soon these lungs will never have to exert themselves beyond their power. Soon this brain shall not be racked for thought—I shall sit at the banquet table of God. Yes, I shall recline on the bosom of Abraham and be at ease forever! Oh weary sons and daughters of Adam, you will not have to drive the plowshare into the unthankful soil in heaven! You will not need to rise to daily toils before the sun has risen and labor when the sun has long ago gone to his rest! You shall be still, you shall be quiet, you shall rest yourselves—for all are rich in heaven, all are happy there, all are peaceful! Toil, trouble, travail and labor are words that cannot be spelled in heaven! They have no such things there, for they always rest.

And mark the *good company they sit with*. They are to "sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob." Some people think that in heaven we shall know nobody. But our text here declares that we "shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob." Then I am sure that we shall be aware that they are Abraham and Isaac and Jacob! I have heard of a good woman who asked her husband, when she was dying, "My dear, do you think you will know me when you and I get to heaven?" "Shall I know you?" he asked. "Why, I have always known you while I have been here—do you think I shall be a greater fool when I get to heaven?" I think it was a very good answer. If we have known one another, here, we shall know one another there! I have dear departed friends up there and it is always a sweet thought to me that when I shall put my foot, as I hope I may, upon the threshold of heaven, there will come my brothers and sisters to clasp me by the hand and say, "Yes, you loved one, and you are here!" Dear relatives that have been separated—you will meet, again, in heaven. One of you has lost a mother—she is gone above. And if you follow the track of Jesus, you shall meet her there!

I think I see yet another coming to meet you at the door of paradise—and though the ties of natural affection may be, in a measure, forgotten—if I may be allowed to use a figure—how blessed would she be as she turned to God and said, "Here am I and the children that You have given me." We shall recognize our friends—husband, you will know your wife! Mother, you will know those dear babies of yours—you marked their features when they lay panting and gasping for breath. You know how you hung over their graves when the cold sod was sprinkled over them

and it was said, "Earth to earth, dust to dust and ashes to ashes." You shall hear those loved voices again! You shall hear those sweet voices once more; you shall yet know that those whom you loved have been loved by God! Would not that be a dreary heaven for us to inhabit where we would be alike, unknowing and unknown? I would not care to go to such a heaven as that. I believe that heaven is a fellowship of the saints and that we shall know one another there. I have often thought I should love to see Isaiah. And as soon as I get to heaven, I think I would ask for him because he spoke more of Jesus Christ than all the rest. I am sure I would want to find George Whitefield—he who so continually preached to the people and wore himself out with a more than seraphic zeal.

O yes, we shall have choice company in heaven when we get there! There will be no distinction of learned and unlearned, clergy and laity—but we shall walk freely, one among another. We shall—"sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob." I have heard of a lady who was visited by a minister on her deathbed and she said to him, "I want to ask you one question, now I am about to die." "Well," said the minister, "what is it?" "Oh," she said, in a very affected way, "I want to know if there are two places in heaven, because I could not bear that Betsy in the kitchen should be in heaven along with me, she is so unrefined." The minister turned round and said, "O, don't trouble yourself about that, madam; there is no fear of that, for until you get rid of your accursed pride, you will never enter heaven at all." We must all get rid of our pride! We must come down and stand on an equality in the sight of God and see in every man, a brother, every woman, a sister, before we can hope to be found in glory! Yes, we bless God, we thank Him that He will set down no separate table for one and for another! The Jew and the Gentile will sit down together. The great and the small shall feed in the same pasture and we shall "sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

But my text has a yet greater depth of sweetness, for it says that, *"Many* shall come and shall sit down." Some narrow-minded bigots think that heaven will be a very small place—where there will be a very few people—who went to *their* chapel or their church. I confess I have no wish for a very small heaven and love to read in the Scriptures that there are many mansions in my Father's house. How often do I hear people say, "Ah, 'Straight is the gate and narrow is the way and few there are that find it.' There will be very few in heaven. There will be more lost." My friend, I disagree with you. Do you think that Christ will let the devil beat Him? That He will let the devil have more in hell than there will be in heaven? No—it is impossible! For then Satan would laugh at Christ. There will be more in heaven than there are among the lost. God says that, "There will be a number that no man can number who will be saved." But He never says that there will be a number that no man can number that will be lost. There will be a host beyond all count who will get into heaven! What glad tidings for you and for me! For if there are so many to be saved, why should not *I* be saved? Why should not *you?* Why should not yonder man over there in the crowd, say, "Cannot I be one among the multitude?" And may not that poor woman, there, take heart and say, "Well, if there were but half-a-dozen saved, I might fear that I should not be one. But since many are to come, why should not I, also, be saved?" Cheer up, disconsolate! Cheer up, son of mourning, child of

sorrow—there is still hope for you! I can never know that any man is past God's grace. There are a few that have sinned that sin that is unto death and God gives them up—but the vast host of mankind are yet within the reach of sovereign mercy—"And many of them shall come from the east and from the west and shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

Look at my text, again, and you will see where these people come from. They are to "come from the east and west." The Jews said that they would all come from Palestine, every single one of them—every man, woman and child—that there would not be one in heaven who was not a Jew! And the Pharisees thought that if they were not all Pharisees, they could not be saved. But Jesus Christ said there will be many who will come from the east and from the west. There will be a multitude from that far off land of China, for God is doing a great work, there, and we hope that the gospel will yet be victorious in that land! There will be a multitude from this western land of England; from the western country beyond the sea, in America, and from the south, in Australia, and from the north, in Canada, Siberia, and Russia. From the uttermost parts of the earth there shall come many to sit down in the kingdom of God! But I do not think this text is to be understood so much geographically as spiritually. When it says that they "shall come from the east and west," I think it does not particularly refer to nations, but to different kinds of people. Now, "the east and the west," signify those who are the very furthest off from religion. Yet many of them will be saved and get to heaven! There is a class of persons who will always be looked upon as hopeless. Many a time I have heard a man or woman say of such a one, "He cannot be saved—he is too abandoned. What is *he* good for? Ask *him* to go to a place of worship—he was drunk on Saturday night. What would be the use of reasoning with *him?* There is no hope for him. He is a hardened fellow. See what he has done these many years? What good will it be to speak to him?" Now, hear this, you who think your fellows worse than yourselves—you who condemn others—you are often just as guilty! Jesus Christ says, "Many shall come from the east and west." There will be many in heaven that were once drunks. I believe, among that blood-bought throng, there are many who reeled in and out of taverns half their lives, but by the power of divine grace they were able to dash the liquor cup to the ground! They renounced the riot of intoxication—fled away from it—and served God. Yes! There will be many in heaven who were drunks on earth. There will be many harlots—some of the most abandoned will be found there!

You remember the story of Whitefield's once saying that there would be some in heaven who were "the devil's castaways"? Some that the devil would hardly think good enough for him, and yet whom Christ would save? Lady Huntingdon once gently hinted that such language was not quite proper. But just at the time there happened to be heard a ring at the bell, and Whitefield went downstairs. Afterwards he came up and said, "Your Ladyship, what do you think a poor woman had to say to me just now? She was a sad profligate, and she said, 'O Mr. Whitefield, when you were preaching you told us that Christ would take in the devil's castaways, and I am one of them'"—and that was the means of her salvation! Shall anybody ever prevent us from preaching to the lowest of the low? I have been accused of getting all the rabble of London around me. God bless the rabble! God save the rabble! But suppose they *are* "the

rabble!" Who needs the gospel more than they do? Who requires to have Christ preached to them more than they do? We have lots of those who preach to ladies and gentlemen—but we need someone to preach to the rabble in these degenerate days! Oh, here is comfort for me, for many of the rabble are to come from the east and from the west! Oh, what would you think if you were to see the difference between some that are in heaven and some that *shall* be there? There might be found one whose hair hangs across his eyes, his locks are matted—he looks horrible—his bloated eyes start from his face, he grins almost like an idiot, he has drunk away his very brain until life seems to have departed so far as sense and being are concerned! Yet I would say to you, "That man is capable of salvation"—and in a few years I might say, "Look up yonder, see that bright star? Can you see that man with a crown of pure gold upon his head? Do you notice that being clad in robes of sapphire and in garments of light? That is the same man who sat there a poor unenlightened, almost idiotic being! Yet sovereign grace and mercy have saved him!" There are none, except those, as I have said before, who have sinned the unpardonable sin, who are beyond God's mercy—fetch me out the worst and I would still preach the gospel to them! Fetch me out the vilest, I would still preach to them because I recollect my Master said, "Go you out into the highways and hedges and *compel* them to come in, that My house may be filled." "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

There is one more word I must notice before I have done with this sweet portion—that is the word, "*shall."* Oh, I love God's "shalls" and "wills"! There is nothing comparable to them. Let a man say, "shall"—what is it good for? "I will," says man—but he never performs. "I shall," he says—and he breaks his promise. But it is never so with God's "shalls"! If He says, "shall," it shall be! When He says, "will," it will be! Now He has said, here, "Many *shall* come." The devil says, "They shall *not* come," but, "They shall come." Their sins say, "You can't come." God says, "You shall come." You, yourselves, say, "We won't come." God says, "You will come." Yes, there are some here who are laughing at salvation, who can scoff at Christ and mock at the gospel! But I tell you, some of you shall come. "What?" you say, "can God *make* me become a Christian?" I tell you, yes, for herein rests the power of the gospel. It does not ask your consent, but it gets it. It does not ask will you have it, but it *makes you willing* in the day of God's power! Not against your will—but it makes you willing. It shows you its value—and then you fall in love with it and straightway you run after it and have it! Many people have said, "We will not have anything to do with religion," yet they have been converted. I have heard of a man who once went to chapel to hear the singing. And as soon as the minister began to preach, he put his fingers in his ears and would not listen. But by-and-by some tiny insect settled on his face so that he was obliged to take one finger out of his ear to brush it away. Just then the minister said, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear." The man listened. And God met with him at that moment to his soul's conversion! He went out a new man, a changed character. He who came in to laugh, retired to pray! He who came in to mock, went out to bend his knees in penitence—he who entered to spend an idle hour, went home to spend an hour in devotion with his God! The sinner became a

saint. The profligate became a penitent. Who knows but that there may not be some like that here! The gospel needs not your consent—it gets it. It knocks the enmity out of your heart. You say, "I do not want to be saved." Christ says you shall be. He makes your will turn round and then you cry, "Lord, save me, or I perish." Ah, might heaven exclaim, "I knew I would make you say that." And then He rejoices over you because He has changed your will and made you willing in the day of His power!

If Jesus Christ were to stand on this platform, tonight, what would many people do with Him? "O!" some say, "We would make him a King." I do not believe it! They would crucify Him, again, if they had the opportunity! If He were to come and say, "Here I am, I love you, will you be saved by Me?"—Not one of you would consent if you were left to your own will! If He should look upon you with those eyes before whose power the lion would have crouched. If He spoke with that voice which poured forth a cataract of eloquence like a stream of nectar rolling down from the cliffs above—not a single person would come to be His disciple! No, it needs the power of the Spirit to make men come to Jesus Christ! He, Himself, said, "No man can come to Me except the Father, who has sent Me, draws him." Ah, we need that. And here we have it. They shall come! They shall come! You may laugh, you may despise us. But Jesus Christ shall not die for nothing! If some of you reject Him, there are some who will not. If there are some who are not saved, others *shall* be. Christ *shall* see His seed! He *shall* prolong His days! And the pleasure of the Lord *shall* prosper in His hands. Some think that Christ died and yet that some for whom He died will be lost. I never could understand that doctrine. If Jesus, my Surety, bore my griefs and carried my sorrows, I believe myself to be as secure as the angels in heaven! God cannot ask payment twice. If Christ paid my debt, shall I have to pay it again? No—

"Free from sin I walk at large,
The Savior's blood's my full discharge!
At His dear feet content I lay,
A sinner saved and homage pay."

They shall come! They shall come! And nothing in heaven, or on earth, or in hell can stop them from coming!

And now, you chief of sinners, listen one moment while I call you to Jesus. There is one person here, tonight, who thinks himself the worst soul that ever lived. There is one who says to himself, "I am sure I do not deserve to be called to Christ!" Soul! I call you! You lost, most wretched outcast—this night, by authority given me of God—I call you to come to my Savior! Some time ago, when I went into the County Court to see what they were doing, I heard a man's name called out and immediately the man said, "Make way! Make way! They call me!" And up he came. Now I call the chief of sinners, tonight! And let him say, "Make way! Make way doubts! Make way fears! Make way sins! Christ calls me! And if Christ calls me, that is enough"—

"I'll to His gracious feet approach
Whose scepter mercy gives;
Perhaps He may command my touch
And then the suppliant lives!
I can but perish if I go—
I am resolved to try
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die!

But, should I die with mercy sought,
When I, the King have tried,
That were to die, (delightful thought!)
As sinner never died."

Go and try my Savior! Go and try my Savior! If He casts you away after you have sought Him, tell it in hell that Christ would not hear you. But *that* you shall never be allowed to do! It would dishonor the mercy of the covenant for God to cast away one penitent sinner. And it never shall be while it is written, "Many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

II. The second part of my text is heart-breaking. I could preach with great delight to myself from the first part. But here is a dreary task to my soul because there are gloomy words here. But, as I have told you, what is written in the Bible must be preached whether it be gloomy or cheerful. There are some ministers who never mention anything about hell. I heard of a minister who once said to his congregation—"If you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be sent to that place which it is not polite to mention." He ought not to have been allowed to preach again, I am sure, if he could not use plain words! Now, if I saw that house on fire over there, do you think I would stand and say, "I believe the operation of combustion is proceeding yonder!" No, I would call out, "Fire! Fire!" And then everybody would know what I meant. So, if the Bible says, "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness," am I to stand here and mince the matter at all? God forbid! We must speak the truth as it is written. It is a terrible truth, for it says, *"The children of the kingdom* shall be cast out"! Now, who are those children? I will tell you—"The children of the kingdom" are those people who are noted for the externals of piety, but who have nothing of the internals of it. People whom you will see with their Bibles and Hymn Books marching off to chapel as religiously as possible, or going to Church as devoutly and demurely as they can. They look as somber and serious as parish ushers—and fancying that they are quite sure to be saved—though their heart is not in the matter, nothing but their bodies. These are the persons who are "the children of the kingdom." They have no grace, no life, no Christ—and they shall be cast into outer darkness!

Again, these people are the *children of pious fathers and mothers*. There is nothing that touches a man's heart, mark you, like talking about his mother. I have heard of a swearing sailor whom nobody could manage, not even the police. He was always making some disturbance wherever he went. Once he went into a place of worship and no one could keep him still. But a gentleman went up and said to him, "Jack, you once had a mother." With that, the tears ran down his cheeks. Jack said, "Ha! Bless you, Sir, I had. And I brought her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave—and a pretty fellow I am, to be here tonight." He then sat down, quite sobered and subdued by the very mention of his mother. Ah, and there are some of you "children of the kingdom" who can remember your mothers! Your mother took you on her knee and taught you early to pray—your father tutored you in the ways of godliness. And yet you are here, tonight, without grace in your heart—without hope of heaven. You are going downwards towards hell as fast as your feet can carry you! There are some of you who have broken your poor mother's heart. Oh, if I could tell you what she has suffered for you when you have, at night,

been indulging in your sin! Do you know what your guilt will be, you, "children of the kingdom," if you perish after a pious mother's prayers and tears have fallen upon you? I can conceive of no one entering hell with a worse place than the man who goes there with drops of his mother's tears on his head and with his father's prayers following him at his heels! Some of you will inevitably endure this doom. Some of you young men and women shall wake up one day and find yourselves in outer darkness while your parents shall be up there in heaven, looking down upon you with upbraiding eyes, seeming to say, "What? After all we did for you? After all we said, are you come to this?" "Children of the kingdom," do not think that a pious mother can save you! Do not think because your father was a member of such-and-such a Church that his godliness will save you!

I can suppose someone standing at heaven's gate and demanding, "Let me in! Let me in!" Why? "Because my mother is in there"; your mother had nothing to do with you. If she was holy, she was holy for herself. If she was evil, she was evil for herself. "But my grandfather prayed for me." That is no use—did you pray for yourself? "No. I did not." Then grandfathers' prayers and grandmothers' prayers and fathers' and mothers' prayers may be piled on the top of one another till they reach the stars, but they can never make a ladder for you to go to heaven. You must seek God for yourself—or rather God must seek you. You must have vital experience of godliness in your heart, or else you are lost, even though all your friends were in heaven. That was a dreadful dream which a pious mother once had and told to her children. She thought the Judgment Day was come; the great books were opened; they all stood before God and Jesus Christ said, "Separate the chaff from the wheat. Put the goats on the left hand and the sheep on the right." The mother dreamed that she and her children were standing just in the middle of the great assembly, and the angel came and said, "I must take the mother—she is a sheep—she must go to the right hand; the children are goats—they must go on the left." She thought, as she went, her children clutched her and said, "Mother, can we part? Must we be separated?" She then put her arms around them and seemed to say, "My children, I would, if possible, take you with me." But in a moment the angel touched her—her cheeks were dried and, now, overcoming natural affection, being rendered supernatural and sublime, and resigned to God's will, she said, "My children, I taught you well. I trained you up and you forsook the ways of God—and now, all I have to say is, Amen to your condemnation." Thereupon they were snatched away, and she saw them in perpetual torment, while she was in heaven.

Young man, what will you think when the last day comes, to hear Christ say, "Depart, you cursed"? And there will be a voice just behind him, saying, "Amen!" And as you inquire from where came the voice—you will find it was your mother! Or, young woman, when you are cast away into outer darkness, what will you think to hear a voice saying, "Amen!" And as you look, there sits your father, his lips still moving with the solemn curse! "Ah, children of the kingdom," the penitent reprobates will enter heaven, many of them! Publicans and sinners will get there; repenting drunks and swearers will be saved. But many of "the children of the kingdom" will be cast out! Oh, to think that you who have been so well trained should be lost while many of the worse will be saved! It will be

the hell of hells for you to look up and see there, "poor Jack," the drunk, lying in Abraham's bosom while you who have had a pious mother are cast into hell simply because you would not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, but put His gospel from you and lived and died without it! That were the very sting of all, to see ourselves cast away, when the chief of sinners finds salvation!

Now listen to me a little while—I will not detain you long—while I undertake the doleful task of telling you what is to become of these "children of the kingdom." Jesus Christ says, they are to be "cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth."

First, notice, they are to be *cast out*. They are not said to *go*. But when they come to heaven's gates, they are to be cast out. As soon as hypocrites arrive at the gates of heaven, Justice will say, "Here he comes! Here he comes! He spurned a father's prayers, and mocked a mother's tears; he has forced his way downward against all the advantages mercy has supplied, and now, here he comes! Gabriel, take the man." The angel, binding you hand and foot, holds you one single moment over the mouth of the chasm. He bids you look down-down-down. There is no bottom—and you hear coming up from the abyss, "sullen moans and hollow groans, and shrieks of tortured ghosts." You quiver, your bones melt like wax and your marrow quakes within you. Where is your might, now? And where are your boasting and bragging? You shriek and cry, you beg for mercy! But the angel, with one tremendous grasp, seizes you fast and then hurls you down, with the cry, "Away, away!" And down you go to the pit of hell that is bottomless—and you roll forever downward-downward-downward—never to find a resting place for the sole of your feet. You shall be cast out.

And *where are you to be cast to?* You are to be cast "into outer darkness." You are to be put in the place where there will be no hope. For, by, "light," in Scripture, we understand, "hope." And you are to be put "into outer darkness," where there is no light—no hope. Is there a man here who has no hope? I cannot suppose such a person! One of you, perhaps, says, "I am thirty pounds in debt and shall be sold up, by-and-by, but I have a hope that I may get a loan and so escape my difficulty." Another says, "My business is ruined, but things may yet take a turn—I have hope." Another says, "I am in great distress, but I hope that God will provide for me." Another says, "I am fifty pounds in debt. I am sorry for it—but I will set these strong hands to work and do my best to get out of it." One of you thinks a friend is dying. But you have a hope that perhaps the fever may take a turn—that he may yet live. But in hell there is no hope! They have not even the hope of dying—the hope of being annihilated! They are forever—forever—forever lost! On every chain in hell, there is written, "Forever." The fires there blaze out the words, "Forever." Up above their heads, they read, "Forever." Their eyes are galled and their hearts are pained with the thought that it is "Forever." Oh, if I could tell you tonight that hell would one day be burned out and that those who were lost might be saved, there would be a jubilee in hell at the very thought of it! But it cannot be—it is "Forever." They are "cast into outer darkness."

But I want to get over this as quickly as I can, for who can bear to talk thus to his fellow creatures? What is it that the lost are doing? They are "weeping and gnashing their teeth." Do you gnash your teeth now? You

would not do it unless you were in pain and agony. Well, in hell there is always gnashing of teeth. And do you know why? There is one gnashing his teeth at his companion and mutters—"I was led into hell by you! You led me astray, you taught me to drink the first time." And the other gnashes his teeth and says, "What if I did, you made me worse than I would have been in later times." There is a child who looks at her mother and says, "Mother, you trained me up to vice." And the mother gnashes her teeth at the child and says, "I have no pity for you, for you excelled me in it and led me into deeper sin." Fathers gnash their teeth at their sons and sons at their fathers. And, I think, if there are any who will have to gnash their teeth more than others, it will be seducers, when they see those whom they have led from the paths of virtue and hear them saying, "Ah, we are glad you are in hell with us! You deserve it, for you led us here." Have any of you, tonight, upon your consciences the fact that you have led others to the pit of hell? O may sovereign grace forgive you! "We have gone astray like lost sheep," said David. Now a lost sheep never goes astray, alone, if it is out of a flock. I lately read of a sheep that leaped over the parapet of a bridge and was followed by every-one of the flock. So if one man goes astray, he leads others with him. Some of you will have to account for others' sins when you get to hell, as well as your own. Oh, what "weeping and gnashing of teeth" there will be in that pit!

Now shut the black book. Who wants to say any more about it? I have solemnly warned you. I have told you of the wrath to come. The evening darkens and the sun is setting. Ah, and the evenings darken with some of you. I can see gray-headed men and women here. Are your gray hairs a crown of glory or a fool's cap to you? Are you on the very verge of heaven, or are you tottering on the brink of your grave and sinking down to hell?

Let me warn you, gray-headed men and women—your evening is coming! O poor tottering gray-head, will you take the last step into the pit of hell? Let a young child step before you and beg you to consider. There is your staff—it has nothing of earth to rest upon. And now, before you die, think about this night, let 70 years of sin start up; let the ghosts of your forgotten transgressions march before your eyes. What will you do with 70 wasted years to answer for, with 70 years of criminality to bring before God? God give you grace this night to repent and to put your trust in Jesus!

And you middle-aged men and women are not safe—the evening lowers with you, too! You may soon die. A few mornings ago I was roused early from my bed by the request that I would hasten to see a dying man. I hurried off with all speed to see the poor creature. But when I reached the house he was dead—a corpse. As I stood in the room, I thought, "Ah, that man little thought he would die so soon." There were his wife and children and friends—they little thought he would die, for he was hale, strong and hearty but a few days before! None of you have a lease on your lives. If you have, where is it? Go and see if you have it anywhere in your chests at home. No! You, too, may die tomorrow! Let me, therefore, warn you by the mercy of God. Let me speak to you as a brother may speak. For I love you, you know I do, and would press the matter home to your hearts. Oh to be among the many who shall be accepted in Christ—how blessed that will be! And God has said that whoever shall

call on His name shall be saved—He casts out none that come unto Him through Christ!

And now, you youths, and maidens, one word with you. Perhaps you think that religion is not for you. "Let us be happy," you say —"let us be merry and joyous." How long, young man, young maiden, how long? "Till I am twenty-one." Are you sure that you will live till then? Let me tell you one thing—if you do live till that time, if you have no heart for God, now, you will have none then! Men do not get better if left alone! It is with them as with a garden—if you leave it alone and permit weeds to grow, you will not expect to find it better in six months—but worse. Ah, men talk as if they could repent when they like! It is the work of God to give us repentance. Some even say, "I shall turn to God on such-and-such a day." Ah, if you felt aright, you would say, "I must run to God and ask Him to give me repentance *now*—lest I should die before I have found Jesus Christ, my Savior."

Now one word in conclusion. I have told you of heaven and hell. What is the way, then, to escape from hell and to be found in heaven? I will not tell you my old tale again, tonight. I remember when I told it to you before—a good friend in the crowd said, "Tell us something fresh, old fellow!" Now really, in preaching ten times a week, we cannot always say things fresh. You have heard John Gough and you know he tells his tales over and over. I have nothing but the old gospel—"He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." There is nothing here of works. It does not say, "He who is a good man shall be saved," but, "He who believes and is baptized." Well, what is it to believe? It is to put your trust entirely upon Jesus! Poor Peter once believed and Jesus Christ said to him, "Come on, Peter, walk to Me on the water." Peter went stepping along on the tops of the wave without sinking. But when he looked at the waves, he began to tremble and down he went! Now, poor sinner, Christ says, "Come on, walk not in your sins, come to *Me*." And if you do, He will give you power! If you believe on Christ, you will be able to walk over your sins—to tread upon them and overcome them. I can remember the time when my sins first stared me in the face. I thought myself the most accursed of all men! I had not committed any very great open transgressions against God. But I remembered that I had been well-trained and tutored and I thought my sins were thus greater than other people's. I cried to God to have mercy, but I feared that He would not pardon me. Month after month I cried to God, but He did not hear me—and I knew not what it was to be saved. Sometimes I was so weary of the world that I desired to die—but then I remembered that there was a worse world after this and that it would be an ill matter to rush before my Maker unprepared. At times I wickedly thought God a most heartless tyrant because He did not answer my prayers and then, at others, I thought, "I deserve His displeasure. If He sends me to hell, He will be just." But I remember the hour when I stepped into a place of worship and saw a tall thin man step into the pulpit—I have never seen him from that day and probably never shall, till we meet in heaven. He opened the Bible and read with a feeble voice, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth. For I am God and there is none else." Ah, thought I, I am one of the ends of the earth. And then, turning round and fixing his gaze on me, as if he knew me, the minister said, "Look, look, look." Why, I thought I had a great deal to *DO,* but I found it was only to *LOOK!* I thought I had a garment to spin out

for myself—but I found that if I looked, Christ would give me a garment. Look, sinner—that is to be saved! Look unto Him, all you ends of the earth, and be saved! This is what the Jews did when Moses held up the bronze serpent. He said, "Look!" And they looked. The serpents might be twisting round them and they might be nearly dead—but they simply looked and the moment they looked, the serpents dropped off and they were healed! Look to Jesus, sinner. "None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good." There is a hymn we often sing, but which I do not think is quite right, it says—

"Venture on Him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude."

Now, it is no *venture* to trust in Christ, not in the least! He who trusts in Christ is quite secure. I recollect that when dear John Hyatt was dying, Matthew Wilks said to him, in his usual tone, "Well, John, could you trust your soul in the hands of Jesus Christ, now?" "Yes," he said, "a million! A million souls!" I am sure that every Christian who has ever trusted in Christ can say, "Amen," to that! Trust in Him! He will never deceive you. My blessed Master will never cast you away!

I cannot speak much longer and I have only to thank you for your kindness. I never saw so large a number so still and quiet. I really think after all the hard things that have been said, that the English people know who loves them—and that they will stand by the man who stands by them. I thank everyone of you and above all, I beg you, if there is any reason or sense in what I have said, think about what you are and may the blessed Spirit reveal to you your state! May He show you that you are dead, that you are lost—ruined. May He make you feel what a dreadful thing it would be to sink into hell! May He point you to heaven! May He take you as the angel did of old and put His hand upon you and say, "Flee! Flee! Flee! Look to the mountain! Look not behind you! Stay not in all the plain."

And may we all meet in heaven at last. And there we shall be happy forever!

P.S. This sermon was watered by many prayers of the faithful in Zion. The preacher did not intend it for publication, but seeing that it is now in print, he will not apologize for its faulty composition or rambling style. Instead thereof, he would beg the prayers of his readers that this feeble sermon may all the more exalt the honor of God by the salvation of many who shall read it. "The excellency of the power is of God, and not of man."

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UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION
NOS. 41, 42

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."
2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14.

IF there were no other text in the sacred Word except this one, I think we would all be bound to receive and acknowledge the truthfulness of the great and glorious doctrine of God's ancient choice of His family. But there seems to be an inveterate prejudice in the human mind against this doctrine—and although most other doctrines will be received by professing Christians, some with caution, others with pleasure—this one seems to be most frequently disregarded and discarded! In many of our pulpits it would be reckoned a high sin and treason to preach a sermon upon *election* because they could not make it what they call a, "practical" discourse! I believe they have erred from the truth of God. Whatever God has revealed, He has revealed for a purpose. There is nothing in Scripture which may not, under the influence of God's Spirit, be turned into a practical discourse—"for all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God and is profitable" for some purpose of spiritual usefulness. It is true, it may not be turned into a free will discourse—that we know right well—but it *can* be turned into a practical free *grace* discourse. And free grace practice is the best practice when the true doctrines of God's immutable love are brought to bear upon the hearts of saints and sinners! Now I trust, this morning, some of you who are startled at the very sound of this Word will say, "I will give it a fair hearing. I will lay aside my prejudices. I will hear what this man has to say." Do not shut your ears and say at once, "It is high doctrine." Who has authorized you to call it high or low? Why should you oppose yourself to God's doctrine? Remember what became of the children who found fault with God's prophet and exclaimed, "Go up, you bald-head! Go up, you bald-head!" Say nothing against God's doctrines, lest haply some evil beast should come out of the forest and devour you, also! There are other woes beside the open judgment of heaven—take heed that these fall not on your head. Lay aside your prejudices—listen calmly, listen dispassionately—hear what Scripture says! And when you receive the truth, if God should be

pleased to reveal and manifest it to your souls, do not be ashamed to confess it! To confess you were wrong, yesterday, is only to acknowledge that you are a little wiser today. Instead of being a reflection on yourself, it is an honor to your judgment and shows that you are improving in the knowledge of the truth of God! Do not be ashamed to learn and to cast aside your old doctrines and views. But take up that which you may more plainly see to be in the Word of God. And if you do not see it to be here in the Bible—whatever I may say, or whatever authorities I may plead—I beseech you, as you love your souls, reject it! And if from this pulpit you ever hear things contrary to this sacred Word, remember that the Bible must be first—and God's minister must lie underneath it!

We must not stand on the Bible to preach—we must preach with the Bible above our heads. After all we have preached, we are well aware that the mountain of truth is higher than our eyes can discern—clouds and darkness are round about its summit and we cannot discern its topmost pinnacle. Yet we will try to preach it as well as we can. But since we are mortal and liable to err, exercise your judgment—"Try the spirits, whether they are of God"—and if on mature reflection on your bended knees, you are led to disregard election—a thing which I consider to be utterly impossible—then forsake it! Do not hear it preached, but believe and confess whatever you see to be God's Word. I can say no more than that by way of introduction.

Now, first, I shall speak a little concerning the *truthfulness* of this doctrine—"God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation." Secondly, I shall try to prove that this election is *absolute*—"He has from the beginning chosen you to salvation," not for sanctification, but, *"through sanctification* of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Thirdly, this election is *eternal* because the text says, "God has from *the beginning* chosen you." Fourthly, it is *personal—"He* has chosen *you."* Then we will look at the *effects* of the doctrine—see what it does. And lastly, as God may enable us, we will try and look at its *tendencies, and* see whether it is indeed a terrible and licentious doctrine. We will take the flower and, like true bees, see whether there is any honey whatever in it—whether any good can come *of* it—or whether it is an unmixed, undiluted evil.

I. First, I must try and prove that the doctrine is TRUE. And let me begin with an *argumentum ad hominen*—I will speak to you according to your different positions and stations. There are some of you who belong to the Church of England and I am happy to see so many of you here. Though now and then I certainly say some very hard things about Church and State, yet I love the old Church, for she has in her communion many godly ministers and eminent saints. Now I know you are great believers in what the Articles declare to be sound doctrine. I will give you a specimen of what they utter concerning election, so that if you

believe them, you cannot avoid receiving election. I will read a portion of the 17th Article upon Predestination and Election—

"Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) He has continually decreed by His counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He has chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honor. Therefore, they which are endued with so excellent a benefit of God, are called according to God's purpose by His Spirit working in due season: they, through divine grace, obey the calling: they are justified freely: they are made sons of God by adoption: they are made like the image of His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity."

Now, I think any Churchman, if he is a sincere and honest believer in Mother Church, must be a thorough believer in election. True, if he turns to certain other portions of the Prayer Book, he will find things contrary to the doctrines of free grace and altogether apart from Scriptural teaching. But if he looks at the Articles, he must see that God has chosen His people unto eternal life! I am not so desperately enamored, however, of that book as you may be—and I have only used this Article to show you that if you belong to the Establishment of England, you should at least offer no objection to this doctrine of predestination.

Another human authority whereby I would confirm the doctrine of election is the old Waldensian Creed. If you read the creed of the old Waldenses—emanating from them in the midst of the burning heat of persecution—you will see that these renowned professors and confessors of the Christian faith did most firmly receive and embrace this doctrine as being a portion of the truth of God. I have copied from an old book, one of the Articles of their faith—"That God saves from corruption and damnation those whom He has chosen from the foundations of the world, not for any disposition, faith, or holiness that He before saw in them, but of His mere mercy in Christ Jesus, His Son, passing by all the rest according to the irreprehensible reason of His own free will and justice."

It is no novelty, then, that I am preaching no new doctrine! I love to proclaim these strong old doctrines which are called by nickname, Calvinism, but which are surely and verily the revealed truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus! By this truth of God, I make a pilgrimage into the past and as I go, I see father after father, confessor after confessor, martyr after martyr, standing up to shake hands with me! Were I a Pelagian, or a believer in the doctrine of free will, I would have to walk for centuries all alone. Here and there a heretic of no very honorable character might rise up and call me, brother. But taking these things to be the standard of my faith, I see the land of the ancients peopled with my brothers and

sisters—I behold multitudes who confess the same as I do and acknowledge that this is the religion of God's own church!

I also give you an extract from the old Baptist Confession. We are Baptists in this congregation—the greater part of us, at any rate—and we like to see what our own forefathers wrote. Some 200 years ago the Baptists assembled together and published their articles of faith to put an end to certain reports against their orthodoxy which had gone forth to the world. I turn to this old book—which I have just published—Baptist Confession of Faith—and I find the following as the 3rd Article—"By the decree of God for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated, or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ to the praise of His glorious grace. Others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation to the praise of His glorious justice. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished. Those of mankind who are predestinated to life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, has chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory out of His mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as condition or cause moving Him hereunto."

As for these human authorities, I care not one rush for all three of them! I care not what they say, pro or *con,* as to this doctrine. I have only used them as a kind of confirmation to *your* faith, to show you that while I may be railed upon as a heretic and as a hyper-Calvinist, after all I am backed up by antiquity! All the past stands by me. I do not care for the present. Give me the past and I will hope for the future. Let the present rise up in my teeth, I will not care. What though a host of the churches of London may have forsaken the great cardinal doctrines of God, it matters not. If a handful of us stand alone in an unflinching maintenance of the sovereignty of our God. If we are beset by enemies, yes, and even by our own brothers and sisters who ought to be our friends and helpers, it matters not—if we can but count upon the past—the noble army of martyrs, the glorious host of confessors! They are our friends. They are the witnesses of the truth of God and they stand by us! With these for us, we will not say that we stand alone, but we may exclaim, "Lo, God has reserved unto Himself seven thousand that have not bowed the knee unto Baal." But the best of all is—*God* is with us!

The great truth of God is always the Bible, and the Bible, alone. My hearers, you do not believe in any other book than the Bible, do you? If I could prove this from all the books in Christendom—if I could fetch back the Alexandrian library, and prove it there—you would not believe it any more! But you surely will believe what is in God's Word!

I have selected a few texts to read to you. I love to give you a whole volley of texts when I am afraid you will distrust a truth of God so that you may be too astonished to doubt, if you do not, in reality, believe! Just let me run through a catalog of passages where the people of God are called elect. Of course if the people are called *elect,* there must be *election.* If Jesus Christ and His apostles were accustomed to call believers by the title of, elect, we must certainly believe that they were so, otherwise the term does not mean anything! Jesus Christ says, "Except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the *elect's* sake, whom He has chosen, He has shortened the days." "False Christs and false prophets shall rise and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the *elect.*" "Then shall He send His angels and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost parts of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven."—Mark 13:20, 22, 27. "Shall not God avenge His own *elect* who cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them?"—Luke 18:7. Together with many other passages which might be selected, wherein either the word, "elect," or, "chosen," or, "foreordained," or "appointed," is mentioned—or the phrase, "My sheep," or some similar designation, showing that Christ's people are distinguished from the rest of mankind!

But you have concordances and I will not trouble you with texts. Throughout the epistles the saints are constantly called, "the elect." In Colossians we find Paul saying, "Put on, therefore, as the *elect* of God, holy and beloved, hearts of mercies." When he writes to Titus, he calls himself, "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's *elect."* Peter says, *"elect* according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Then if you turn to John, you will find he is very fond of the word! He says, "The elder to the *elect* lady." And he speaks of our "*elect* sister." And we know where it is written, "The church that is at Babylon, *elected* together with you." They were not ashamed of the word in *those* days. They were not afraid to talk about it. Nowadays the word has been dressed up with diversities of meaning and persons have mutilated and marred the doctrine so that they have made it a very doctrine of devils! I do confess that many who call themselves believers have gone to rank Antinomianism! But not withstanding this, why should I be ashamed of it, if men wrest it? We love God's truth on the rack as well as when it is walking upright. If there were a martyr whom we loved before he went on the rack, we would love him still more when he was stretched there! When God's truth is stretched on the rack, we do not call it a lie! We love not to see it racked, but we love it even when racked because we can discern what its proper proportions ought to have been if it had not been racked and tortured by the cruelty and inventions of men! If you will read many of the epistles of the ancient fathers, you will find them always writing to the people of God as the, "elect." Indeed,

the common conversational term used among many of the Churches by the primitive Christians to one another was that of the, "elect." They would often use the term to one another, showing that it was generally believed that all God's people were manifestly "elect."

But now for the verses that will positively prove the doctrine. Open your Bibles, and turn to John 15:16, and there you will see that Jesus Christ has chosen His people, for He says, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain: that whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you." Then in the 19th verse, "If you were of the world, the world would love his own, but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." Then in the 17th chapter and the 8th and 9th verses, "For I have given unto them the words which You gave Me; and they have received them and have known surely that I came out from You and they have believed that You did send Me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me for they are Yours." Turn to Acts 13:48—"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the Word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." They may try to split that passage into hairs if they like—but it says, "ordained to eternal life" in the original as plainly as it possibly can! And we do not care about all the different commentaries thereupon. You scarcely need to be reminded of Romans 8, because I trust you are all well-acquainted with that chapter and understand it by this time. In the 29th and following verses, it says, "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified and whom He justified, them He also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" It would also be unnecessary to repeat the whole of the 9th chapter of Romans. As long as that remains in the Bible, no man shall be able to prove Arminianism! So long as that is written there, not the most violent contortions of the passage will ever be able to exterminate the doctrine of election from the Scriptures! Let us read such verses as these—"For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger." Then read the 22nd verse, "What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction? And

that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory?"

Then go on to Romans 11:7—"What then? Israel has not obtained that which he seeks for, but the election has obtained it and the rest were blinded." In the 6th verse of the same chapter, we read—"Even so, then, at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." You, no doubt, all remember the passage in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29—"For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes and things which are not, to bring to nothing things which are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence." Again, remember the passage in 1 Thessalonians 5:9—"God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ," and then you have my text, which I think would be quite enough. But if you need any more, you can find them at your leisure if we have not quite removed your suspicions as to the doctrine not being true.

I think, my friends, that this overwhelming mass of Scripture testimony must stagger those who dare to laugh at this doctrine! What shall we say of those who have so often despised it and denied its divinity? What shall we say to those who have railed at its justice and dared to defy God and call Him an Almighty tyrant, when they have heard of His having elected so many to eternal life? Can you, O rejecter, cast it out of the Bible? Can you take the penknife of Jehudi and cut it out of the Word of God? Would you be like the women at the feet of Solomon and have the child cut in halves that you might have your half? Is it not here in Scripture? And is it not your duty to bow before it and meekly acknowledge what you understand not—to receive it as the truth even though you could not understand its meaning? I will not attempt to prove the justice of God in having thus elected some and left others. It is not for me to vindicate my Master! He will speak for Himself and He does so—"But, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?" Who is he that shall say unto his father, "What have you begotten?"...or unto his mother, "What have you brought forth?" "I am the Lord—I form the light and create darkness. I, the Lord, do all these things. Who are you that replies against God? Tremble and kiss His rod; bow down and submit to His scepter; impugn not His justice, and arraign not His acts before your bar, O man!"

But there are some who say, "It is hard for God to choose some and leave others." Now, I will ask you one question. Is there any of you here,

this morning, who wishes to be holy, who wishes to be regenerate, to leave off sin and walk in holiness? "Yes, there is," someone says, "I do." Then God has elected you! But another says, "No. I don't want to be holy. I don't want to give up my lusts and my vices." Why should you grumble, then, that God has not elected *you?* For if you were elected, you would not like it, according to your own confession! If God, this morning, had chosen you to holiness, you say you would not care for it. Do you not acknowledge that you prefer drunkenness to sobriety, dishonesty to honesty? You love this world's pleasures better than religion—then why should you grumble that God has not chosen you to religion? If you love religion, He has chosen you to it! If you desire it, He has chosen you to it! If you do not, what right have you to say that God ought to have given you what you do not wish for? Supposing I had in my hand something which you do not value, and I said I shall give it to such-and-such a person—you would have no right to grumble that I did not give it to you! You could not be so foolish as to grumble that the other has got what you do not care about! According to your own confession, many of you do not want religion—do not want a new heart and a right spirit—do not want the forgiveness of sins! You do not want sanctification. You do not want to be elected to these things—then why should you grumble? You count these things but as husks, so why should you complain of God who has given them to those whom He has chosen? If you believe them to be good and desire them, they are there for you! God gives liberally to all those who desire—but first of all, *He* makes them desire—otherwise they never would. If you love these things, He has elected you to them and you may have them. But if you do not, who are you that you should find fault with God when it is your own desperate will that keeps you from loving these things? Suppose a man in the street should say, "What a shame it is I cannot have a seat in the Chapel to hear what this man has to say." And suppose he says, "I hate the preacher—I can't bear his doctrine—but still, it's a shame I have not a seat"? Would you expect a man to say so? No—you would at once say, "That man does not care for it. Why should he trouble himself about other people having what they value and he despises?" You do not like holiness, you do not like righteousness. If God has elected me to these things, has He hurt you by it? "Ah, but," some say, "I thought it meant that God elected some to heaven and some to hell." That is a very different matter from the gospel doctrine! He has elected men to holiness and to righteousness—and through that to heaven. You must not say that He has elected these simply to heaven and others only to hell. He has elected you to *holiness* if you love holiness. If any of you love to be saved by Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ elected you to be saved! If any of you desire to have salvation, you are elected to have it—if you desire it sincerely and earnestly! But, if you

don't desire it, why on earth would you be so preposterously foolish as to grumble because God gives that which you do not like, to other people?

II. Thus I have tried to say something with regard to the truth of the doctrine of election. And now, briefly, let me say that election is absolute, that is, it does not depend upon what we are. The text says, "God has from the beginning chosen us unto salvation." But our opponents say that God chooses people because they are good—that He chooses them on account of sundry works which they have done. Now, we ask in reply to this, what works are those on account of which God elects His people? Are they what we commonly call, "works of law"?—works of obedience which the creature can render? If so, we reply to you—If men cannot be *justified* by the works of the law, it seems to us pretty clear that they cannot be *elected* by the works of the law! If they cannot be justified by their good deeds, they cannot be saved by them. Then the decree of election could not have been formed upon good works. "But," say others, "God elected them on the foresight of their faith." Now God *gives* faith, therefore He could not have elected them on *account* of faith which He foresaw. There shall be 20 beggars in the street and I determine to give one of them a shilling. Will anyone say that I determined to give that one a shilling—that I elected him to have the shilling—because I foresaw that he would have it? That would be talking nonsense! In like manner, to say that God elected men because He foresaw they would have faith—which is salvation in the germ—would be too absurd for us to listen to for a moment! Faith is the gift of God. Every virtue comes from Him. Therefore it cannot have caused Him to elect men, because it is His gift! election, we are sure, is absolute and altogether apart from the virtues which the saints have afterwards. What if a saint should be as holy and devout as Paul? What if he should be as bold as Peter, or as loving as John? Still, he could claim nothing but what he received from his Maker! I never knew a saint, yet, of any denomination who thought that God saved him because He foresaw that he would have these virtues and merits. Now, my brothers and sisters, the best jewels that the saint ever wears, if they are jewels of our own fashioning, are not of the first water! There is something of earth mixed with them. The highest grace we ever possess has something of earthliness about it. We feel this when we are most refined, when we are most sanctified and our language must always be—

"I the chief of sinners am;
Jesus died for me."

Our only hope, our only plea, still hangs on grace as exhibited in the person of Jesus Christ. And I am sure we must utterly reject and disregard all thought that our graces, which are gifts of our Lord, which are His right-hand planting, could have ever caused His love. And we always must sing—

"What was there in us that could merit esteem

Or give the Creator delight?
It was even so, Father, we always must sing,
Because it seemed good in Your sight"

"He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy." He saves because He will save. And if you ask me why He saves me, I can only say because He would do it. Is there anything in me that should recommend me to God? No. I lay aside everything. I had nothing to recommend me. When God saved me, I was the most abject, lost and ruined of the race. I lay before Him as an infant in my blood. Verily, I had no power to help myself. O how wretched did I feel and know myself to be! If you had something to recommend you to God, I never had. I will be content to be saved by grace, unalloyed, pure grace. I can boast of no merits. If you can do so, still I cannot. I must sing—

"Free grace alone from the first to the last
Has won my affection and held my soul fast."

III. Then, thirdly, this election is ETERNAL. "God has from the beginning chosen you unto eternal life." Can any man tell me when the beginning was? Years ago we thought the beginning of this world was when Adam came upon it. But we have discovered that thousands of years before that, God was preparing chaotic matter to make it a fit abode for man, putting races of creatures upon it who might die and leave behind the marks of His handiwork and marvelous skill before He tried His hand on man. But that was not the beginning, for revelation points us to a period long before this world was fashioned—to the days when the morning stars were begotten—when, like drops of dew from the fingers of the morning, stars and constellations fell trickling from the hand of God. When, by His own lips, He launched forth ponderous orbs. When with His own hands He sent comets, like thunderbolts, wandering through the sky to find, one day, their proper sphere. We go back to years gone by, when worlds were made and systems fashioned, but we have not even approached the beginning! Until we go to the time when all the universe slept in the mind of God as yet unborn—until we enter the eternity where God the Creator lived alone, everything sleeping within Him, all creation resting in His mighty gigantic thought—we have not guessed the beginning. We may go back, back, back, ages upon ages. We may go back, if we might use such strange words, whole eternities and yet never arrive at the beginning! Our wings might be tired, our imagination would die away. Could it outstrip the lightnings flashing in majesty, power and rapidity, it would soon weary itself before it could get to the beginning! But God from the *beginning* chose His people; when the unnavigated ether was yet unfanned by the wing of a single angel; when space was shoreless, or else unborn; when universal silence reigned, and not a voice or whisper shocked the solemnity of silence, when there was no being and no motion, no time, and nothing but God Himself, alone in His eternity; when without the song of an angel, without the attendance of even the

cherubim, long before the living creatures were born, or the wheels of the chariot of Jehovah were fashioned—even then, "In the beginning was the Word," and in the beginning God's people were one with the Word, and "In the beginning He chose them unto eternal life." Our election, then, is eternal. I will not stop to prove it. I only just run over these thoughts for the benefit of young beginners, that they may understand what we mean by eternal, absolute election.

IV. And, next, the election is PERSONAL. Here again, our opponents have tried to overthrow election by telling us that it is an election of *nations*—and not of people. But here the apostle says, "God has from the beginning chosen *you*." It is the most miserable shift on earth to make out that God has not chosen persons, but nations, because the very same objection that lies against the choice of persons, lies against the choice of a nation! If it were not just to choose a *person* it would be far more unjust to choose a nation, since nations are but the union of multitudes of persons! To choose a nation seems to be a more gigantic crime—if election is a crime—than to choose one person. Surely to choose ten thousand would be reckoned to be worse than choosing one—to distinguish a whole nation from the rest of mankind seems to be a greater extravaganza in the acts of divine sovereignty than the election of one poor mortal and leaving out another. But what are nations but men? What are whole peoples but combinations of different units? A nation is made up of that individual, and that, and that. And if you tell me that God chose the Jews, I say, then, He chose that Jew and that Jew and that Jew. And if you say He chooses Britain, then I say He chooses that British person and that British person and that British person. So that it is the same thing, after all. election, then, is personal—it must be so! Everyone who reads this text and others like it, will see that Scripture continually speaks of God's people one by one and speaks of them as having been the special subjects of election—

"Sons we are through God's election,
Who in Jesus Christ believe;
By eternal destination
Sovereign grace we here receive."

We know it is personal election.

V. The other thought is—for my time flies too swiftly to enable me to dwell at length upon these points—that election produces GOOD RESULTS. "He has from the beginning chosen you unto sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." How many men mistake the doctrine of election altogether! And how my soul burns and boils at the recollection of the terrible evils that have accrued from the spoiling and the wresting of that glorious portion of God's glorious truth! How many are there who have said to themselves, "I am elect," and have sat down in sloth and worse than that! They have said, "I am the elect of God," and with both

hands they have done wickedness. They have swiftly run to every unclean thing because they have said, "I am the chosen child of God, irrespective of my works—therefore I may live as I like and do what I like." O, beloved! Let me solemnly warn everyone of you not to carry the truth of God too far—or, rather not to turn the truth of God into error, for we cannot carry it too far! We may overstep the truth—we can make that which was meant to be sweet for our comfort a terrible mixture for our destruction. I tell you there have been thousands of men who have been ruined by misunderstanding election—who have said, "God has elected me to heaven and to eternal life"—but they have forgotten that it is written, God has elected them, "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." This is God's election—election to *sanctification* and to *faith*. God chooses His people to be holy and to be believers! How many of you here, then, are believers? How many of my congregation can put their hands upon their hearts and say, "I trust in God that I am sanctified"? Is there one of you who says, "I am elect"?

One of you says, "I trust I am elect"—but I jog your memory about some vicious act that you committed during the last six days. Another of you says, "I am elect"—but I would look you in the face and say, *"elect?* You are a most cursed hypocrite and that is all you are!" Others would say, "I am elect"—but I would remind them that they neglect the mercy seat and do not pray. Oh, beloved, never think you are elect unless you are *holy*. You may come to Christ as a sinner but you may not come to Christ as an elect person until you can see your holiness! Do not misconstrue what I say—do not say, "I am elect," and yet think you can be living in sin! That is impossible. The elect of God are holy. They are not pure, they are not perfect, they are not spotless—but taking their life as a whole, they are holy persons. They are marked and distinct from others—and no man has a right to conclude himself elect except in his holiness. He may be elect and yet lying in darkness, but he has no right to believe it. No one can say it, if there is no evidence of it. The man may live one day, but he is dead at present. If you are walking in the fear of God, trying to please Him and to obey His commandments, doubt not that your name has been written in the Lamb's Book of Life from before the foundation of the world!

And, lest this should be too high for you, note the other mark of election, which is faith—belief of the truth of God. Whoever believes God's truth and believes on Jesus Christ, is elect. I frequently meet with poor souls who are fretting and worrying themselves about this thought—"What if I should not be elect!" "Oh, Sir," they say, "I know I put my trust in Jesus. I know I believe in His name and trust in His blood. But what if I should not be elect?" Poor dear creature! You do not know much about the gospel or you would never talk so, for *he that believes is elect*. Those who are elect, are elect unto sanctification and

unto faith. If you have faith, you are one of God's elect! You may know it and ought to know it, for it is an absolute certainty! If you, as a sinner, look to Jesus Christ this morning and say—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your cross I cling,"

you are elect! I am not afraid of election frightening poor saints or sinners. There are many divines who tell the inquirer, "election has nothing to do with you." That is very bad, because the poor soul is not to be silenced like that. If you could silence him so, it might be well—but he will think of it, he can't help it. Say to him, then, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you are elect. If you will cast yourself on Jesus, you are elect. I tell you—the chief of sinners—this morning—I tell you in His name—if you will come to God without any works of your own, cast yourself on the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ—if you will come, now, and trust in Him, you are elect—you were loved of God from before the foundation of the world, for you could not do that unless God had given you the power and had chosen you to do it! Now you are safe and secure if you do but come and cast yourself on Jesus Christ and wish to be saved and to be loved by Him. But think not that any man will be saved without faith and without holiness. Do not conceive, my hearers that some decree passed in the dark ages of eternity will save your souls, unless you believe in Christ! Do not sit down and fancy that you are to be saved without faith and holiness! That is a most abominable and accursed heresy, and has ruined thousands!

Lay not election as a pillow for you to sleep on, or you may be ruined. God forbid that I should be sewing pillows under armholes that you may rest comfortably in your sins. Sinner, there is nothing in the Bible to lighten your sins! But if you are condemned, O man! If you are lost, O woman! You will not find in this Bible one drop to cool your tongue, or one doctrine to lessen your guilt. Your damnation will be entirely your own fault, and your sin will richly merit it—because you believe you are not condemned. "You believe not because you are not of My sheep. You will not come to Me that you might have life." Do not fancy that election excuses sin—do not dream of it—do not rock yourself in sweet complacency in the thought of your irresponsibility! You are responsible. We must give you both things. We must have divine sovereignty and we must have man's responsibility. We must have election, but we must ply your hearts—we must send God's truth at you. We must speak to you and remind you of this, that while it is written, "In Me is your help," yet it is also written, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself."

VI. Now, lastly, what are the true and legitimate tendencies of right conceptions concerning the doctrine of election? First, I will tell you what the doctrine of election will make saints do under the blessing of God. And, secondly what it will do for sinners if God blesses it to them.

First, I think election, to a saint, is one of the most *stripping* doctrines in all the world—to take away all trust in the flesh or all reliance upon anything except Jesus Christ. How often do we wrap ourselves up in our own righteousness and array ourselves with the false pearls and gems of our own works and doings? We begin to say, "Now I shall be saved, because I have this and that evidence." Instead of that, it is naked faith that saves—that faith and that, alone, unites to the Lamb—irrespective of works, although it is productive of them. How often do we lean on some work other than that of our own beloved Jesus and trust in some might, other than that which comes from on High? Now if we would have this might taken from us, we must consider election. Pause, my soul, and consider this. God loved you before you had a being! He loved you when you were dead in trespasses and sins and sent His Son to die for you! He purchased you with His precious blood before you could say His name! Can you, then, be *proud?*

I know nothing, nothing again, that is more *humbling* for us than this doctrine of election. I have sometimes fallen prostrate before it when endeavoring to understand it. I have stretched my wings and, eagle-like, I have soared towards the sun. Steady has been my eye and true my wing for a season. But, when I came near it and the one thought possessed me—"God has from the beginning chosen you unto salvation," I was lost in its luster! I was staggered with the mighty thought—and from the dizzy elevation down came my soul, prostrate and broken, saying, "Lord, I am nothing, I am less than nothing! Why me? Why me?"

Friends, if you want to be humbled, study election, for it will make you humble under the influence of God's Spirit. He who is proud of his election is not elect—and he who is humbled under a sense of it may believe that he is. He has every reason to believe that he is, for it is one of the most blessed effects of election—that it helps us to humble ourselves before God.

Once again—election in the Christian should make him very *fearless* and very *bold.* No man will be as bold as he who believes that he is elect of God. What cares he for man if he is chosen of his Maker? What will he care for the pitiful chirpings of some tiny sparrows when he knows that he is an eagle of a royal race? Will he care when the beggar points at him, when the blood royal of heaven runs in his veins? Will he fear if all the world stand against him? If earth is all in arms abroad, he dwells in perfect peace—for he is in the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High, in the great pavilion of the Almighty! "I am God's," he says, "I am distinct from other men. They are of an inferior race. Am I not noble? Am I not one of the aristocrats of heaven? Is not my name written in God's Book?" Does he care for the world? No—like the lion that cares not for the barking of the dog, he smiles at all his enemies—and when they come too near him, he moves himself and dashes them to pieces. What cares

he for them? He walks about them like a colossus—while little men walk under him and understand him not. His brow is made of iron, his heart is of flint—what does he care for man? No—if one universal hiss came up from the wide world, he would smile at it, for he would say—

"He that has made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode."

I am one of His elect. I am chosen of God and precious—and though the world cast me out, I fear not. Ah, you time-serving professors, some of you will bend like the willows! There are few oaken-Christians, nowadays, that can stand the storm—and I will tell you the reason. It is because you do not believe yourselves to be elect! The man who knows he is elect will be too proud to sin—he will not humble himself to commit the acts of common people. The believer in God's truth will say, "*I* compromise my principles? *I* change my doctrines? *I* lay aside my views? *I* hide what I believe to be true? No! Since I know I am one of God's elect, in the very teeth of all men I shall speak God's truth, whatever man may say." Nothing makes a man so truly bold as to feel that he is God's elect! He shall not quiver, he shall not shake—who knows that God has chosen him!

Moreover, election will make us *holy*. Nothing under the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit can make a Christian more holy than the thought that he is chosen! "Shall I sin," he says, "after God has chosen me? Shall I transgress after such love? Shall I go astray after so much loving-kindness and tender mercy? No, my God, since You have chosen me, I will love You. I will live to You—

"Since You, the everlasting God,
My Father have become."

I will give myself to You to be Yours forever, by election and by redemption, casting myself on You and solemnly consecrating myself to Your service.

And now, lastly, to the ungodly. What says election to you? First, you ungodly ones, I will excuse you for a moment. There are many of you who do not like election and I cannot blame you for it, for I have heard those preach election who have sat down and said, "I have not one word to say to the sinner." Now, I say you *ought* to dislike such preaching as that, and I do not blame you for it! But I say, take courage, take hope, O you sinner, that there is election! So far from dispiriting and discouraging you, it is a very hopeful and joyous thing that there is an election. What if I told you, perhaps, none can be saved, none are ordained to eternal life? Would you not tremble and fold your hands in hopelessness and say, "Then how can I be saved, since none are elect?" But, I say there is a multitude of elect, beyond all counting—a host that no mortal can number! Therefore, take heart, poor sinner! Cast away your despondency—may you not be elect as well as any other?—for there is

chosen an innumerable host! There is joy and comfort for you! Then, not only take heart, but go and try the Master! Remember, if you were not elect, you would lose nothing by it. What did the four lepers say? "Let us fall unto the host of the Syrians, for if we stay here, we must die, and if we go to them, we can but die." O sinner! Come to the throne of electing mercy! You may die where you are. Go to God—and, even supposing He should spurn you, suppose His uplifted hand should drive you away—a thing impossible—yet you will not lose anything! You will not be more damned for that. Besides, supposing you are damned, you would at least have the satisfaction of being able to lift up your eyes in hell and say, "God, I asked mercy of You and You would not grant it. I sought it, but You did refuse it." That you shall never say, O sinner! If you go to Him and ask Him, you shall receive—for He never has spurned one yet! Is not that hope for you? Though there is an allotted number, yet it is true that all who seek belong to that number! Go and seek—and if you should be the first one to go to hell, tell the devils that you did perish thus—tell the demons that you are a castaway after having come as a guilty sinner to Jesus. I tell you it would disgrace the Eternal—with reverence to His name—and He would not allow such a thing! He is jealous of His honor and He could not allow a sinner to say that! But ah, poor soul! Do not think thus, that you can lose anything by coming!

There is yet one more thought—do you love the thought of election this morning? Are you willing to admit its justice? Do you say, "I feel that I am lost; I deserve it, and if my brother is saved, I cannot murmur. If God destroys me, I deserve it, but if He saves the person sitting beside me, He has a right to do what He will with His own, and I have lost nothing by it." Can you say that honestly from your heart? If so, then the doctrine of election has had its right effect on your spirit, and you are not far from the kingdom of heaven! You are brought where you ought to be, where the Spirit wants you to be—and being so this morning, depart in peace! God has forgiven your sins! You would not feel that if you were not pardoned—you would not feel that if the Spirit of God were not working in you! Rejoice, then, in this! Let your hope rest on the cross of Christ. Think not on election, but on Christ Jesus! Rest on Jesus—Jesus first, last, and without end!

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THE DEATH OF THE CHRISTIAN
NO. 43

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 9, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"You shall come to your grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn comes in, in his season."
Job 5:26.

WE do not believe all that Job's friends said. They spoke very often as uninspired men, for we find them saying many things that are not true. And if we read the book of Job through, we might say with regard to them, "miserable comforters are you all," for they did not speak concerning God's servant, Job, the thing that was right. But nevertheless, they gave utterance to many holy and pious sentences which are well worthy of regard as having come from the lips of three men distinguished in their age for their learning, talent, and ability. Three gray-headed sires, who from experience, were able to speak what they knew. Their mistakes are not to be wondered at because they had not then that clear, bright, shining light which we enjoy in these modern times. They had few opportunities to meet together. There were but few prophets in those days who taught them the things of the kingdom. We marvel that without the light of the gospel revelation they were able to discover so much of the truth of God as they did. However, I must make a remark concerning this chapter, that I cannot but regard it as being, in the main, not so much the utterance of the man—who here speaks—Eliphaz the Temanite—but the very Word of God. Not so much the simple saying of the unwise comforter who upbraided Job as the speech of the great Comforter who consoles His people, and who only utters the thing that is right! The opinion is justified by the fact that this chapter is quoted by the Apostle Paul. Eliphaz says in the 13th verse, "He takes the wise in their own craftiness." And we find the Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 3:19 saying, "As it is written, He takes the wise in their own craftiness"—thus giving sanction to this passage as having been inspired of God—at all events as being most certainly truthful. Most certainly the experience of such a man as Eliphaz is worthy of much regard. And when he, speaking of the general condition of God's people—that they are hid from the scourge of the tongue, "that they are not afraid of destruction when it comes"—that they laugh at destruction and famine and so on, we may accept his words as being proven by experience and authenticated by inspiration!

"You shall come to your grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn comes in, in his season." Here is a very beautiful comparison, the com-

parison of the aged Christian—for that I take it lies on the surface of the text—to a shock of corn. Go into the harvest field and you shall see how much the wheat reminds you of the aged believer. How much anxiety has been expended on that field! When the seed first sprung up, the farmer dreads lest the worm should bite the tender shoots and the blade should be devoured. Or lest some sharp frost should consume the infant plant and cause it to wither and die. And, then, month after month, as the seasons came, how did he anxiously look towards heaven and long that the rains might come, or that the genial sunshine might pour out its vivifying floods of light upon the field? When it has come to somewhat of maturity, how greatly has he feared lest the mildew and blast should shrivel up the precious ears? It now stands in the fields and, in some respects, he is freed from his anxiety. The months of his travail are over. He has waited patiently for the precious fruits of the soil and now they are there.

And so with the gray-headed man; how many years of anxiety have been expended upon him? In his youth how likely did it seem that he might be smitten down by death and yet he has passed safely through youth, manhood and age. What varied accidents have been warded from him? How has the shield of the Providential Keeper been over his head to keep him from the shafts of the pestilence, or from the heavy hand of accident that might have taken his life!? How many anxieties has he had, himself? How many troubles has he passed through? Look upon the hoary-headed veteran! Mark the scars that troubles have inflicted upon his forehead! And see, written deep in his breast, the dark mementos of the sharp struggles and trials he has endured! And now his anxieties are somewhat over—he is come very nearly to the haven of rest. A few short years of trial and trouble shall land him on fair Canaan's coast! We look upon him with the same pleasure that the farmer regards the wheat because the anxiety is over and the time of rest is now approaching. Mark how weak the stem has become! How every wind shakes it to and for—it is withered and dried! See how the head hangs down to earth, as if it were about to kiss the dust and show from where it had its origin! So, mark the aged man—tottering are his steps—the eyes that look out of the windows are darkened, the grinders cease because they are few—and the grasshopper has become a burden. Yet even in that weakness there is glory! It is not the weakness of the tender blade—it is the weakness of the full ripe corn! It is a weakness that shows its maturity. It is a weakness that gilds it with glory. Even as the color of the wheat is golden, so that it looks more beauteous than when the greenness of its verdure is on it, so the gray-headed man has a crown of glory on his head! He is glorious in his weakness—more than the young man in his strength, or the maiden in her beauty! Is not a shock of corn a beautiful picture of the state of man, moreover, because very soon it must be taken home? The reaper is coming! Even now I hear the sickle sharpening. The reaper has well edged it and he shall soon cut the corn down. Look! He is com-

ing across the field to reap his harvest. And then, by-and-by, it shall be carried into the barn and safely housed, no more subject to blight, or mildew, or insect, or disease. There it shall be secured where no snow can fall upon it, no winds can molest it. It shall be safe and secure. And joyful shall be the time when harvest home shall be proclaimed and the shock of corn, fully ripe, shall be carried into the farmer's garner! Such is the aged man. He, too, shall soon be taken home. Death is even now sharpening his sickle and the angels are getting ready their chariot of gold to bear him up to the skies! The barn is built. The house is provided. Soon the great Master shall say, "Bind up the tares in bundles to burn and gather the wheat into My barn."

This morning, we shall consider *the death of Christians in general*. Not merely of the aged Christian, for we shall show you that while this text does seem to bear upon the aged Christian, in reality it speaks with a loud voice to every man who is a believer. "You shall come to your grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn comes in, in his season."

There are four things we shall mark in the text. First, we shall consider that death is *inevitable,* because it says, "You shall come." Secondly, that death is *acceptable,* because it does not read, "I will make you go to your grave," but, "You shall come there." Thirdly that death is always *timely*—"You shall come to your grave in *full age."* Fourthly, that death to the Christian is always *honorable,* for the promise declares to him, "You shall go to your grave in full age, like as a shock of corn comes in, in his season."

1. The first remark, namely, that death, even to the Christian, is INEVITABLE, is very trite, simple, and common. We scarcely need have made it. But we found it necessary, in order to introduce one or two remarks upon it. How familiar is the thought that all men must die and, therefore, what can we say upon it? And yet we blush not to repeat it, for while it is a truth so well known—there is none so much forgotten! While we all believe it in theory and receive it in the brain, how seldom is it impressed on the heart? The sight of death makes us remember it. The tolling of the solemn bell speaks to us of it. We hear the deep-tongued voice of time as the bell tolls the hours and preaches our mortality. But very usually we forget it. Death is inevitable to all. But I wish to make an observation concerning death and that is, that while it is written, "It is appointed unto all men, once to die," yet a time shall come when some Christians shall not die at all! We know that had Adam never sinned, he would not have died, for death is the punishment of sin. And we know that Enoch and Elijah were translated to heaven without dying. Therefore it does seem to follow that death is not absolutely necessary for a Christian. And, moreover, we are told in Scripture that there are some who shall be "alive and remain," when Jesus Christ shall come. And the Apostle says, "I tell you a mystery—we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump."

There shall be some who shall be found living, of whom the Apostle says, "Then we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we always be with the Lord." We know that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom, but it is possible that they may be refined by some spiritual process which shall preclude the necessity of dissolution. Oh, I have thought of that idea very much and I have wondered whether it would not be possible that some of us might be in that happy number who shall not see death! Even if we are not, there is something very cheering in the thought—Christ did so conquer death that He not only delivers the lawful captive out of the prison, but He saves a band from the jaws of the monster, and leads them by his den unharmed!

He not only resuscitates the dead and puts new life into those that are slain by the fell scythe, but some He actually takes to heaven by a by-road. He says to death—"Avaunt, you monster! On these you shall never put your hand! These are chosen men and women. And your cold fingers shall never freeze the current of their soul. I am taking them straight to heaven without death. I will transport them in their bodies up to heaven without passing through your gloomy portals, or having been captives in your dreary land of shades." How glorious is the thought that Christ has vanquished death—that some men shall not die! But you will say to me, "How can that be? For the body has mortality mingled with its very essence!" We are told, it is true, by eminent men that there is a necessity in nature that there should be death, since one animal must prey upon another. And even could all animals be taught to give up their prey, they must feed upon plants and so devour certain minute insects which had hidden thereon. Death, therefore, seems to be the law of nature. Be it remembered that men have already lived far beyond the present allotted term and it does seem most easy to conceive that the creature which can subsist a thousand years could exceed that period. But this objection is not valid, since the saints will not live forever in this world, but will be removed to a habitation where laws of glory shall supersede laws of nature.

II. And now comes a sweet thought—that death to the Christian is always ACCEPTABLE—"You shall *come* to your grave." Old Caryl makes this remark on this verse—"A willingness and a cheerfulness to die. You shall *come*, you shall not be dragged or hurried to your grave, as it is said of the foolish rich man in Luke 12, 'This night shall your soul be taken from you.' But you shall come to your grave quietly and smilingly, as it were. You shall go to your grave, as it were, upon your own feet and rather walk than be carried to your sepulcher." The wicked man, when he dies, is driven to his grave, but the Christian *comes* to his grave! Let me tell you a parable. Behold, two men sat together in the same house when Death came to each of them. He said to one, "You shall die." The man looked at him—tears suffused his eyes and tremblingly he said, "O

Death, I cannot! I will not die." He sought out a physician and said to him, "I am sick, for Death has looked upon me. His eyes have paled my cheeks, and I fear I must depart. Physician, here is my wealth, give me health and let me live." The physician took his wealth but gave him not his health with all his skill. The man changed his physician, and tried another, and thought that perhaps he might spin out the thread of life a little longer. But, alas! Death came and said, "I have given you time to try your varied excuses. Come with me. You shall die." And he bound him hand and foot and made him go to that dark land of shades. As the man went, he clutched at every side post by the way, but Death, with iron hands, still pulled him on! There was not a tree that grew along the way but he tried to grasp it, but Death said, "Come on! You are my captive and you shall die." And unwillingly as the laggard schoolboy who goes slowly to school, so did he trace the road with Death. He did not *come* to his grave, but Death fetched him to it—the grave came to him.

But Death said to the other man, "I am come for you." He smilingly replied, "Ah, Death! I know you, I have seen you many a time. I have held communion with you. You are my Master's servant. You have come to fetch me home. Go, tell my Master I am ready, whenever He pleases. Death, I am ready to go with you." And together they went along the road and held sweet company. Death said to him, "I have worn these skeleton bones to frighten wicked men. But I am not frightful. I will let you see myself. The hand that wrote upon Belshazzar's wall was terrible because no man saw anything but the hand; "But," said Death, "I will show you my whole body. Men have only seen my bony hand, and have been terrified." And as they went along, Death ungirded himself to let the Christian see his body and he smiled, for it was the body of an angel. He had wings of cherubs, and a body as glorious as Gabriel. The Christian said to him, "you are not what I thought you were—I will cheerfully go with you." At last Death touched the believer with his hand—it was even as when the mother does in sport smites her child a moment. The child loves that loving pinch upon the arm, for it is a proof of affection. So did Death put his finger on the man's pulse, and stopped it for a moment, and the Christian found himself, by Death's kind finger, changed into a spirit. Yes, found himself brother to the Angels! His body had been etherealized, his soul purified and he himself was in heaven! You tell me this is only a parable. But let me give you some facts that shall back it up. I will tell you some of the deathbed sayings of dying saints and show you that, to them, Death has been an agreeable visitant of whom they were not afraid. You will not disbelieve dying men! It was ill to act the hypocrite's part at such a time. When the play is over, men will take off the mask—and so with these men when they came to die—they stood out in solemn unclothed reality.

First, let me tell you what Dr. Owen said—that celebrated prince of Calvinists. While his works are to be found, I am not afraid that men

shall lack arguments to defend the gospel of free grace. A friend called to tell Dr. Owen that he had put to press his, "Meditations on the Glory of Christ." There was a momentary gleam in his languid eye as he answered, "I am glad to hear it. Oh," he said, "the long wished-for time has come at last, in which I shall see that glory in another manner than I have ever done, or was capable of doing in this world."

"But," you may say, "this man was a mere theologian, let us hear a poet speak."

George Herbert, after some severe struggles and having requested his wife and nieces, who were weeping in extreme anguish, to leave the room, committed his will to Mr. Woodnott's care. Crying out, he said, "I am ready to die—Lord, forsake me not now, my strength fails. But grant me mercy for the merits of my Lord Jesus. And now, Lord, receive my soul." Then he laid himself back and breathed out his life to God. Thus the poet dies. That glorious fancy of his that might have pictured gloomy things if it, had pleased, was only shed with rapturous sight of angels. As he used to say himself, "I think I hear the church bells of heaven ringing." And I think he did hear them when he came near the river Jordan!

"But," you will say, "one was a theologian, and the other a poet—it might have been all fancy." Now learn what an active man, a missionary said—Brainard. He said, "I am almost in eternity. I long to be there; my work is done. I have done with all my friends. The entire world is now nothing to me; oh, to be in heaven to praise and glorify God with His holy angels!" That is what Brainard said. He who counted all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and went among wild untutored Indians to preach the gospel!

But it is possible you may say, "These were men of ages gone by." Now, you shall have men of modern times! And first, hear what the great and eminent Scotch preacher, Haldane, said. He raised himself a little and distinctly repeated these words, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then we shall appear with Him in glory." He was then asked if he thought he was going home. He answered, "Perhaps not quite yet." Mrs. Haldane affectionately said, "Then you will not leave us very soon." He replied with a smile, "To depart and to be with Christ is far better." On being asked if he felt much peace and happiness, he twice repeated, "Exceedingly great and precious promises." He then said, "But I must rise." Mrs. Haldane said, "You are not able to get up." He smiled and answered, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with His likeness." She said, "Is that what rising up you meant?" He replied, "Yes, that is the rising I meant. I must rise!"

And now, what said Howard—the great philanthropist, the man who, while possessing true religion and being the most eminent and distinguished of Christians, would, from his plain commonsense mode of acting, never be suspected of being a fanatic and an enthusiast? A few days before his death, when the symptoms of his disease began to assume a

most alarming appearance, he said to Admiral Priestman, "You endeavor to divert my mind from dwelling on death. But I entertain very different sentiments. Death has no terror for me; I always look forward to it with cheerfulness, if not with pleasure."

But perhaps you may say, "We never knew any of these people. We would like to hear of somebody whom we did know." Well, you shall hear of one whom you have heard me affectionately mention. He was not of our denomination, but he was a very prince in Israel—I refer to Joseph Irons. Many of you heard the sweet and blessed things that proceeded out of his lips and will, perhaps, be able to verify what is said of him. At intervals he repeated short portions of Scripture and select sentences, such as, "How long, Lord?" "Come, Lord Jesus!" "I long to go home, to be at rest." Seeing his dear wife shedding tears, he said, "Do not weep for me; I am waiting for that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." After a pause, to recover his breath, he added, "He that has preserved me thus far, will never leave, or forsake me. Fear not—all is well! Christ is precious. I am going home, for I am a shock of corn fully ripe." Now that is a man you did know, many of you. And it proves the fact that I have asserted—that to a Christian, death is acceptable, come when it may! I am sure I can say, with many of my brothers and sisters, here, that could I now have the greatest favor conferred on me that men could desire, I would ask that I might die! I never wish to have the choice given to me. But to die is the happiest thing man can have because it is to lose anxiety, it is to slay care, and it is to have the peculiar sleep of the beloved. To the Christian, then, death must be acceptable!

A Christian has nothing to lose by death. You say he has to lose his friends. I am not so sure of that. Many of you have many more friends in heaven than on earth. Some Christians have more dearly beloved ones above than below. You often count your family circle, but do you do as that little girl of whom Wordsworth speaks, when she said, "Master, we are seven." Some of them were dead and gone to heaven, but she would have it that they were still all brothers and sisters. Oh, how many brothers and sisters we have upstairs in the upper room in our Father's house! How many dear ones linked with us in the ties of relationship, for they are as much our relations, now, as they were then! Though in the Resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, yet in that great world, who has said that the ties of affection shall be severed, so that we shall not even, there, claim kindred with one another, as well as kindred with Jesus Christ? What have we to lose by death? Come when he may, should we not open the door for him? I would love to feel like that woman who said, when she was dying, "I feel like a door on the latch, ready to be opened to let my Lord in." Is not that a sweet state, to have the house ready, so that it will require no setting in order? When death comes to a wicked man, he finds him moored fast, he snaps his cable and drives his ship to sea. But when he comes to the Christian, he

finds him winding up the anchor and he says, "When you have done your work and shipped the anchor, I will take you home." With sweet breath he blows on him and the ship is wafted gently to heaven, with no regrets for life, but with angels at the prow, spirits guiding the rudder, sweet songs coming through the cordage and canvas silvered over with light!

III. Then thirdly, the Christian's death is always TIMELY—"You shall come to your grave in a full age." "Ah," says one, "that is not true! Good people do not live longer than others; the most pious man may die in the prime of his youth." But look at my text. It does not say you shall come to your grave in old age—but in a "full age." Well, who knows what a "full age" is? A "full age" is whenever God likes to take His children home! There are some fruits you know that are late in coming to perfection and we do not think their flavor is good till Christmas. Or till they have gone through the frost—while some are fit for table right now. All fruits do not get ripe and mellow at the same season, and so with Christians. They are at a "full age" when God chooses to take them home. They are at "full age" if they die at twenty-one. They are not more if they live to be ninety. Some wines can be drunk very soon after the vintage. Others need to be kept. But what does this matter, if when the liquor is broached it is found to have its full flavor? God never broaches His cask till the wine has perfected itself. There are two mercies to a Christian. The first is that he will never die too soon. And the second, that he will never die too late!

First, he will never die *too soon*. Spencer, who blazed out so brilliantly some years ago, preached so wonderfully that many expected that a great light would shine steadily and that many would be guided to heaven. But then suddenly the light was quenched in darkness and he drowned while yet in his youth. Men wept and said, "Ah, Spencer died too soon." So it has been sung of Kirk White, the poet who worked so laboriously at his studies. Like the eagle who finds that the arrow that smote him was winged by a feather from his own body, so was his own study the means of his death. And the poets said he died too soon. It was untrue. He did not die too soon—no Christian ever does! "But," some say, "how useful might they have been had they lived." Ah, but how damaging they might have been! And were it not better to die than to do something, afterwards, that would disgrace themselves and bring disgrace to the Christian character? Were it not better for them to sleep while their work was going on, than to break it down afterwards? We have seen some sad instances of Christians who have been very useful in God's cause, but have afterwards had sad falls and have dishonored Christ. Though they were saved and brought back, at last, we could almost wish that they had died rather than lived. You don't know what might have been the career of these men who were taken away so soon! Are you quite sure they would have done so much good? Might they not have done much evil? Could we have a dream of the future and see what they might have been, we would say, "Ah Lord! Let it stop while it is well." Let him sleep while the music

plays, there may be hideous sounds afterwards. We long not to keep awake to hear the dreary notes. The Christian dies well—he does not die too soon.

Again, the Christian never dies *too late*. That old lady, there, is 80 years old. She sits in a miserable room, shivering before a small fire. She is kept by charity. She is poor and miserable. "What's the good of her?" everybody says —"She has lived too long. A few years ago she might have been of some use. But now look at her! She can scarcely eat unless her food is put into her mouth. She cannot move. And what good can she be?" How dare you find fault with your Master's work! He is too good a husbandman to leave His wheat in the field too long and let it shale out. Go and see her, and you will be reproved. Let her speak—she can tell you things you never knew in all your life. Or, if she does not speak at all, her silent unmurmuring serenity—her constant submission—teaches you how to bear suffering. So that there is something you can yet learn from her—say not the old leaf hangs too long on the tree! An insect may yet twist itself therein, and fashion it into its habitation. O say not the old dry leaf ought to have been blown off long ago! The time is coming when it shall fall gently on the soil. But it remains to preach to unthinking men the frailty of their lives. Hear what God says to each of us—"You shall come to your grave in full age." Cholera! You may fly across the land and taint the air—I shall die in a "full age." I may preach today, and as many days as I please in the week, but I shall die at a full age. However ardently I may labor, I shall die at a full age! Affliction may come to drain my very life's blood and dry up the very sap and marrow of my being. Ah, but affliction, you shall not come too soon—I shall die at a full age! And you waiting man! And you tarrying woman! You are saying, "O Lord, how long? How long? Let me go home." You shall not be kept from your beloved Jesus one hour more than is necessary! You shall have heaven as soon as you are ready for it. Heaven is ready enough for you, and your Lord will say, "Come up higher!" when you have arrived at a full age—but never before nor after!

IV. Now the last thing is that a Christian will die with HONOR. "You shall come to your grave like a shock of corn comes in, in his season." You hear men speak against funeral honors and I certainly do enter my protest against the awful extravagance with which many funerals are conducted and the absurdly stupid fashions that are often introduced. It would be a happy thing if some persons could break through them and if widows were not obliged to spend the money which they need so much, themselves, upon a needless ceremony which makes death not honorable, but rather despicable! But I think that while death should not be flaunted out with gaudy plumes, there is such a thing as an honorable funeral which everyone of us may desire to have. We do not wish to just be carried away as a bundle of tares—we would prefer that devout men would carry us to the grave and make much lamentation over us. Some

of us have seen funerals that were very like a "harvest home." I can remember the funeral of a sainted minister under whom I once sat. The pulpit was hung in black and crowds of people came together. And when an aged veteran in the army of Christ rose up to deliver the funeral oration over his remains, there stood a weeping people lamenting that a prince had fallen that day in Israel! Then, verily, I felt what Mr. Jay must have experienced when he preached the funeral sermon for Rowland Hill, "Howl fir tree, the cedar is fallen!"

There was such a melancholy grandeur there. And yet my soul seemed lit up with joy to think it possible that some of us might share in the same affection and that the same tears might be wept over us when we come to die! Ah, my brothers here, my brothers in office, my brothers and sisters in this church—it may somewhat cheer your hearts to know that when you depart, your death will be to us a source of the deepest grief and most piercing sorrow. Your burial shall not be that prophesied for Jehoiakim—the burial of an ass, with none to weep over him. But devout men will assemble and say, "Here lies the deacon who for years served his Master so faithfully." "Here lies the Sunday school teacher," will the child say, "who early taught me the Savior's name." And if the minister should fall, I think a crowd of people following him to the tomb would well give him such a funeral as a shock of corn has when "it comes in, in his season." I believe we ought to pay great respect to the departed saints' bodies. "The memory of the just is blessed." And even you little saints in the church, don't think you will be forgotten when you die. You may have no gravestone. But the angels will know where you are as well without a gravestone, as with it! There will be some who will weep over you. You will not be hurried away, but will be carried with tears to your grave.

But I think there are *two* funerals for every Christian—one, the funeral of the *body;* the other, the *soul*. Funeral, did I say, of the *soul?* No, I meant not so! I meant not so! It is a *marriage* of the soul, for as soon as it leaves the body, the angel reapers stand ready to carry it away! They may not bring a fiery chariot as they had for Elijah, but they have their broad spreading wings. I rejoice to believe that angels will come as convoys to the soul across the ethereal plains. Lo! Angels at the head support the ascending saint and lovingly they look upon his face as they bear him upwards. And angels at the feet assist in wafting him up yonder through the skies. And as the husbandmen come out from their houses and cry, "A joyous harvest home," so will the angels come forth from the gates of heaven and say, "Harvest home! Harvest home! Here is another shock of corn fully ripe gathered into the garner!" I think the most honorable and glorious thing we shall ever behold, next to Christ's entrance into heaven and His glory, there, is the entrance of one of God's people into heaven. I can suppose it is made a holiday whenever a saint enters and that is continually—so that they keep perpetual holiday! Oh, I think there is a

shout that comes from heaven, whenever a Christian enters it, louder than the noise of many waters! The thundering acclamations of a universe are drowned as if they were but a whisper in that great shout which all the ransomed raise when they cry, "Another and yet another comes!" And the song is still swelled by increasing voices, as they chant, "Blessed husbandman, blessed husbandman, Your wheat is coming home. Shocks of corn fully ripe are gathering into Your garner!"

Well, wait a little, beloved. In a few more years you and I shall be carried through the ether on the wings of angels. I think I die and the angels approach. I am on the wings of cherubs. Oh, how they bear me up—how swiftly and yet how deftly. I have left mortality with all its pains. Oh, how rapid is my flight! Just now I passed the morning star. Far behind me, now, the planets shine! Oh, how swiftly do I fly and how sweetly! Cherubs! What sweet flight is yours and what kind arms are these I lean upon! And on my way you kiss me with the kisses of love and affection. You call me brother. Cherubs—am I your brother? I, who just now was captive in a tenement of clay—am I your brother? "Yes!" they say. Oh, listen! I hear music strangely harmonious! What sweet sounds come to my ears! I am nearing Paradise. 'Tis even so. Do not spirits approach with songs of joy? "Yes!" they say. And before they can answer, behold they come—a glorious convoy! I catch a sight of them as they are holding a great review at the gates of Paradise. And ah, there is the golden gate. I enter in. And I see my blessed Lord! I can tell you no more. All else were things unlawful for flesh to utter. My Lord! I am with You—plunged into You—lost in You just as a drop is swallowed in the ocean—as one single tint is lost in the glorious rainbow! Am I lost in You, glorious Jesus? And is my bliss consummated? Is the wedding day come at last? Have I really put on the marriage garments? And am I Yours? Yes! I am! There is nothing else now for me. In vain your harps, you angels! In vain all else! Leave me for a little while. I will know your heaven, by-and-by. Give me some years, yes give me some *ages* to lean here on this sweet bosom of my Lord! Give me half an eternity and let me bask myself in the sunshine of that one smile. Yes—give me this! Did You speak, Jesus? "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love, and now you are Mine! You are with Me." Is not this heaven? I want nothing else! I tell you once again, you blessed spirits, I will see you, by-and-by; but with my Lord I will now take my feast of loves. Oh, Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! YOU are heaven! I need nothing else! I am lost in YOU!

Beloved, is not this to go to "the grave in full age, like as a shock of corn," fully ripe? The sooner the day shall come, the more we shall rejoice. Oh, tardy wheels of time! Speed on your flight. Oh, angels, from where do you come with haggard wings? Oh, fly through the ether and outstrip the lightning's flash! Why may I not die? Why do I tarry here? Impatient heart, be quiet a little while. You are not yet fit for heaven; otherwise you would not be here. You have not done your work; other-

wise you would have your rest. Toil on a little longer. There is rest enough in the grave, you shall have it there. On! On!

"With my scrip on my back, and my staff in my hand,
I'll march on in haste thro' an enemy's land.
Though the way may be rough, it cannot be long.
So I'll smooth it with hope, and I'll cheer it with song."

My dear friends, you who are not converted, I have no time to say anything to you this morning. I wish I had, and I pray that all I have said may be yours. Poor hearts, I am sorry I cannot tell you this is yours right now. I would if I could, preach to every one of you and say that you all shall be in heaven. But God knows there are some of you that are on the road to hell—and do not suppose you will enter heaven if you go hell's road! Nobody would expect, if he proceeded to the north, to arrive at the south! No, God must change your heart. By simple trust in Jesus, if you give yourself up to His mercy, even though the vilest of the vile, you shall sing before His face! And I think, poor sinner, you will say to me as a poor woman did last Wednesday, after I had been preaching—when I believe everybody had been crying—from the least to the greatest, and even the preacher in the pulpit. As I went down, I said to one, "Are you chaff or wheat?" And she said, "Ah, I trembled tonight, sir." I said to another, "Well, sister, I hope we shall be in Paradise soon." And she replied, "*You* may, sir." And I came to another and said, "Well, do you think you will be gathered with the wheat?" And she answered, "One thing I can say—if God ever lets *me* get into heaven I will praise Him with all my might. I will sing myself away, and shall never think I can sing loud enough." It reminded me of what an old disciple once said—"If the Lord Jesus does but save me, He shall never hear the last of it." Let us praise God, then, eternally—

"While life, or thought, or being lasts,
Or immortality endures!"

Now may the Three-in-One God dismiss you with His blessing.

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REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE
NO. 44

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 23, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Then has God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."
Acts 11:18.

ONE of the greatest obstacles which the Christian religion ever overcame was the inveterate prejudice which possessed the minds of its earliest followers. The Jewish believers, the 12 apostles and those whom Jesus Christ had called from the dispersed of Israel were totally attached to the idea that salvation was of the Jews. They believed that none but the disciples of Abraham, or, at any rate, the circumcised ones, could be saved. They could not bring themselves to the thought that Jesus had come to be the Savior of all nations, and that in Him should all the people of the earth be blessed. It was with difficulty they could allow the supposition; it was so opposite to all their Jewish education, that we find them summoning Peter before a council of Christians and saying to him, "You went in to men uncircumcised and did eat with them." Nor could Peter exonerate himself until he had rehearsed the matter fully and said that God had appeared unto him in a vision, declaring, "What God has cleansed, that call not you common," and that the Lord had bid him preach the gospel to Cornelius and his household inasmuch as they were believers. After this, the power of grace was so mighty that these Jews could no longer withstand it—and in the teeth of all their previous education, they at once assumed the broad principle of Christianity and glorified God, saying, "Then has God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." Let us bless God that we are now free from the chains of Judaism, and that we are not under those of a Gentilism which has, in its turn, excluded the Jew. Let us bless God that we live so near the blessed time that is coming when Jew and Gentile, bond and free, shall feel themselves one in Jesus Christ, our Head! I am not, now, however, about to enlarge upon this—my subject this morning is "Repentance unto life." May God give me grace so to speak to you that His word may be as a sharp sword, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow."

By "Repentance unto life," I think we are to understand *that* repentance which is accompanied by spiritual life in the soul, and ensures

eternal life to everyone who possesses it. "Repentance unto life," I say, brings with it spiritual life, or rather, is the first consequence thereof. There are repentances which are not signs of spiritual life, but of natural life; they are only effected by the power of the conscience, and the voice of nature speaking in men; but the repentance here spoken of is produced by the Author of life—and when it comes, it begets such life in the soul that he who was "dead in trespasses and sins," is quickened together with Christ; he who had no spiritual susceptibilities, now "receives with meekness the engrafted word"; he who slumbered in the very center of corruption, receives power to become one of the sons of God and to be near His throne! This I think is, "repentance unto life"—that which gives life unto a dead spirit. I have also said this repentance ensures eternal life, for there are repentances of which you hear men speak which do not secure the salvation of the soul. Some preachers will affirm that men may repent and may believe, and yet may fall away and perish. We will not consume our time by stopping to expose their error this morning; we have often considered it before, and have refuted all that they could say in defense of their dogma! Let us think of an infinitely better repentance. The repentance of our text is not their repentance, but it is a "repentance unto life." It is a repentance which is a true sign of eternal salvation in Christ; a repentance which preserves us through this temporary state in Jesus, and which when we are passed into eternity, gives us a bliss which cannot be destroyed. "Repentance unto life" is the act of salvation of the soul—the germ which contains all the essentials of salvation—which secures them to us and prepares us for them!

We are, this morning, to give a very careful and prayerful attention to the "repentance" which is "unto life." First, I shall devote a few minutes to the consideration of *false repentance;* secondly, I shall consider *the signs that mark true repentance;* and after that, I shall extol the *divine beneficence* of which it is written, "Then has God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

I. First, then, we will consider certain FALSE REPENTANCES. I will begin with this remark—*that trembling beneath the sound of the gospel is not "repentance."* There are many men who, when they hear a faithful gospel sermon, are exceedingly stirred and moved by it. By a certain power which accompanies the Word, God testifies that it is His own Word, and He causes those who hear it involuntarily to tremble. I have seen some men, while the truths of Scripture have been sounded from this pulpit, whose knees have knocked together, whose eyes have flowed with tears as if they had been fountains of water! I have witnessed the deep dejection of their spirit, when—as some of them have told me—they

have been shaken until they knew not how to abide the sound of the voice, for it seemed like the terrible trumpet of Sinai thundering out their destruction! Well, my hearers, you may be very much disturbed under the preaching of the gospel, and yet you shall not have that "repentance unto life"! You may know what it is to be very seriously, and very solemnly affected when you go to God's house, and yet you may be hardened sinners. Let me confirm the remark by an example—Paul stood before Felix with the chains upon his hands—and as he preached of "righteousness, temperance, and of judgment to come," it is written, "Felix trembled." And procrastinating Felix is in hell with the rest of those who have said, "Go your way for this time. When I have a more convenient season I will call for you." There are many of you who cannot attend the house of God without being alarmed; you know what it is to stand aghast at the thought that God will punish you; you may often have been moved to sincere emotion under God's minister. But let me tell you, you may be, after all, a castaway because you have not repented of your sins, and neither have you turned to God!

Further still, it is quite possible that you may not only tremble before God's Word, but you may become a sort of amiable Agrippa, and be *"almost persuaded" to turn to Jesus Christ, and yet have no "repentance."* You may go further and even desire the gospel! You may say—"Oh, this gospel is such a good thing I wish I had it! It ensures so much happiness here, and so much joy hereafter; I wish I might call it mine." Oh, it is good, thus, to hear this voice of God! And you may sit and while some powerful text is being well-handled, you may say, "I think it is true!" But it must enter the *heart* before you can repent! You may even go upon your knees in prayer, and you may ask with terrified lips that this may be blessed to your soul; but after all that you may still be no child of God. You may say as Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuaded me to be a Christian"; yet, like Agrippa, you may never proceed beyond the "almost." He was "almost persuaded to be a Christian," but not, "altogether." Now, how many of you here have been "almost persuaded," and yet you are not really in the way of eternal life? How often has conviction brought you on your knees, and you have "almost" repented—but you have remained there without actually repenting? See that corpse? It is lately dead. It has scarcely acquired the ghastliness of death; the color is still life-like; its hands are still warm; you may fancy it is alive, and it seems almost to breathe. Everything is there—the worm has scarcely touched it—dissolution has scarcely approached. There is no offensive smell—yet life is gone—life is not there! So it is with you—you are *almost* alive. You have *almost* every external organ of religion which the Chris-

tian has, but you have not life! You may have repentance, but not sincere repentance. O hypocrite! I warn you this morning—you may not only tremble, but feel a complacency towards the Word of God—and yet after all, not have "repentance unto life." You may sink down into the pit of hell that is bottomless, and hear it said, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Yet, again, it is possible for men to progress even further than this, and positively to *humble themselves under the hand of God, and still be total strangers to repentance!* Their goodness is not like the morning cloud and the early dew that passes away, but when the sermon is heard they go home and commence what they conceive to be the work of repentance. They renounce certain vices and follies; they clothe themselves in sackcloth; their tears flow very freely on account of what they have done; they weep before God! And yet with all that, their repentance is but a temporary repentance, and they go back to their sins again! Do you deny that such a penitence can exist? Let me tell you of a case. A certain man named Ahab coveted the vineyard of his neighbor, Naboth, who would not sell it for a price nor make an exchange. He consulted with his wife, Jezebel, who contrived to put Naboth to death, and thus secure the vineyard for the king. After Naboth was put to death, and Ahab had taken possession of the vineyard, the servant of the Lord met Ahab, and said to him, "Have you killed, and also taken possession? Thus says the Lord, in the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall the dogs lick your blood, even yours! Behold, I will bring evil upon you, and will take away your prosperity." We read that Ahab went away and humbled himself, and the Lord said, "Because Ahab humbles himself before Me, I will not bring evil in his days." He had granted him some kind of mercy, but we read in the very next chapter that Ahab rebelled, and in a battle in Ramoth-Gilead, according to the servant of the Lord, he was slain there so that "the dogs licked his blood" in the very vineyard of Naboth! You, too, I tell you, may humble yourselves before God for a time, and yet remain the slaves of your transgressions! You are afraid of damnation, but you are not afraid of sinning; you are afraid of hell—but you are not afraid of your iniquities! You are afraid of being cast into the pit of hell, but not afraid to harden your hearts against His commands! Is it not true, O sinner that you are trembling at hell? It is not the soul's state that troubles you, but hell! If hell were extinguished, your repentance would be extinguished! If the terrors awaiting you were withdrawn, you would sin with a higher hand than before—and your soul would be hardened and would rebel against its Sovereign. Be not deceived, my brethren! Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith. Ask yourselves if

you have that which is "repentance unto life," for you may humble yourselves for a time, and yet never repent before God!

Beyond this many advance, and yet fall short of grace. *It is possible that you may confess your sins, and yet may not repent*. You may approach God and tell Him you are indeed a wretch; you may enumerate a long list of your transgressions, and of the sins that you have committed without a sense of the heinousness of your guilt, without a spark of real hatred of your deeds. You may confess and acknowledge your transgressions, and yet have no abhorrence of sin. And if you do not, in the strength of God, resist sin—if you do not turn from it—this fancied repentance shall be but the gilding which displays the paint which decorates! You may even, I say, confess your faults, and yet have not repentance.

Once more, and then I have gone to the farthest thought I have to give on this point. You *may do some work meet for repentance, and yet you may be impenitent!* Let me give you a proof of this in a fact authenticated by inspiration.

Judas betrayed his Master. And after having done so, an overwhelming sense of the enormous evil he had committed seized upon him. His guilt buried all hope of repentance—and in the misery of desperation, not the grief of true regret—he confessed his sin to the high priests, crying, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us, see you to that." Whereupon he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple to show that he could not bear to carry the price of guilt upon him, and left them there. He went out, and was he saved? No. "He went out and hanged himself." And even then the vengeance of God followed him—for when he had hanged himself, he fell from the height where he was suspended and was dashed to pieces. He was lost, and his soul perished. Yet see what this man did. He had sinned; he confessed his wrong; he returned the silver. Still, after all that, he was a castaway. Does not this make us tremble? You see how possible it is to be the shape of the Christian so nearly, that wisdom itself, if it is only mortal, may be deceived!

II. Now, having thus warned you that there are many false kinds of repentance, I propose to occupy a short time by some remarks on TRUE REPENTANCE and the signs whereby we may discern whether we have that "repentance" which is "unto life."

First of all let me correct one or two mistakes which those who are coming to Jesus Christ very often make. One is they frequently think they must have deep, horrible and awful manifestations of the terrors of law and of hell before they can be said to repent. How many have I con-

versed with who have said to me what I can only translate into English to you, this morning, something in this way—"I do not repent enough. I do not feel myself enough of a sinner. I have not been so gross and wicked a transgressor as many—I almost wish I had. Not because I love sin, but because then I think I would have deeper convictions of my guilt and feel more sure that I had truly come to Jesus Christ." Now it is a great mistake to imagine that these terrible and horrible thoughts of a coming judgment have *anything* to do with the validity of "repentance." They are very often not the gift of God at all but the insinuations of the devil! And even where the law works and produces these thoughts, you must not regard them as being part and parcel of "repentance." They do not enter into the essence of repentance. "Repentance" is a hatred of sin! It is a turning from sin and a determination, in the strength of God, to forsake it. "Repentance" is a hatred of sin and a forsaking of it. It is possible for a man to repent without any terrific display of the terrors of the law. He may repent without having heard the trumpet sounds of Sinai—without having heard more than a distant rumble of its thunder! A man may repent entirely through the power of the voice of mercy. God opens some hearts to faith as in the case of Lydia. Others He assaults with the sledge hammer of the wrath to come! Some He opens with the picklock of grace and some with the crowbar of the law. There may be different ways of getting there, but the question is, has he got there? Is he there? It often happens that the Lord is not in the tempest or in the earthquake but in the "still small voice."

There is another mistake many poor people make when they are thinking about salvation, and that is that they cannot repent enough. They imagine that were they to repent up to a certain degree, they would be saved. "Oh, sir," some of you will say, "I have not penitence enough!" beloved, let me tell you that there is not any eminent degree of "repentance" which is necessary to salvation! You know there are degrees of faith and yet the least faith saves. So there are degrees of repentance and the least repentance will save the soul if it is sincere! The Bible says, "He who believes shall be saved." And when it says that, it includes the very smallest degree of faith. So when it says, "Repent and be saved," it includes the man or woman who has the lowest degree of real repentance. Repentance, moreover, is never perfect in any man in this mortal state. We never get perfect faith so as to be entirely free from doubting. And we never get repentance which is free from some hardness of heart. The most sincere penitent that you know will feel himself to be partially impenitent. Repentance is also a continual lifelong act. It will continually grow. I believe a Christian on his deathbed will more bitterly repent than

he ever did before. It is a thing to be done all your lifelong. Sinning and repenting—sinning and repenting make up a Christian's life! Repenting and believing in Jesus—repenting and believing in Jesus make up the consummation of his happiness! You must not expect that you will be perfect in "repentance" before you are saved. No Christian can be perfect. "Repentance" is a grace. Some people preach it as a *condition* of salvation. Condition of nonsense! There are no conditions of salvation! God *gives* the salvation, Himself! And He only gives it to those to whom He will. He says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." If, then, God has given you the least repentance—if it is sincere repentance—praise Him for it and expect that repentance will grow deeper and deeper as you go further on! Then this remark, I think, ought to be applied to all Christians—Christian men and women, you feel that you have not deep enough repentance—you feel that you have not large enough faith. What are you to do? Ask for an increase of faith and it will grow! So with repentance! Have you ever tried to get deep repentance? My friends, if you have failed therein, still trust in Jesus and try every day to get a penitential spirit. Do not expect—I say again—to have perfect repentance at first—*sincere* penitence you must have—and then under divine grace you will go on from strength to strength, until at last you shall hate and abhor sin as a serpent or a viper! And then shall you be near, very near, the perfection of repentance! These few thoughts, then, in opening the subject. And now you say, what are the signs of true "repentance" in the sight of God?

First, I tell you, there is always *sorrow* with it. No man ever repents of sin without having some kind of sorrow with it. More or less intense, it may be according to the way in which God calls him, and his previous manner of life—but there must be some sorrow. We do not care when it comes, but at some time or other it must come, or it is not the repentance of the Christian! I knew a man once who professed that he had repented, and he certainly was a changed character so far as the external was concerned; but I never could see that he had any real sorrow for sin. Neither when he professed to believe in Jesus, did I ever see any marks of penitence in him. I considered in that man it was a kind of ecstatic jump into grace, and I found out afterwards he had just as ecstatic a jump into guilt again! He was not a sheep of God, for he had not been washed in penitence—for all God's people have to be washed there when converted from their sins. No man can come to Christ and know His pardon without feeling that sin is a hateful thing—for it put Jesus to death! You who have tearless eyes, unbended knees, unbroken hearts—how can

you think you are saved? The gospel promised salvation only to those who really repent.

Lest, however, I should hurt some of you and make you feel what I do not intend, let me remark that I do not mean to say that you must shed actual tears. Some men are so hard in constitution that they could not shed a tear. I have known some who have been able to sigh and to groan, but tears would not come. Well, I say that though the tear often affords evidence of penitence, you may have "repentance unto life" without it. What I would have you understand is there must be some real *sorrow*. If the prayer may not be vocal, it must be secret. There must be a groan if there is no word. There must be a sigh if there is no tear, to show the repentance, even though it is but small.

There must be in this repentance, I think, not only sorrow, but there must be practice—practical repentance—

"'Tis not enough to say we're sorry, and repent
And then go on from day to day just as we always went."

Many people are very sorry and very penitent for their past sins. Hear them talk. "Oh," they say, "I deeply regret that I should ever have been a drunk. And I sincerely bemoan that I should have fallen into that sin. I deeply lament that I should have done so." Then they go straight home and when one o'clock on Sunday comes, you will find them at it again! And yet such people say they have repented! Do you believe them, when they say they are sinners, but do not love sin? They may not love it for the time. But can they be sincerely penitent and then go and transgress, again, immediately in the same way as they did before? How can we believe you if you transgress again and again and do not forsake your sin? We know a tree by its fruit and you who are penitent will bring forth works of repentance! I have often thought it was a very beautiful instance, showing the power of penitence which a pious minister once related. He had been preaching on penitence and had, in the course of his sermon, he spoke of the sin of stealing. On his way home a laborer came alongside of him, and the minister observed that he had something under his smock-frock. He told him he need not accompany him farther, but the man persisted. At last he said, "I have a spade under my arm which I stole up at that farm. I heard you preaching about the sin of stealing, and I must go and take it back." That was sincere penitence which caused him to go back and replace the stolen article. It was like those South Sea Islanders of whom we read who stole the missionaries' articles of apparel, and furniture, and everything out of their houses, but when they were savingly converted, they brought them all back! But many of you say you repent, yet nothing comes of it. It is not worth the

snap of a finger! People who have committed a robbery, or have kept a gambling house do not sincerely repent when they are very careful that all the proceeds shall be laid out to their hearts' best comfort! True "repentance" will yield works meet for repentance. It will be practical repentance.

Yet farther, you may know whether your repentance is practical by this test. Does it last, or does it not? Many of your repentances are like the hectic flush upon the cheek of the consumptive person which is no sign of health. Many a time have I seen a young man in a flow of newly acquired but unsound godliness and he has thought he was about to repent of his sins. For some hours such a one was deeply penitent before God—and for weeks he relinquishes his follies. He attends the house of prayer and converses as a child of God. But back he goes to his sins as the dog returns to his vomit! The evil spirit has gone "back to his house and has taken with him seven others more wicked than himself. And the last state of that man is worse than the first." How long has your penitence lasted? Did it continue for months? Or did it come upon you and go away suddenly? You said, "I will join the church—I will do this, that, and the other, for God's cause." Are your works lasting? Do you believe your repentance will last 6 months? Will it continue for 12 months? Will it last until you are wrapped in your winding-sheet?

Yet again, I must ask you one question more. Do you think you'd repent of your sins if no punishment were placed before you? Or do you repent because you know you shall be punished forever if you remain in your sins? Suppose I tell you there is no hell at all—that, if you choose, you may swear—and if you will, you may live without God? Suppose there were no reward for virtue and no punishment for sin—which would you choose? Can you honestly say this morning, "I think, I know, by the grace of God, I would choose righteousness if there were no reward for it, if there were nothing to be gained by righteousness, and nothing to be lost by sin"? Every sinner hates his sin when he comes near to the mouth of hell. Every murderer hates his crime when he comes to the gallows. I never found a child hate its fault so much as when it was going to be punished for it. If you had no cause to dread the pit of hell—if you knew that you might give up your life to sin and that you might do so with impunity—would you still feel that you hated sin and that you could not, would not, commit sin except through the infirmity of the flesh? Would you still desire holiness? Would you still desire to live like Christ? If so—if you can say this in *sincerity*—if you thus turn to God and hate your sin with an everlasting hatred, you need not fear but that you have a "repentance" which is "unto life."

III. Now comes the concluding and third point, and that THE BLESSED BENEFICENCE OF GOD in granting to men "repentance unto life." "Repentance," my dear friends, is the GIFT of God! It is one of those spiritual favors which ensure eternal life. It is the marvel of divine mercy that it not only provides the way of salvation, that it not only invites men to receive grace, but that it *positively makes men willing to be saved*. God punished His Son, Jesus Christ, for our sins and therein He provided salvation for all His lost children! He sends His minister. The minister bids men repent, and believe and he labors to bring them to God. They will not listen to the call, and they despise the minister; but then another messenger is sent, a heavenly ambassador who cannot fail. He summons men to repent and turn to God. Their thoughts are a little wayward, but after He, the divine Spirit, pleads with them, they forget what manner of men they were, and they repent and turn! Now, what would we do if we had been treated as God were? If we had made a supper or a feast and sent out messengers to invite the guests to come, what would we do? Do you think we would take the trouble to go round and visit them all and get them to come? And when they sat down and said they could not eat, would we open their mouths? If they still declared they could not eat, would we still make them eat? Ah, beloved, I am inclined to think you would not do so! If you had signed the letters of invitation and the invited would not come to your feast, would you not say, "You shall not have it"? But what does God do? He says, "Now I will make a feast. I will invite the people and if they do not come in, My ministers shall go out and fetch them in bodily. I will say to My servants, "Go you out into the highways and hedges and *compel* them to come in, that they may partake of the feast I have prepared.'" Is it not a stupendous act of divine mercy that He actually *makes them willing?* He does not do it by force, but uses a sweet spiritual persuasion. They are first as unwilling to be saved as they can be. "But," says God, "that is nothing, I have power to make you turn to Me, and I will." The Holy Spirit then brings home the Word of God to the consciences of His children in so blessed a manner that they can no longer refuse to love Jesus! Mark you, not by any force against the will, but by a sweet spiritual influence *changing* the will. O, you lost and ruined sinners, stand here and admire my Master's mercy! He sets not only a feast of good things before men, but He induces them to come and partake of them! He compels them to continue feasting until He carries them to the everlasting, eternal mansion! And as He bears them up, He says to each one, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore, by My loving-kindness I have drawn you. Now, do you love Me?" "Oh, Lord," they cry, "Your grace in bringing us here proves that You do love us, for we

were unwilling to go. You said, you shall go—we said we would not go, but You have made us go. And now, Lord, we bless You, and love You for that force. It was sweet constraint." I was a struggling captive, but I am now made willing—

"Oh, sovereign grace, my heart subdue!
I would be led in triumph too—
A willing captive to my Lord
To sing the honors of His Word."

Well now, what do you say? Some of you will say, "Sir, I have been trying to repent for a long time. In pains and afflictions I have been praying and trying to believe, and doing all I can." I will tell you another thing—you will try a long time before you will be able to do it. That is not the way to get it. I heard of two gentlemen traveling. One of them said to the other, "I do not know how it is, but you always seem to remember your wife and family and all that is doing at home. And you seem as if you connected all things around you with them. But I try to bring mine to my recollection constantly, and yet I never can." "No," said the other, "that is the very reason—because you *try*. If you could connect them with every little circumstance you meet, you would easily remember them. I think at such-and-such a time—now they are rising. At another time—now they are at prayers; at such-and-such a time—now they are having their breakfast. In this way I have them still before me." I think the same thing happens with regard to "repentance." If a man says, "I want to believe," and tries by some mechanical means to work himself into repentance, it is an absurdity and he will never accomplish it! The way for him to repent is by God's grace to believe—to believe and think on Jesus. If he pictures to himself the wounded bleeding side, the crown of thorns, the tears of anguish—if he takes a vision of all that Christ suffered, I will be bound for it—he will turn to Him in repentance! I would stake what reputation I may have in spiritual things upon this—that a man cannot, under God's Holy Spirit, contemplate the cross of Christ without a broken heart! If it is not so, my heart is different from anyone else's. I have never known a man who has thought upon, and taken a view of the cross who has not found that it begat "repentance," and begat faith! We look at Jesus Christ if we would be saved, and we then say, "Amazing sacrifice! That Jesus thus died to save sinners." If you want faith, remember HE gives it. If you want repentance, HE gives it! If you want everlasting life, HE gives it liberally. He can force you to feel your great sin and cause you to repent by the sight of Calvary's cross—and the sound of the greatest, deepest death shriek, "Eloi! Eloi! Lama Sabacthani?" "My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?"

That will beget "repentance." It will make you weep and say, "Alas, and did my Savior bleed? And did my Sovereign die for *me?"* Then beloved, if you would have "repentance," my best advice to you is—look to Jesus! And may the blessed Giver of all "repentance unto salvation" guard you from the false repentances which I have described and give you that "repentance" which exists unto life—

"Repent! The voice celestial cries.
Nor longer dare delay.
The wretch that scorns the mandate, dies,
And meets a fiery day!
No more the sovereign eye of God
Overlooks the crimes of men;
His heralds are dispatched abroad
To warn the world of sin!
The summons reach thro' all the earth
Let earth attend and fear!
Listen, you men of royal birth,
And let your vassals hear!
Together in His presence bow,
And all your guilt confess—
Embrace the blessed Savior now,
Nor trifle with His grace.
Bow, before the awful trumpet sounds,
And calls you to His bar—
For mercy knows the appointed bound
And turns to vengeance there."

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CONVERSION
NO. 45

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 7, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one converts him, let him know that he who converts the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
James 5:19, 20.

THE true believer is always pleased to hear of anything which concerns the salvation of his own soul. He rejoices to hear of the covenant plan drawn up for him from all eternity, of the great fulfillment on the cross at Calvary, of all the stipulations of the Savior, of the application of them by the Holy Spirit, of the security which the believer has in the person of Christ, and of those gifts and graces which accompany salvation to all those who are heirs thereof. But I feel certain that deeply pleased as we are when we hear of things touching our own salvation and deliverance from hell, we, as preachers of God and as new creatures in Christ, being made like unto Him, have true benevolence of spirit, and therefore, are always delighted when we hear, speak, or think concerning the salvation of others! Next to our own salvation, I am sure as Christians we shall always prize the salvation of other people. We shall always desire that what has been so sweet to our own taste may also be tasted by others. And what has been of so inestimably precious a value to our own souls may also become the property of all those whom God may please to call unto everlasting life. I am sure, beloved, now that I am about to preach concerning the conversion of the ungodly, you will take as deep an interest in it as if it were something that immediately concerned your own souls! After all, such were some of you once! You were unconverted and ungodly! And had not God taken thought for you and set His people to strive for your souls, where had you been? Seek then, to exercise that charity and benevolence towards others which God and God's people first exercised towards you.

Our text has in it, first of all, *a principle involved*—that of *instrumentality*. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one converts him, let him know that he who converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death." Secondly, here is *a general fact stated*—"He who converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." And thirdly, there is *a particular application of this fact made*. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth and one converts him"—that is the same principle as when a sinner is converted "from the error of his way."

I. First then, here is *a great principle involved*—a very important one—that of INSTRUMENTALITY. God has been pleased in His inscrutable wisdom and intelligence to work the conversion of others by instrumentality. True, He does not in all cases do so, but it is His general way. Instrumentality is the plan of the universe. In the new creation it is almost always God's invariable rule to convert by means of instruments. Now we will make one or two brief remarks upon this first principle.

First then, we say that *instrumentality is not necessary with God*. God can, if He pleases, convert souls without any instruments whatever. The mighty Maker who chooses to use the sword sometimes can, if He pleases, slay without it. He who uses the workman, the trowel, and the hammer can, if He so sees fit, build the house in a moment! And from the foundation-stone even to the topstone thereof can complete it by the Words of His own mouth. We never hear of any instrumentality used in the conversion of Abraham; he lived in a land in the midst of idolaters. He was called from Ur of the Chaldees, and from there God called him and brought him to Canaan by an immediate voice—doubtless from above—by God's own agency without the employment of any prophet, for we read of none who could, as far as we can see, have preached to Abraham and taught him the truth. Then in modern times we have a mighty instance of the power of God in converting without human might. Saul, on his journey towards Damascus—upon his horse, fiery and full of fury against the children of God—is hastening to hail men and women, and cast them into prison, to bring them bound unto Jerusalem. But suddenly a voice is heard from heaven, "Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute Me?" And Saul was a new man! No minister was his spiritual parent; no book could claim him as its convert; n human voice, but the immediate utterance of Jesus Christ, Himself—at once, then and there, and upon the spot—brought Saul to know the truth! Moreover there are some men who never seem to need conversion at all, for we have one instance in Scripture of John the Baptist, of whom it is said, "He was filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." And I do not know but what there are some who very early in life have a change of heart. It is quite certain that all *infants*, (who doubtless being, each of them elect, do ascend to heaven), undergo a change of heart without instrumentality. And so there may be some concerning whom it may be written that though they were born in sin, and shaped in iniquity, yet they were so early taught to know the Lord, so soon brought to His name, that it must have been almost without instrumentality at all! God can, if He pleases, cast the instrument aside! The mighty Maker of the world who used no angels to beat out the great mass of nature and fashion it into a round globe; He who without hammer or anvil fashioned this glorious world, can if He pleases, speak, and it is done; command, and it shall stand fast! He needs not instruments, though He uses them.

Secondly, we make another remark, which is that *instrumentality is very honorable to God, and not dishonorable*. One would think, perhaps, at first sight that it would reflect more glory to God if He effected all con-

versions, Himself, without the use of men. But that is a great mistake. It is as honorable to God to convert by means of Christians and others, as it would be if He should effect it alone. Suppose a workman has power and skill with his hands alone, to fashion a certain article? But you put into his hands the worst tools you can find! You know he can do it well with his hands but these tools are so badly made that they will be the greatest impediment you could lay in his way. Well now, I say if a man with these bad instruments, or these poor tools—things without edges, that are broken, that are weak and frail—is able to make some beautiful fabric, he has more credit from the use of those tools than he would have had if he had done it simply with his hands! The tools, so far from being an advantage, were a disadvantage to him; so far from being a help, are of my supposition, even a detriment to him in his work! And so with regard to human instrumentality. So far from being any assistance to God, we are all hindrances to Him. What is a minister? He is made by God a means of salvation, but it is an amazing thing that anyone so faulty, so imperfect, so little skilled, should yet be blessed of God to bring forth children for the Lord Jesus! It seems as amazing as if a man could fashion rain from fire, or if he could fabricate some precious alabaster vase out of the refuse of the dunghill! God in His mercy does more than make Christians without means—He takes bad means to make good men, and so He even reflects credit on Himself because His instruments are, all of them, such poor things! They are all such earthen vessels that they do not even set out the glory of the gold which they hold—like the foil that sets forth the jewel, or like the dark spot in the painting that makes the light more brilliant! And yet the dark spot and the foil are not, in themselves, costly or valuable. So God uses instruments to set forth His own glory, and to exalt Himself.

This brings us to the other remark, that *usually God does employ instruments*. Perhaps in one case out of a thousand men are converted by the immediate agency of God—so indeed are all, in one sense. But usually, in 99 cases out of a hundred, God is pleased to use the instrumentality of His ministering servants of His Word—of Christian men or some other means to bring us to the Savior. I have heard of some—I remember them, now—who were called like Saul, at once from heaven. We can remember the history of the brother who, in the darkness of the night, was called to know the Savior by what he believed to be a vision from heaven or some effect on his imagination. On one side he saw a black tablet of his guilt, and his soul was delighted to see Christ cast a white tablet over it. And he thought he heard a voice that said, “I am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake and will not remember your sins.” He was a man converted almost without any instrumentality. But you do not meet with such a case often. Most persons have been convinced by the pious conversation of sisters, by the holy example of mothers, by the minister, by the Sunday school teacher, or by the reading of tracts or Scripture. Let us not, therefore, believe that God will often work without instruments! Let us not sit down silently and say, “God will do His own

work." It is quite true He will; but then He does His work by using His children as instruments. He does not say to the Christian when he is converted, "Sit down. I have nothing for you to do but I will do all Myself, and have all the glory." No. He says, "You are a poor weak instrument. You can do nothing, but lo, I will strengthen you and I will make you thrash the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff—and so shall I get more honor through your having done it; than if I would, had My own strong arm flattened the mountains, and broken them in pieces!"

Now another thought, and that is—*If God sees fit to make use of any of us for the conversion of others, we must not therefore be too sure that we are converted ourselves*. It is a most solemn thought that God makes use of ungodly men as instruments for the conversion of sinners! And it is strange that some most terrible acts of wickedness have been the means of the conversion of men. When Charles II ordered the Book of Sports to be read in churches and after the service the clergyman was required to read to all the people, to spend the afternoon in what are called harmless diversions, and games that I will not mention here—even that was made the means of conversion! For one man said within himself, "I have always disported myself thus on the Sabbath, but now to hear this read in church! How wicked we must have become! How the whole land must be corrupt." It led him to think of his own corruption, and brought him to the Savior! There have been words proceeding, I had almost said from devils, which have been the means of conversion. Grace is not spoiled by the rotten wooden spout it runs through. God did once speak by an *ass* to Balaam, but that did not spoil His words. So He speaks, not simply by an ass, which He often does, but by something worse than that! He can fill the mouths of ravens with food for an Elijah, and yet the raven is still a raven. We must not suppose because God has made us useful, that we are therefore converted!

But then another thing. *If God in His mercy does not make us useful to the conversion of sinners, we are not therefore to say we are sure we are not the children of God*. I believe there are some ministers who have had the painful labor of toiling from year to year without seeing a single soul regenerated. Yet those men have been faithful to their charge, and have well discharged their ministry. I do not say that such cases often occur, but I believe they have occurred sometimes. Yet, mark you, the end of their ministry has been answered after all—for what is the end of the gospel ministry? Some will say it is to convert sinners; that is a collateral end. Others will say it is to convert the saints; that is true, but the proper answer to give is—it is to glorify God! And God is glorified even in the *damnation* of sinners! If I testify to them the truth of God and they reject His gospel—if I faithfully preach His truth and they scorn it—my ministry is not therefore void! It has not returned to God void, for even in the punishment of those rebels, He will be glorified! Even in their destruction, He will get Himself honor, and if He cannot get praise from their songs, He will at last get honor from their condemnation and overthrow when He

shall cast them into the fire forever! The true motive for which we should always labor is the glory of God in the conversion of souls, and the building up of God's people. But let us never lose sight of the great end. Let God be glorified! And He will be, if we preach His truth faithfully and honestly. Therefore, while we should seek for souls, if God denies them to us, let us not say, "I will not have other mercies that He has given." Rather let us comfort ourselves with the thought that though they are not saved, though Israel is not gathered in, God will glorify and honor us at last!

One thought more upon this subject—*God, by using us as instruments, confers upon us the highest honor which men can receive*. O beloved, I dare not dilate upon this! It should make our hearts burn at the thought of it. It makes us feel thrice honored that God should use us to convert souls—and it is only the grace of God which teaches us, on the other hand, that it is grace, and grace alone which makes us useful—which can keep us humble under the thought that we are bringing souls to the Savior! It is a work which he who has once entered, if God has blessed him, cannot renounce! He will be impatient; he will long to win more souls to Jesus; he will think that labor is but ease, so that by any means he may save some and bring men to Jesus. Glory and honor, praise and power be unto God that He thus honors His people! But when He exalts us most, we will still conclude with, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be all the glory forever and ever!"

II. Secondly, we come to the GENERAL FACT. "He who converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." The choicest happiness which mortal breast can know is the happiness of benevolence—of doing good to our fellow creatures. To save a body from death is that which gives us almost heaven on earth! Some men can boast that they have sent so many souls to hell—that they have hurled many of their fellows out of the world. We meet, now and then, a soldier who can glory that in battle he struck down so many enemy—that his swift and cruel sword reached the heart of so many of his enemies. But I don't count that glory! If I thought I had been the means of the death of a single individual, I think I would scarcely rest at night, for the uneasy ghost of that murdered wretch would stare me in my eyes! I would remember I had slain him and perhaps, sent his soul, unshaven and unwashed, into the presence of his Maker. It seems amazing to me that men can be found to be soldiers—I say not if it is right or wrong—still, I wonder where they can find the men. I know not how, after a battle, they can wash their hands of blood, wipe their swords, and put them by—and then lie down to slumber and their dreams be undisturbed! I think the tears would fall hot and scalding on my cheeks at night, and the shrieks of the dying, and the groans of those approaching eternity would torture my ears! I know not how others can endure it! To me it would be the very portal of hell, if I could think I had been a destroyer of my fellow creatures.

But what bliss it is to be the instrument of saving bodies from death! Those monks on Mount St. Bernard, surely, must feel happiness when they rescue men from death. The dog comes to the door, and they know what it means. He has discovered some poor weary traveler who has lain down to sleep in the snow, and is dying from cold and exhaustion. Up rise the monks from their cheerful fire, intent to act the Good Samaritan to the lost one! At last they see him! They speak to him but he answers not; they try to discover if there is breath in his body, and they think he is dead; they take him up, give him remedies, and hastening to their hostel they lay him by the fire and warm and chafe him, looking into his face with kindly anxiety, as much as to say, "Poor creature! Are you dead?" When, at last, they perceive some heaving of the lungs, what joy is in the breast of those brothers, as they say, "His life is not extinct." I think if there could be happiness on earth, it would be the privilege to help to chafe one hand of that poor, almost dying man, and be the means of bringing him to life again! Or suppose another case. A house is in flames, and in it is a woman with her child who cannot by any means escape. In vain she attempts to come down stairs; the flames prevent her. She has lost all presence of mind, and knows not how to act. The strong man comes, and says, "Make way! Make way! I must save that woman!" And cooled by the genial streams of benevolence, he marches through the fire! Though scorched and almost stifled, he gropes his way. He ascends one staircase, then another, and though the stairs totter, he places the woman beneath his arm, takes the child on his shoulder and down he comes! Twice a giant, having more might than he ever possessed before, he has jeopardized his life, and perhaps an arm may be disabled, or a limb taken away, or a sense lost, or an irretrievable injury done to his body—yet he claps his hands, and says—"I have saved lives from death!" The crowd in the street hails him as a man who has been the deliverer of his fellow creatures, honoring him more than the monarch who had stormed a city, sacked a town, and murdered myriads!

But ah, brothers and sisters, the body which was saved from death today, may die tomorrow! Not so the soul that is saved from death—it is saved FOREVER! It is saved beyond the fear of destruction! And if there is joy in the breast of a benevolent man when he saves a body from death, how much more blessed must he be when he is made the means in the hands of God of saving "a soul from death, and hiding a multitude of sins." Suppose that by some *conversation* of yours, you are made the means of delivering a soul from death! My friends, you are apt to imagine that all conversions under God are done by the minister. You make a great mistake! There are many conversions effected by a very simple observation from the most humble individual. A single spoken word may be more the means of conversion than a whole sermon! There you sit before me. I thrust at you, but you are too far off. Some brother, however, addresses an observation to you—it is like a very stab with a short dagger in your heart! God often blesses a short pithy expression from a friend, more than a long discourse from a minister! There was once in a village

where there had been a revival in religion, a man who was a confirmed infidel. Notwithstanding all the efforts of the minister and many Christian people, he had resisted all attempts, and appeared to be more and more confirmed in his sin. At length the people held a prayer meeting especially to intercede for his soul. Afterwards God put it into the heart of one of the elders of the Church to spend a night in prayer on behalf of the poor infidel. In the morning the elder rose from his knees, saddled his horse, and rode down to the man's smithy. He meant to say a great deal to him, but he simply went up to him, took him by the hand, and all he could say was, "O sir! I am deeply concerned for your salvation! I am deeply concerned for your salvation! I have been wrestling with God all this night for your salvation!" He could say no more, his heart was too full. He then mounted on his horse and rode away. Down went the blacksmith's hammer, and he immediately went to see his wife. She said, "What is the matter with you?" "Matter enough," said the man, "I have been attacked with a new argument this time. There is elder B_____; He has been here this morning, and he said, 'I am concerned about your salvation.' Why now, if he is concerned about my salvation, it is a strange thing that *I* am not concerned about it." The man's heart was clean captured by that kind word from the elder. He took his own horse and rode to the elder's house, and when he arrived there, the elder was in his parlor, still in prayer; and they knelt down together. God gave him a contrite spirit and a broken heart, and brought that poor sinner to the feet of the Savior! There was "a soul saved from death, and a multitude of sins covered."

Again, you may be the means of conversion by a letter you may write. Many of you have not the power to speak or say much. But when you sit down alone in your chamber, you are able, with God's help, to write a letter to a dear friend of yours. Oh, I think that is a very sweet way to endeavor to be useful! I think I never felt so much earnestness after the souls of my fellow creatures as when I first loved the Savior's name. And though I could not preach, and never thought I would be able to testify to the multitude, I used to write texts on little scraps of paper and drop them anywhere, that some poor creatures might pick them up and receive them as messages of mercy to their souls. There is your brother. He is careless and hardened. Sister, sit down and write a letter to him! When he receives it, he will perhaps smile, but he will say, "Ah, well! It is Betsy's letter, after all!" And that will have some power. I knew a gentleman whose dear sister used to write to him often concerning his soul. "I used to," said he, "stand with my back up against a lamppost, with a cigar in my mouth, perhaps at two o'clock in the morning to read her letter. I always read them. And I have," he said, "wept floods of tears after reading my sister's letters. Though I still kept on the error of my ways, they always checked me—they always seemed like a hand pulling me away from sin. A voice crying out, 'Come back! Come back!'" And at last a letter from her, in conjunction with a solemn providence, was the means of breaking his heart and he sought salvation through his Savior!

Again, many have been converted by *the example of true Christians*. Many of you feel that you cannot write or preach—you think you can do nothing! Well, there is one thing you can do for your Master—you can *live* Christianity. I think there are more people who look at the new life in Christ written out in you than they will in the old life that is written in the Scriptures. An infidel will use arguments to disprove the Bible, if you set it before him—but, if you do to others as you would they should do to you. If you give of your bread to the poor and disperse to the needy, living like Jesus, speaking words of kindness and love. If you live honestly and uprightly in the world—he will say, "Well, I thought the Bible was all hypocrisy. But I cannot think so now, because there is Mr. So-and-So—look how he lives! I could believe my infidelity if it were not for him. The Bible certainly has an effect upon his life, and therefore I must believe it."

And then how many souls may be converted by what some men are privileged to *write and print!* There is *"Dr. Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion."* Though I decidedly object to some things in it, I wish that everybody had read that book, so many have been the conversions it has produced! I think it more honor to have written *"Watt's Psalms and Hymns,"* than *"Milton's Paradise Lost,"* and more glory to have written that book of old Wilcocks, *"A Drop of Honey,"* or the tract that God has used so much—*"The Sinner's friend"*—than all the books of Homer! I value books for the good they may do to men's souls. Much as I respect the genius of Pope, or Dryden, or Burns, give me the simple lines of Cowper that God has used in bringing souls to Him. Oh, to think that we may write and print books which shall reach poor sinners' hearts! The other day my soul was exceedingly gladdened by an invitation from a pious woman to go and see her. She told me she had been ten years on her bed and had not been able to stir from it. "Nine years," she said, "I was dark, blind, and unthinking. But my husband brought me one of your sermons. I read it, and God blessed it to the opening of my eyes; He converted my soul with it. And now, all glory to Him! I love His name! "Each Sabbath morning," she said, "I wait for your sermon. I live on it all the week as marrow and fatness to my spirit." "Ah," I thought, "here is something to cheer the printers, and all of us who labor in that good work!" One good brother wrote to me this week, "Brother Spurgeon, keep your courage up. You are known in multitudes of households of England and you are loved, too. Though we cannot hear you, or see your living form, yet throughout our villages your sermons are scattered. And I know of cases of conversion from them, more than I can tell you." Another friend mentioned to me an instance of a clergyman of the Church of England, a canon of a cathedral who frequently preaches my sermons on the Sabbath—whether in the cathedral or not, I cannot say, but I hope he does. Oh, who can tell, when these things are printed, what hearts they may reach, what good they may effect? Words that I spoke three weeks ago, eyes are now reading—while tears are gushing from them as they read! "Glory be to God most high!"

But, after all, *preaching is the ordained means for the salvation of sinners,* and by this, ten times as many are brought to the Savior as by any other. Ah, my friends, to have been the means of saving souls from death by preaching—what an honor! There is a young man who has not long commenced his ministerial career. When he enters the pulpit, everybody notices what a deep solemnity there is upon him, beyond his years. His face is white and blanched by an unearthly solemnity. His body is shriveled up by his labor. Constant study and midnight lamps have worn him away—but when he speaks he utters wondrous words that lift the soul up to heaven! And the aged saint says, "Well! Never did I go so near to heaven as when I listened to his voice!" There comes in some young man who listens and criticizes his aspect. He thinks it is by no means such as to be desired—but he listens. One thought strikes him, then another. See that man—he has been moral all his life—but he has never been renewed. Now tears begin to flow down his cheeks. Just put your ear against his breast and you will hear him groan out, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Ah, good reward for a withered frame or a ruined constitution! Or, take another case. A man is preaching the Word of God. He is standing up to deliver his Master's message, and in steals some poor harlot. Such a case I knew not long ago. A poor harlot determined she would go and take her life on Blackfriars Bridge. Passing by these doors one Sunday night, she thought she would step in, and for the last time hear something that might prepare her to stand before her Maker. She forced herself into the aisle, and she could not escape until I rose from the pulpit. The text was, "See you this woman?" I dwelt upon Mary Magdalene and her sins—her washing the Savior's feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hair of her head. There stood the woman—melted away with the thought that she should thus hear herself described, and her own life painted! Oh, to think of saving a poor harlot from death, to deliver such a one from going down to the grave, and then as God pleased, to save her soul from going down to hell! Is it not worth ten thousand lives if we could sacrifice them all on the altar of God? When I thought of this text, yesterday, I could only weep to think that God should have so favored me! Oh, Men and Women, how can you better spend your time and wealth than in the cause of the Redeemer? What holier enterprise can you engage in than this sacred one of saving souls from death and hiding a multitude of sins? This is a wealth that you can take with you—the wealth that has been acquired under God by having saved souls from death and covered a multitude of sins!

I know there are some now before the throne who first wept the penitential tear in this house of prayer, and who thanked God that they had listened to this voice. And I think they still have a tender and affectionate love for him whom God honored thus. Minister of the gospel, if you on earth are privileged to win souls, I think when you die, those spirits will rejoice to be your guardian angels! They will say, "Father, that man is dying whom we love, may we go and watch him?" "Yes," says God, "you may go, and carry heaven with you." Down come the spirits, ministering

angels and oh, how lovingly they look on us! They would, if they could, strike out the furrow from the forehead and take away the cold clammy sweat with their own blessed hands! They must not do it. But oh, how tenderly they watch that suffering man who was made the means of doing good to their souls! And when he opens his eyes to immortality, he shall see them like guards around his bed, and hear them say, "Come with us, thrice welcome, honored servant of God. Come with us!" And when he speeds his way upwards towards heaven on strong wings of faith, these spirits who stand by him will clap their wings behind him, and he will enter heaven with many crowns upon his head, each of which he will delight to cast at the feet of Jesus! Oh, brothers and sisters, if you turn a sinner from the error of his ways, remember you have saved a soul from death, and hidden a multitude of sins!

III. THE APPLICATION I can only just mention. It is this—that he who is the means of the conversion of a sinner does, under God, "save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins." Particular attention ought to be paid to *backsliders*. For in bringing backsliders into the church, there is as much honor to God as in bringing in sinners. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one converts him." Alas, the poor backslider is often the most forgotten! A member of the church has disgraced his profession, the church excommunicated him, and he was accounted "a heathen and a publican." I know of men of good standing in the gospel ministry who, ten years ago, fell into sin. And that is thrown in our teeth to this very day! Do you speak of them? You are at once informed, "Why, ten years ago they did so-and-so." Brethren, Christians ought to be ashamed of themselves for taking notice of such things so long afterwards! True, we may use more caution in our dealings, but to reproach a fallen brother for what he did so long ago is contrary to the spirit of John, who went after Peter three days after he had denied his Master with oaths and curses! Nowadays it is the fashion, if a man falls, to have nothing to do with him! Men say, "He is a bad fellow, we will not go after him." Beloved, suppose he is the worst—is not that the reason why you should go most after him? Suppose he never was a child of God—suppose he never knew the truth of God—is not that the greater reason why you should go after him? I do not understand your mawkish modesty, your excessive pride that won't let you go after the chief of sinners! The worse the case, the more is the reason why we should go.

But suppose the man is a child of God, and you have cast him off—remember, he is your brother. He is one with Christ as much as you are! He is justified, he has the same righteousness that you have. And if, when he has sinned, you despise him, then you despise his Master. Take heed! You, yourself, may be tempted and may one day fall. Like David, you may walk on the top of your house rather too high, and you may see something which shall bring you to sin. Then what will you say if the Brethren pass *you* by with a sneer and take no notice of *you?* Oh, if we have one backslider connected with our church, let us take special care of him! Don't deal harshly with him. Remember you would have been a

backslider, too, if it were not for the grace of God. I advise you, whenever you see professors living in sin, to be very shy of them, but if after a time, you see any sign of repentance, or if you do not, go and seek out the lost sheep of the house of Israel, for remember that if one of you errs from the truth, and one converts him, let him remember, that "he who converts the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

"Backsliders, who feel your misery," I will come after you one moment! Poor backslider, you were once a Christian. Do you hope you were? "No," you say, "I believe I deceived myself and others. I was no child of God." Well, if you did, let me tell you that if you will acknowledge that, God will forgive you! Suppose you did deceive the church—you are not the first who did it. There are some members of this church, I fear, who have done so, and we have not found them out. I tell you, your case is not hopeless! That is not the unpardonable sin! Some who have tried to deceive the very elect of God have yet been delivered! And my Master says He is able to save to the uttermost (and you have not gone beyond the uttermost) all who come to Him! Come then, to His feet—cast yourself on His mercy. And though you did once enter His camp as a spy, He will not hang you up for it, but will be glad to get you as a trophy of mercy! But if you were a child of God, and can honestly say, "I know I did love Him, and He loved me," I tell you He still loves you! If you have gone ever so far astray, you are as much His child as ever! Though you have run away from your Father, come back, come back! He is still your Father. Think not He has unsheathed the sword to slay you. Say not, "He has cast me out of the family." He has not! His heart yearns for you right now. My Father loves you! Come, then, to His feet, and He will not even remind you of what you have done! The prodigal was going to tell his Father all his sins and ask him to make him one of his hired servants, but the Father stopped his mouth. He let him say that he was not worthy to be called his son, but he would not let him say, "Make me as a hired servant." Come back and your Father will receive you gladly! He will put His arms around you, and kiss you with the kisses of His love! And He will say, "I have found this, My son who was lost; I have recovered this sheep that had gone astray." My Father loved you without works—He justified you irrespective of them! You have no less merit now than you had then! Come and trust and believe in Him!

Lastly, you who believe you are not backsliders, if you are not saved, remember that a soul is saved from death and a multitude of sins hidden. Oh, my friends, if I might but be a hundred-handed man to catch you all, I would love to be so. If anything I would say could win your souls—if by preaching here from now till midnight, I might by any possibility capture some of you to the love of the Savior—I would do it! Some of you are speeding your way to hell blindfolded! My hearers, I do not deceive you, you are going to hell as fast as time can carry you! Some of you are deceiving yourselves with the thought that you are righteous, but you are not so. Many of you have had solemn warnings and have never

been moved by them. You have admired the way in which the warning has been given, but the thing, itself, has never entered your heart. Hundreds of you are without God and without Christ, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel—and may I not plead with you? Is a gloomy religious system to hold me captive, and never let me speak? Why, poor hearts, do you know your sad condition? Do you know that "God is angry with the wicked every day"? Do you know that "The way of transgressors is hard"? That "He who believes not is condemned already"? Has it never been told you that "he that believes not shall be damned"? And can you stand damnation? My hearers, could you make your bed in hell? Could you lie down in the pit of hell? Do you think it would be an easy portion for your souls to be rocked on waves of flames forever, and to be tossed about with demons in the place where hope cannot come? You may smile now, but will not smile soon! God sends me as an ambassador, but if you listen not to me, He will not send an ambassador next time, but an executioner! Soon there will be no wooing words of mercy—the only exhortation you will hear will be the dull cold voice of Death who shall say, "Come with me." Then you will not be in the place where we sing God's praises, and where righteous prayers are daily offered. The only music you will hear will be the sighs of the damned, the shrieks of fiends, and the yelling of the tormented! O may God in His mercy snatch you as brands from the fire to be trophies of His grace throughout eternity! The way to be saved is to "renounce your works and ways with grief," and fly to Jesus. And if now you are a conscience-stricken sinner, that is all I want! If you will confess that you are a sinner; that is all God requires of you, and even *that* He gives you! Jesus Christ says, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do you hear His wooing words? Will you turn from His sweet looks of mercy? Has His cross no influence? Have His wounds no power to bring you to His feet? Ah, then what can I say? Only the arm of the Spirit, which is mightier than man, can make hard hearts melt, and bow stubborn wills to the ground!

Sinners, if you confess your sins this morning, there is a Christ for you. You need not say, "Oh, that I knew where to find Him." The Word is near you, on your lips, and in your heart. If you will, with your heart, believe—and with your mouth confess the Lord Jesus, you shall be saved, for, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved. And he that believes not shall be damned."

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THE GLORIOUS HABITATION
NO. 46

SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 14, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations."
Psalm 90:1.

MOSES was the inspired author of three devotional compositions. We first of all find him as Moses the poet, singing the song which is aptly joined with that of Jesus in the Book of Revelation, where it says, "The song of Moses and of the Lamb." He was a poet on the occasion when Pharaoh and his hosts were cast into the Red Sea, "His chosen captains also were drowned in the Red Sea." Further on in his life we discover him in the character of a preacher and then his doctrine distilled as the dew and his speech dropped like the rain in those chapters which are full of glorious imagery and rich with poetry which you will find in the Book of Deuteronomy. And now in the Psalms we find him the author of a prayer—"A prayer of Moses, the man of God." Happy combination of the poet, the preacher, and the man of prayer! Where three such things are found together, the man becomes a very giant above his fellows! It often happens that the man who preaches has but little poetry and the man who is the poet, would not be able to preach and utter his poems before immense assemblies but would be only fit to write them by himself. It is a rare combination when true devotion and the spirit of poetry and eloquence meet in the same man. You will see in this Psalm a wondrous depth of spirituality. You will mark how the poet subsides into the man of God and how, lost in himself, he sings his own frailty, declares the glory of God and asks that he may have the blessing of his heavenly Father always resting on his head.

This first verse will derive peculiar interest if you remember the place where Moses was when he thus prayed. He was in the wilderness. Not in some of the halls of Pharaoh, nor yet in a habitation in the land of Goshen, but in a wilderness. And perhaps from the summit of the hill, looking upon the tribes of Israel as they were taking up their tents and marching along, he thought, "Ah, poor travelers, they seldom rest anywhere. They have not any settled habitation where they can dwell. Here they have no continuing city." But he lifted his eyes above and he said, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." Passing his eyes back through history, he saw one great temple where God's people had dwelt. And with his prophetical eyes rolling with sacred frenzy, he could foresee that throughout the future, the specially chosen of God

would be able to sing, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations."

Taking this verse as the subject of our discourse this morning, we shall first of all *explain* it. And then we shall try and do what the old Puritans called, "*improve*" it—by which they did *not* mean improve the *text,* but improve the people a little by the consideration of the verse!

I. First we will try to explain it somewhat. Here is a *habitation*—"Lord, You have been our dwelling place," and secondly, if I may use such a common word, here is *the lease of it*—"You have been our dwelling place in all generations."

First then, here is a *habitation*—"Lord, You have been our habitation." The mighty Jehovah, who fills all immensity—the Eternal, Everlasting, Great I Am—does not refuse to allow figures concerning Himself; though He is so high that the eyes of angels have not seen Him; though He is so lofty that the wings of cherub have not reached Him; though He is so great that the utmost extent of the travels of immortal spirits have never discovered the limit of Himself—yet He does not object that His people should speak of Him thus familiarly—and should say, "Jehovah, You have been our dwelling place." We shall better understand this figure by contrasting the thought with the state of Israel in the wilderness. Secondly by making mention of some things by way of comparison which are peculiar to our house and which we never can enjoy if we are not the possessors of a dwelling place of our own.

First, we shall contrast this thought, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place," with the peculiar position of the Israelites as they were traveling through the wilderness.

We remark, first, that *they must have been in a state of great uneasiness*. At nightfall, or when the pillar stayed its motion, the tents were pitched and they laid themselves down to rest. Perhaps on the morrow, before the morning sun had risen, the trumpet sounded. They stirred themselves from their beds and found the ark was in motion. The fiery, cloudy pillar was leading the way through the narrow passages of the mountain up the hillside, or along the arid waste of the wilderness. They had scarcely time to arrange their little property in their tents and make all things comfortable for themselves before they heard the sound of, "Away! Away! Away! This is not your rest. You must still be onward journeying towards Canaan!" They could not plant a little patch of ground around their tent. They could not lay out their house in order and arrange their furniture. They could not become attached to the spot of ground. Even though just now their father had been buried in a place where a tent had tarried for a time, yet they must be off! They must have no attachment to the place—they must have nothing of what we call comfort, ease and peace—but be always journeying, always traveling. Moreover, so exposed were they that they never could be very easy in

their tents. At one time the sand, with the hot wind behind it, would drive through the tent and cover them almost to burial. On frequent occasions the hot sun would scorch them and their canvas would scarcely be protection; at another time the biting north wind would freeze around them so that within their tents they sat shivering and cowering around their fires. They had little ease. But behold the contrast which Moses, the Man of God, discerns with gratitude, "You are not our tent, but You are our dwelling place; though we are uneasy, here, though we are tossed from side to side by troubles. Though we travel through a wilderness and find it a rough pathway. Though when we sit down, here, we know not what comfort means—O Lord, in You we possess all the comforts which a house can afford! We have all that a mansion or palace can give the prince who can loll upon his couch and rest upon his bed of down. Lord, You are to us comfort! You are a house and habitation." Have you ever known what it is to have God for your dwelling place in the sense of comfort? Do you know what it is when you have storms behind you, to feel like a seabird blown to the land by the very storm? Do you know what it is when you have been caged, sometimes, by adversity, to have the string cut by divine grace and like the pigeon that flies at once to its own dovecot, have you sped your way across the ether and found yourself in God? Do you know what it is, when you are tossed on the waves, to go down into the depths of the Godhead, there rejoicing that not a wave of trouble ruffles your spirit but that you are serenely at home with God, your own Almighty Father? Can you, amidst all the uneasiness of this desert journey, find a comfort? Is the breast of Jesus a sweet pillow for your head? Can you lie thus on the breast of Deity? Can you put yourself on the stream of providence and float along without a struggle while angels sing around you—divinely guided, divinely led—"We are bearing you along the stream of providence to the ocean of eternal bliss"? Do you know what it is to lie on God, to give up all care, to drive anxiety away and there—not in a recklessness of spirit, but in a holy carelessness—to be careful for nothing, "but in everything by supplication to make known your needs unto God"? If so, you have gained the first idea—"Lord, You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations."

Again, the Israelites were *very much exposed to all kinds of curious creatures*, owing to their residing in tents and their habits of wandering. At one time the fiery serpent was their foe. By night the wild beasts prowled around them. Unless that fiery pillar had been a wall of fire around them and a glory in their midst, they might all have fallen a prey to the wild monsters that roamed the deserts! Worse foes they found in humankind. The enemy rushed down from the mountains—wild wandering hordes constantly attacked them. They never felt themselves secure, for they were travelers through an enemy's country. They were hastening across a land where they were not wanted, to another land that was

providing means to oppose them when they should arrive! Such is the Christian. He is journeying through an enemy's land—every day he is exposed to danger. His tent may be broken down by death. The slanderer is behind him, the open foeman is before him. The wild beast that prowls by night and the pestilence that wastes by day continually seek his destruction. He finds no rest where he is. He feels himself exposed. But, says Moses, "Though we live in a tent exposed to wild beasts and fierce men, yet You are our habitation; in You we find no exposure; within You we find ourselves secure and in Your glorious person we dwell as in an impregnable tower of defense, safe from every fear and alarm, knowing that we are secure." O Christian, have you ever known what it is to stand in the midst of battles with arrows flying thick around you—more than your shield can catch—and yet you have been as secure as if you were folding your arms and resting within the walls of some strong bastion where arrow could not reach you and where even the sound of trumpet could not disturb your ears? Have you known what it is to dwell securely in God—to enter into the Most High and laugh to scorn the anger, the frowns, the sneers, the contempt, the slander and calumny of men? To ascend into the sacred place of the pavilion of the Most High and to abide under the shadow of the Almighty and to feel yourself secure? And mark you, you may do this! In times of pestilence it is possible to walk in the midst of cholera and death, singing—

"Plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till He please, I cannot die!"

It is possible to stand exposed to the utmost degree of danger and yet to feel such a holy serenity that we can laugh at fear. We become too great, too mighty, too powerful through God to stoop for one moment to the cowardice of trembling—"We know whom we have believed and we are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him." When homeless men wander; when poor distressed spirits, beaten by the storm, find no refuge, we enter into God! And shutting behind us the door of faith, we say, "Howl you winds! Blow you tempests! Roar you wild beasts! Come on you robbers"—

"He that has made his refuge God
Shall find a most secure abode!
Shall walk all day beneath His shade
And there at night shall rest his head!"

Lord, in this sense, You have been our habitation.

Again, poor Israel in the wilderness *was continually exposed to change*. They were never in one place long. Sometimes they might tarry for a month in one spot—just near the seventy palm trees. What a sweet and pleasant place to go out each morning, to sit beside the well and drink that clear stream! "Onward!" cries Moses. And he takes them to a place where the bare rocks stand out from the mountainside and the red burning sand is beneath their feet. Vipers spring up around them and thorny

bushes grow instead of pleasing vegetation. What a change they have! Yet another day they shall come to a place that shall be still drearier. They walk through a canyon so close and narrow that the frightened rays of the sun scarcely dare enter such a prison lest they should never find their way out again! They must go onward from place to place, continually changing, never having time to settle. Never time to say, "Now we are secure— we shall dwell in this place." Here again, the contrast casts light upon the text—"Ah," says Moses, "though we are always changing, Lord, You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations." The Christian knows no change with regard to God. He may be rich today and poor tomorrow. He may be sickly today and well tomorrow. He may be in happiness today, tomorrow he may be distressed. But there is no change with regard to his relationship to God! If He loved me yesterday, He loves me today! I am neither better nor worse in God than I ever was! Let prospects be blighted, let hopes be blasted, let joy be withered, let mildews destroy everything—I have lost nothing of what I have in God! He is my strong habitation whereunto I can continually resort. The Christian never becomes poorer nor never grows richer with regard to God. "Here," he can say, "is a thing that never can pass away or change. On the brow of the Eternal there is never a furrow. His hair is unwhitened by age. His arm is unpalsied by weakness. His heart does not change in its affections—His will does not vary in its purpose. He is the Immutable Jehovah, standing fast and forever! You are our habitation! As the house changes not, but stands in the same place, so have I found You from my youth up. When first I was cast upon You from my mother's breast, I found You my God of Providence. When first I knew You by that spiritual knowledge which You, alone, can give, I found You a sure habitation. And I find You such now. Yes, when I shall be old and gray-headed, I know You will not forsake me! You will be the same dwelling place in all generations."

One thought more in contrasting the position of the Israelites with ourselves—that is *weariness*. How weary must Israel have been in the wilderness! How tired must have been the soles of their feet with their constant journeys! They were not in a place of repose, luxury and rest, but in a land of journeying and weariness and trouble. I think I see them traveling, frequently wiping the burning sweat from their brows and saying, "Oh that we had a habitation where we might rest! Oh, that we could enter a land of vines and pomegranates, a city where we might enjoy immunity from alarm! God has promised it to us, but we have not found it. There remains a rest for the people of God—O that we might find it!" Christian, God is your habitation in this sense! He is your rest and you will never find rest except in Him. I defy a man who has no God to have a soul at rest. He who has not Jesus for his Savior will always be a restless spirit. Read some of Byron's verses and you will find him, (if he were tru-

ly picturing himself), to be the very personification of that spirit who walked to and fro, seeking rest and finding none. Here is one of his verses—

"I fly like a bird of the air,
In search of a home and a rest—
A balm for the sickness of care
A bliss for a bosom unblest."

Read the lives of any men who have had no gospel justification, or have had no knowledge of God and you will find that they were like the poor bird that had its nest pulled down and knew not where to rest, flying about, wandering and seeking a habitation. Some of you have tried to find rest out of God. You have sought to find it in your wealth. But you have pricked your head when you have laid it on that pillow! You have sought it in a friend, but that friend's arm has been a broken reed where you hoped it would be a wall of strength! You will never find rest except in God. There is no refuge but in Him. Oh, what rest and composures are there in Him! It is more than sleep, more than calm, more than quiet, deeper than the dead stillness of the noiseless sea in its utmost depths where it is undisturbed by the slightest ripple and winds can never intrude. There is a holy calm and sweet repose which only the Christian knows—something like the slumbering stars up there in beds of azure. Or like the seraphic rest which we may suppose beatified spirits have when they are before the throne—there is a rest so deep and calm, so still and quiet, so profound that we find no words to describe it! You have tried it and can rejoice in it. You know that the Lord has been your dwelling place—your sweet, calm, constant home where you can enjoy peace in all generations. But I have dwelt too long upon this part of the subject, so I will speak of it in a different way.

First of all, *the dwelling place of man is the place where he can unbend himself and feel himself at home and speak familiarly*. In this pulpit I must somewhat check my words. I deal with men of the world who watch my speech and are ever on the catch. Men who wish to have this or that to criticize—I must be on my guard. So you men of business, when you are on the exchange, or in your shop, have to guard yourselves. What does the man do at home? He can lay bare his breast and do and say as he pleases—it is his own house—his dwelling place. And is he not master there? Shall he not do as he will with his own? Assuredly, for he feels himself at home! Ah, my beloved, do you ever find yourself in God to be at home? Have you been with Christ and told your secrets in His ear and found that you could do so without reserve? We do not generally tell secrets to other people, for if we do and make them promise that they *will never* tell them, they will never tell them except to the first person they meet! Most persons who have secrets told them are like the lady of whom it is said she never told her secrets except to two sorts of persons—those that asked her and those that did not. You must not trust men of the

world! But do you know what it is to tell all your secrets to God in prayer, to whisper all your thoughts to Him? You are not ashamed to confess your sins to Him with all their aggravations. You make no apologies to God but you put in every aggravation and you describe all the depths of your baseness. Then, as for those little needs you would be ashamed to tell to another—before God you can tell them all! You can tell Him your grief that you would not whisper to your dearest friend. With God, you can always be at home. You need be under no restraint. The Christian at once gives God the key of his heart and lets Him turn everything over. He says, "Here is the key of every cabinet. It is my desire that You would open them all. If there are jewels, they are Yours. And if there are things that should not be there, drive them out. Search me and try my heart." The more God lives in the Christian, the better the Christian loves Him. The oftener God comes to see him, the better he loves his God. And God loves His people all the more when they are familiar with Him! Can you say in this sense, "Lord, You have been my dwelling place"?

Then again, *man's home is the place where his affections are centered.* God deliver us from those men who do not love their homes! Lives there a man so base, so dead, that he has no affection for his own house? If so, surely the spark of Christianity must have died entirely out! It is *natural* that men should love their homes. It is *spiritual* that they should love them. In our homes we find those to whom we must and always shall be most attached. There our best friends and kindred dwell. When we wander, we are as birds that have left their nests and can find no settled home. We wish to go back and to see again that smile—to grasp once more that loving hand and to find that we are with those to whom the ties of affection have knit us! We wish to feel—and every Christian will feel—with regard to his own family that they are the warp and woof of his nature, that he has become a part and portion of them. And there he centers his affection. He cannot afford to lavish his love everywhere. He centers it in that particular spot, that oasis in this dark desert world. Christian, is God your habitation in that sense? Have you given your whole soul to God? Do you feel you can bring your whole heart to Him and say, "O God! I love You from my soul! With the most impassioned earnestness I love you"?—

"The dearest idol I have known—
Whatever that idol be—
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only Thee!"

O God! Though I sometimes wander, yet I love You in my wanderings, and my heart is fixed on You. What though the creature does beguile me, I detest that creature; it is to me as the apple of Sodom. You are the master of my soul, the emperor of my heart. No vice-regent, but king of kings! My spirit is fixed on You as the center of my soul—

"You are the sea of love
Where all my pleasures roll
The circle where my passions move—
The center of my soul."

"O God! You have been our dwelling place in all generations."

My next remark is concerning the *lease of this dwelling place*. God is the believer's habitation. Sometimes, you know, people get turned out of their houses, or their houses tumble down about their ears. It is never so with ours—God is our dwelling place throughout all generations. Let us look back in times past and we shall find that God has been our habitation—oh, the old house at home! Who does not love it, the place of our childhood, the old roof tree, the old cottage? There is no village in the entire world half as good as that particular village where we were born! True, the gates, stiles and posts have been altered. But still there is an attachment to those old houses, the old tree in the park and the old ivy-mantled tower. It is not very picturesque, perhaps, but we love to go see it. We like to see the haunts of our boyhood. There is something pleasant in those old stairs where the clock used to stand—and the room where grandmother was accustomed to bend her knee and where we had family prayer. There is no place like that house! Well, beloved, God has been the habitation of the Christian in years gone by. Christian, your house is, indeed, a venerable house and you have long dwelt there! You dwelt there in the person of Christ long before you were brought into this sinful world. And it is to be your dwelling place throughout all generations. You are never to ask for another house. You will always be contented with that one you have. You will never wish to change your habitation. And if you wished it, you could not, for He is your dwelling place in all generations! God give you to know what it is to take this house in its long lease and always to have God for your dwelling place!

II. Now I come to improve this text somewhat. First, let us improve it to SELF-EXAMINATION. How may we know whether we are Christians or not? Whether the Lord is our dwelling place and will be throughout all generations? I shall give you some hints for self-examination by referring you to several passages which I have looked up in the first Epistle of John. It is remarkable that almost the only Scriptural writer who speaks of God as a dwelling place is that most loving apostle, John, out of whose Epistle we have been reading.

He gives us in his First Epistle, the 12th verse of the 4th chapter, one means of knowing whether we are living in God—*"If we love one another*, God dwells in us and His love is perfected in us." And again, further on, he says, "And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love. And he that dwells in love dwells in God and God in him." You may then tell whether you are a tenant of this great spiritual house by the love you have towards others! Have you a love towards the saints? Well, then you are a saint yourself! The goats will not love the sheep. And

if you love the sheep, it is evidence that you are a sheep yourself. Many of the Lord's weak family never can get any other evidences of their conversion except this—"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." And though that is a very little evidence, yet it is such a one that the strongest faith often cannot get a much better. What? Has the devil told you you are not the Lord's? Poor Faint-Heart, do you love the Lord's people? "Yes," you say, "I love to see their faces and to hear their prayers. I could almost kiss the hem of their garments." Is it so? And would you give to them if they were poor? Would you visit them if they were sick, and tend to them if they needed assistance? "Ah, yes." Then fear not! You who love God's people, you must love the Master. We know we dwell in God if we love one another.

In the 13th verse is another sign—"Hereby know we that we dwell in Him and He in us, because *He has given us of His Spirit."* Have we ever had the Spirit of God in us? That is one of the most solemn questions I can ask. Many of you know what it is to be excited by religious feeling who never had the Spirit of God. Many of us have great need to tremble lest we should not have received that Spirit. I have tried, myself, scores of times, in different ways, to see whether I really am a possessor of the Spirit of God or not. I know that the people of the world scoff at the idea and say, "It is impossible for anybody to have the Spirit of God." Then it is impossible for anybody to go to heaven! For we *must* have the Spirit of God—we must be *born-again* of the Spirit before we can enter there! What a serious question this is—"Have I the Spirit of God in me?" True, my soul is at times lifted on high and I feel that I could sing like a seraph. True, sometimes I am melted down by deep devotion and I could pray in terrible solemnity. But so can hypocrites, perhaps. Have I the Spirit of God? Have you any evidence within you that you have the Spirit? Are you sure that you are not laboring under a delusion and a dream? Have you actually the Spirit of God within you? If so, you dwell in God. That is the second sign.

But the apostle gives another sign in the 15th verse—"*Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God*, God dwells in him and he in God." The confession of our faith in the Savior is another sign that we live in God. Oh, Poor-Heart, can you not come under *this* sign? You may have but little boldness, but can you not say, "I believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ"? If so, you dwell in God! Many of you, I know, say, "When I hear a sermon, I feel affected by it. When I am in the House of God, I feel like a child of God, but the business cares, and troubles of life take me off, and then I fear I am not." But you can say, "I do believe in Christ. I know I cast myself on His mercy and hope to be saved by Him." Then do not say you are not a child of God if you have faith!

But there is one more sign whereby we ought to examine ourselves, in the 3rd chapter, 24th verse—"He who *keeps His commandments dwells in*

Him and He in him." Obedience to the commandments of God is a blessed sign of a dwelling in God! Some of you have a deal of religious talk, but not much religious walk; a large stock of outside piety, but not much real inward piety which develops itself in your actions. That is a hint for some of you who know that it is *right to be baptized and are not*. You know it is one of the commandments of God that, "He who believes shall be baptized," and you are neglecting what you know to be your duty. You are dwelling in God, I doubt not, but you lack one evidence of it, namely—obedience to God's commandments! Obey God and then you will know that you are dwelling in Him!

But I have another word by way of improvement and that is one of CONGRATULATION. You who dwell in God, allow me to congratulate you. Thrice happy men are you if you are dwelling in God! You need not blush to compare yourselves with angels. You need not think that any on earth can share such happiness as yours! Zion, oh, how blessed are you, freed from all sins! Now you are, through Christ, made to dwell in God and, therefore, are eternally secure. I congratulate you, Christians! First, in that you have such a *magnificent house* to dwell in. You have not a palace that shall be as gorgeous as Solomon's—a mighty palace as immense as the dwellings of the kings of Assyria, or Babylon—but you have a God that is more than mortal creatures can behold! You dwell in an immortal fabric. You dwell in the Godhead—something which is beyond all human skill! I congratulate you, moreover, that you live in such a *perfect house*. There never was a house on earth that could not be made a little better. But the house you dwell in has everything you need. In God you have all you require. I congratulate you, moreover, that you live in a house that shall *last forever*. A dwelling place that shall not pass away! When this world shall have been scattered like a dream—when, like the bubble on the breaker, creation shall have died away—when all this universe shall have died out like a spark from an expiring brand, your house shall live and stand more imperishable than marble, more solid than granite, self-existent as God, *for it is God!* Be happy, then!

Now, lastly, a word of ADMONITION AND WARNING to some of you. My hearers, what a pity it is that we have to divide our congregation—that we cannot speak to you in a mass as being all Christians! This morning I would that I could take God's Word and address it to you all—that you all might share the sweet promises it contains. But some of you would not have them if I were to offer them! Some of you despise Christ, my blessed Master! Many of you think sin but a trifle and grace to be worthless. You think heaven is a vision, and hell a fiction. Some of you are careless and hardened and thoughtless—without God and without Christ! Oh, my hearers, I wonder at myself that I should have so little benevolence that I do not preach more fervently to you! I think if I could get a right estimate of your souls' value, I would not speak as I do now,

with stammering tongue, but with flaming words! I have great cause to blush at my own slothfulness, though God knows I have strived to preach His truth as vehemently as possible and would spend myself in His service. But I wonder why I do not stand in every street in London and preach His truth; when I think of the thousands of souls in this great city that have never heard of Jesus, that have never listened to Him; when I think of how much ignorance exists and how little gospel preaching there is, how few souls are saved, I think—O God, what little grace I must have, that I do not strive more for souls!

One word by way of *warning*. Do you know poor soul that you have not a house to live in? You have a house for your body, but no house for your soul. Have you ever seen a poor girl at midnight sitting down on a door step crying? Somebody passes by and says, "Why do you sit here?" "I have no house, sir. I have no home." "Where is your father?" "My father's dead, sir." "Where is your mother?" "I have no mother, sir." "Have you no friends?" "No friends at all." "Have you no house?" "No, I have none. I am homeless." And she shivers in the chill air, and gathers her poor ragged shawl around her and cries again, "I have no house—I have no home." Would you not pity her? Would you blame her for her tears? Ah, there are some of you that have homeless souls here, this morning! It is something to have a homeless body, but to think of a homeless soul! I think I see you in eternity, sitting on the doorstep of heaven. An angel says, "What? Have you no house to live in?" "No house," says the poor soul. "Have you no father?" "No, God is not my father, and there is none beside Him." "Have you no mother?" "No. The church is not my mother; I never sought her ways, nor loved Jesus. I have neither father nor mother." "Have you no house, then?" "No, I am a homeless soul."

But there is one thing worse about that—homeless souls have to be sent into hell! To a dungeon; to a lake that burns with fire. Houseless soul! In a little while your body will be gone, and where will you house yourself when the hot hail of eternal vengeance comes from heaven? Where will you hide your guilty head when the winds of the last judgment day shall sweep on you with fury? Where will you shelter yourself when the blast of the terrible one shall be as a storm against a wall—when the darkness of eternity comes upon you, and hell thickens round you? It will be all in vain for you to cry, "Rocks, hide me! Mountains, fall upon me!"—the rocks will not obey you, the mountains will not hide you. Caverns would be palaces if you could dwell in them, but there will be no caverns for you to hide your head in. You will be homeless souls, homeless spirits, wandering through hell tormented, destitute, afflicted! And that throughout eternity! Poor homeless soul, do you need a house? I have a house to let this morning for every sinner who feels his misery—do you need a house for your soul? Then I will condescend to men of low estate, and tell you in homely language that I have a house to let!

Do you ask me what the price is? I will tell you. It is something less than proud human nature will like to give. It is *without money and without price!* Ah, you would like to pay some rent wouldn't you? You would love to do *something* to win Christ. Then you cannot have the house! It is "without money and without price." I have told you enough of the house, itself, and therefore I will not describe its excellences. But I will tell you one thing—if you feel you are a homeless soul this morning, you may not have the key tomorrow! If you feel yourself to be a homeless soul, today, you may enter it now! If you had a house of your own, I would not offer it to you. But since you have no other, here it is! Will you take my Master's house on a lease for all eternity, with nothing to pay for it, nothing but the ground rent of loving and serving Him forever? Will you take Jesus and dwell in Him throughout eternity? Or will you be content to be a homeless soul? Come inside, sir. Look, it is furnished from top to bottom with all you need; it has cellars filled with gold, more than you will spend as long as you live; it has a parlor where you can entertain yourself with Christ, and feast on His love. It has tables well stored with food for you to live on forever; it has a drawing room of brotherly love where you can receive your friends. You will find a resting room up there where you can rest with Jesus! And on the top there is a lookout from where you can see heaven itself! Will you have the house, or will you not? Ah, if you are homeless, you will say, "I should like to have the house, but may I have it?" Yes here is the key. The key is, "Come to Jesus." But you say, "I am too shabby for such a house." Never mind. There are garments inside. As Rowland Hill once said—

"Come naked, come filthy, come ragged, come poor!
Come wretched, come dirty, come just as you are!"

If you feel guilty and condemned, come, and though the house is too good for you, Christ will make you good enough for the house, by-and-by! He will wash you and cleanse you, and you will yet be able to sing with Moses, with the same unfaltering voice, "Lord, You have been my dwelling place throughout all generations."

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CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE
NO. 47

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 21, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"I pray not that You should take them out of the world,
but that You should keep them from the evil one."
John 17:15.

THIS prayer of Christ is an ever precious portion to all true believers from the fact that each of them has an inalienable interest in it. Every one of us, beloved, when we listen to the words of Christ, should remember that He is praying for us—that while it is for the great body of His elect He intercedes in this chapter and the one preceding it—yet it is also for each believer in particular that He offers intercession. However weak we are, however poor, however little our faith, or however small our grace may be, our names are still written on His heart! Nor shall we lose our share in Jesus' love.

I will proceed at once to the discussion of the text as my time is limited. First, there is a *negative prayer*—"I pray *not* that You should take them out of the world." Second, here is *a positive prayer*—"but that You should keep them from the evil one."

We have, then, a *negative prayer* in this verse. "I pray *not* that You should take them out of the world." Now beloved, when we see persons converted to God—when men are turned from iniquity unto righteousness, from sinners into saints, the thought sometimes strikes us—would it not be good to take them at once to heaven? Would it not be an excellent thing to translate them speedily from the realms of sin to the breast of the Lord who loves them with an everlasting love? Would it not be wiser to take the young plants out of the chilly air of this world where they may possibly be injured and weakened and transplant them at once to the land where they may bloom forever in peace and tranquility? Not so, however, does Jesus pray. When the man had the devils cast out of him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go." But Jesus said to him, "Go to your friends and relations and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you." Some men, when they are converted, are all for going speedily to heaven. But they have not done with earth yet. They would like to wear the crown without bearing the cross. They desire to win without running and conquer without a battle. But their

whim has no countenance from Jesus, for He exclaims, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world."

I shall first of all speak of *the meanings of this prayer;* secondly, *the reasons for this prayer;* thirdly, *the doctrinal inferences that we may derive from it,* and fourthly, *the practical lessons it teaches*. We will speak briefly on each point.

I. First, THE MEANINGS OF THIS PRAYER. "I pray not that you should take them out of the world." Now there are two senses in which this prayer may be understood. one is—He prays not that they should, *by retirement and solitude,* be kept entirely separate from the world. And the second—He asks not that they should be taken away *by death*.

First, as regards *retirement from the world and solitude;* some hermits and others have fancied that if we were to shut ourselves out from the world and live alone, we would then be more devoted to God and serve Him better. Many men of old lived in deserts, never coming into the cities, wandering about alone, praying in caves and forests and thinking they were contaminated and rendered impure if once they mingled with mankind. So have we among the Roman Catholics, persons who act the part of hermits living far from the common haunts of men and believing that by so doing they shall abundantly serve God. There are, also, certain orders of monks and nuns who live almost alone, seeing only their fellows and fancying that they are putting honor upon God and winning salvation for themselves. Now it is too late in the day for any of us to speak against monasticism. It has demonstrated its own fallacy! It was found that some of those men who had separated from society were guilty of more vile and vicious practices and sinned more grossly than men who were in the world. There are not many who can depart from the customs of social life and in solitude maintain their spirit, pure and unsullied. Why, brethren, common sense tells us at once that living alone is not the way to serve God! It may be the way to serve *self* and wrap ourselves in a garment of self-complacency. But it cannot be the way to truly worship God. If it is possible, by this means, to fulfill one part of the great law of God, we cannot possibly carry out the other portion—to love our neighbor as ourselves, for we thus become unable to bind up the broken-hearted, to bring the wanderer back, or to win souls from death and sin! Out of the heart proceeds all evil and if we were in retirement, we would sin because we would carry our hearts with us into whatever solitude we entered. If we could but once get rid of our hearts, if there were some means of rendering our natures perfect—*then* we *might* be able to live alone! But as we now are, that door must be well enforced so that could keep out the devil. That hell must be much secluded so that

sin cannot enter. I have heard of a man who thought he could live without sin if he were to dwell alone. He took a pitcher of water and a store of bread, and provided some wood and shut himself up in a solitary cell, saying "Now I shall live in peace." But in a moment or two he chanced to kick the pitcher over and he, thereupon, used an angry expression. Then he said, "I see it is possible to lose one's temper even when alone." And he at once returned to live among men!

But it may be understood in a second sense. "I pray not that You should take them out of this world"—*by death*. That is a sweet and blessed mode of taking us out of the world which will happen to us all, by-and-by. In a few more years the chariot of fire and the horses of fire will take away the Lord's soldiers. But Jesus does not pray that *one* of His chosen people should be too soon removed—He does not desire to see His newly-begotten souls plume their wings and fly aloft to heaven until their time shall come. How frequently does the wearied pilgrim put up the prayer, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest." But Christ does not pray like that. He leaves us to His Father, until, like shocks of corn fully ripe, we shall, each of us, be gathered into our Master's garner! Jesus does not plead for our immediate removal by death. He asks that we may do well in the world, but He never asks for us to be gathered in before we are ripe. Thus I have explained the two meanings of the words, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world"—either by living retired from men, or being taken away by death.

II. Now the second point was THE REASONS FOR THIS PETITION. These reasons are threefold. Christ does not pray that we should be taken out of the world because our abode here is for our own good, for the world's benefit and for His glory!

1. First, *it would not be for our own good to be taken out of this world*. I leave out the first idea of the text and only speak of it concerning death. We conceive that the greatest blessing we shall ever receive of God is to die. But doubtless it would not be for our good to withdraw from this world as soon as we had escaped from sin. It is better for us to tarry a little while—far better. And the reasons for this are—first, because *a little stay on earth will make heaven all the sweeter*. Nothing makes rest so sweet as toil! Nothing can render security so pleasant as a long exposure to alarms and fears and battles. No heaven will be as sweet as a heaven which has been preceded by torments and pains! I think the deeper draughts of woe we drink here below, the sweeter will be those draughts of eternal glory which we shall receive from the golden bowls of bliss! The more we are battered and scarred on earth, the more glorious will be our victory above when the shouts of a thousand times ten thousand angels

welcome us to our Father's palace! The more trials—the more bliss; the more sufferings—the more ecstasies; the more depression—the higher the exaltation. Thus we shall gain more of heaven by the sufferings we shall pass through here below. Let us not, then, my brethren, fear to advance through our trials—they are for our good. To stop here awhile is for our benefit. Why? We would not know how to converse in heaven if we had not a few trials and hardships to tell of and some tales of delivering grace to repeat with joy. An old sailor likes to have passed through a few shipwrecks and storms, however hazardous they may have been, for if he anchors in Greenwich Hospital, he will there tell his companions, with great pleasure, of his hair-raising escapes! There will be some old soldiers in heaven, too, who will recount their fights—how their Master delivered them and how He won the victory and kept off all their foes.

Again, *we would not have fellowship with Christ if we did not stop here*. Fellowship with Christ is so honorable a thing that it is worth while to suffer that we may thereby enjoy it. You have sometimes heard me express a desire that I might be in the number of those who shall be alive and remain and so shall escape death. But a dear friend of mine says he had rather die, in order that he might thus have fellowship with Christ in His sufferings—and I think the thought finds an echo in my own breast! To die with Jesus makes death a perfect treasure. To be a follower in the grave with Him makes death a pleasure. Moreover, you and I might be taken for cowards, although we may have fellowship with Him in His glory, if we had no scars to prove the sufferings we had passed through and the wounds we had received for His name! Thus, again, you see it is for our good to be here—we would not have known fellowship with the Savior if we had not tarried here a little while. I would never have known the Savior's love half as much if I had not been in the storms of affliction. How sweet it is to learn the Savior's love when nobody else loves us! When friends flee away, what a blessed thing it is to see that the Savior does not forsake us but still keeps us and holds fast by us and clings to us and will not let us go! O beloved brethren, believe that your remaining here on earth is for your eternal benefit and, therefore, Jesus said, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world."

2. And again, *it is for the good of other people*. I think we should all be willing to remain on earth for the good of others. Why may not saints die as soon as they are converted? For this reason—because God meant that they should be the means of the salvation of their brethren. You would not, surely, wish to go out of the world if there were a soul to be saved by you! I think if I could go to glory before I had converted all the souls allotted to me, I would not be happy. But that would be impossible, for God

will not shut His saints in till they have been spiritual fathers to those appointed. We do not wish to enter heaven till our work is done—it would make us uneasy on our beds if there were one single soul left to be saved by our means! Tarry, then, Christian. There is a brand to be plucked out of the fire, a sinner to be saved from his sins, a rebel to be turned from the error of his ways—and maybe that sinner is one of your relatives! Maybe, poor widow, you are spared in this world because there is a wayward son of yours not yet saved. Perhaps God has designed to make you the favored instrument of bringing him to glory. And you gray-headed Christian, it may be that though, "the grasshopper is a burden to you" and you long to go, you are kept here because one of your offspring, by your instrumentality is yet to be saved. Tarry, then, for your son's sake, who came from your loins. I know how deeply you love him and for his sake, surely, you are content to be left here a little—counting it for the best that you may bring in your son to glory with you!

3. But the third reason is because *it is for God's glory*. A tried saint brings more glory to God than an untried one. I do verily think in my own soul that a believer in a dungeon reflects more glory on his Master than a believer in paradise! I believe that a child of God in the burning fiery furnace, whose hair is yet unscorched and upon whom the smell of the fire has not passed, displays more of the glory of the Godhead than even he who stands with a crown upon his head, perpetually singing praises before the eternal throne. Nothing reflects as much honor on a workman as a trial of his work and its endurance of it. It is the same with God. It honors Him when His saints preserve their integrity. Peter honored Christ more when he walked upon the water than when he stood upon the land. There was no glory given to God by his walking on the solid shore, but there was glory reflected when he trod upon the water. Peter saw the Lord coming on the water and he said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, bid me come unto You on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus." What may we not go through, Christians, at His command? O I think we could rise and cut Agag to pieces and hew Satan, himself, and break his head through the power of Jesus! It is, then, for the glory of Jesus that we yet tarry. If my lying in the dust would elevate Christ one inch higher, I would say, "O let me remain, for it is sweet to be here for the Lord." And if to live here forever would make Christ more glorious, I would prefer to live here eternally. If we could but add more jewels to the crown of Christ by remaining here, why should we wish to be taken out of the world? We would say, "It is blessed to be anywhere where we can glorify Him."

III. The third point is THE DOCTRINAL INFERENCE WE MAY DERIVE FROM THIS PRAYER.

The first inference—*death is God taking the people out of the world and when we die we are removed by God*. Death is not an independent being that comes at his own will to carry us away when he pleases. In fact, it is not true that death takes away the Christian at all—God, alone, can remove His children from this world—whether the humble peasant, or the reigning monarch—only one hand lifts them to the sky. You will see this by referring to the Revelation where the vintage of the wicked is gathered by an angel but the harvest of the righteous is reaped by Christ, Himself. "And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he, also, having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over the fire and cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the cluster of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God." These were the wicked. But if you go to the preceding passage, it says, "And I looked and behold a white cloud and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Your sickle and reap—for the time is come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And *He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle* on the earth, and the earth was reaped." Christ is the reaper who cuts His own corn! He will not trust an angel to do it. God alone has the issues of life in His hand.

The next thing is that *dying is not of one-half so much importance as living to Christ*. "I pray not that You should take them out of the world." He does not make their dying an object of prayer, "but that You should keep them from the evil one." He prays that they should be preserved in life knowing that their death would assuredly follow rightly, as a matter of course. Many say, one to the other, "Have you heard that So-and-So is dead?" "How did he die?" They should say, "How did he live?" It may be an important question—how does a man die? But the more important one is, how does a man live? What curious notions people get about death! The question they ask is not whether a man dies in the Lord Jesus, but, "Has he had a very easy death? Did he die gently?" If so, they conclude that all is well. If I ask, "Had he any affection to trust in Christ?" the reply probably will be, "Well, at all events, I thought he had. He had a very easy death." People think so much of an easy death—if there are no pains in death, if they are not in trouble and not plagued

like others—they falsely conclude all to be well. But though like sheep they are laid in the grave, they may awaken to destruction in the morning! It is not a sign of grace that our dying is easy. It is natural for persons in the decay of strength to die easily. Many of the most vicious men who have destroyed the power of their bodies have an easy, painless death from the fact that there is nothing to struggle against death. But then, though they die like lambs, they wake up in sorrow! Do not put any confidence in deathbeds, my dear friends. Do not look on them as evidences of Christianity. The great evidence is not how a man dies—but how he lives!

IV. The practical lesson we learn from this part of the text—"I pray not that You should take them out of the world," is this—*that we never have any encouragement to peevishly ask God to let us die*. Christians always want to die when they have any trouble or trial. You ask them, "Why?" "Because we want to be with the Lord." O yes, they want to be with the Lord when troubles and temptations come upon them! But it is not because they are "panting to be with the Lord"—it is because they desire to get rid of their troubles—otherwise they would not want to die at all times when a little vexation is upon them! They want to get home, not so much for the Savior's company, as to get out of the little hard work! They did not wish to go away when they were in quiet and prosperity. Like lazy fellows, as most of us are, when we get into a little labor we beg to go home. It is quite right, sometimes, that you should desire to depart because you would not prove yourself to be a true Israelite if you did not want to go to Jerusalem. You may pray to be taken home out of the world, but Christ will not take up the petition. When your prayers come to the Lord, this little one may try to get among them, but Christ will say, "I do not know anything about you, 'I pray not that You should take them out of the world.'" You may wish it sincerely and really desire it, but you will not, at present, get your Master to pray with you. Instead of crying, or wishing to be away from the battle, brace yourself up in the name of the Lord! Think every wish to escape the fight is but a desertion of your Master. Do not so much as think of rest, but remember that though you may cry, "Let me retire into the tent," you will not be admitted until you return a victor! Therefore stop here and work and labor.

My dear friends, I had intended to preach from the other half of the verse, but that is quite impossible. The time is so far gone and I can only manage the first part. So I must depart from my original intention. And I will restrict myself to some thoughts which occur to me upon the first portion of our text.

"I pray not that You should take them out of the world." Perhaps tomorrow you will be saying, "I am very sorry Sunday is over. I am obliged to go to business again. I wish it were always Sunday, that I might attend to my preaching, or to the schools, or to the prayer meeting, or to the tract-distributing. No obstructions of the world afflict me there, no vexations of the spirit occur there. I am sick of the world; oh, if I could never go into it again." Let me jog your elbow a bit. Does Jesus think so? Hear Him! "I pray not that You should take them out of the world." There is no remedy for the ill, if it is an ill—therefore endure it with becoming fortitude! Yes, rather seek to improve the opportunity thus afforded you of conferring a blessing upon your race and of gaining advantages for yourselves.

The pious mind will know how to improve the very sight of sin to its own sanctification. It will learn humility when it remembers that restraining grace, alone, prevents a similar fault in itself. It will gather subjects for gratitude and admiration from the fact that grace, alone, has made it to differ. Never shall we value divine grace so much as when we see the evil from which it delivers us! Never shall we more abhor sin than when we discern its visible deformity! Bad society is, in itself, like the poisonous cassava shrub—but if baked in the fire of grace, it may even be rendered useful! True grace casts salt into the poisonous stream and then, when forced to ford it, the filth is destroyed. Abide, then, O soldier, in the trenches of labor and battle, for the hardness of service is beneficial to you.

But remember while here that you lose no opportunity of attacking the foe. Never miss an opportunity of having a shot at the devil! Be ready on all occasions to do mischief to the enemy. In business, drop a word of savor and unction. In company, turn the conversation heavenward; in private, wrestle at the throne. I do not advise you to intrude religion at unseasonable hours. I do not conceive it to be your duty, when a customer calls to pay a bill, to ask him into your office and spend half an hour in prayer with him. Nor would I think it necessary to sanctify your ribbons and shawls by exhorting the purchasers across the counter! Some have not been quite innocent of the charge of cant who make as much use of religion to attract customers as they do of their plate glass window. Do not talk of religion to be heard of men but when a fair opportunity offers, out with your rifle and take a steady aim! Cromwell's singular advice to his soldiers was, "Trust in God, my friends, and keep your powder dry." In a better sense this is mine—more than all keep up a continual fire on the Enemy by a holy life! Nothing will more reprove sin than your holiness. If you cannot tell the stick it is crooked, you can prove it to be so

by laying a straight one side by side with it. So put your purity before the impure and they will be effectually reproved!

Well then, again, *do not be afraid to go out into the world to do good.* Christ is keeping you in the world for the advantage of your fellow men. I am sometimes wicked enough to think that I would rather go anywhere than stand up again and preach my Master's gospel. Like Jonah, I have thought I would really pay my fare to be carried away to Tarshish, instead of coming back to Nineveh. So would some of you who have tried to preach and found you could not succeed as you desired. But do not be down-hearted, my brothers! A Christian should never get so. If you have but one listener, today, perhaps the next time the number will be doubled, and so on, till they cannot be counted! Never say, "I wish to go out of this world." Do not murmur, "My life is prolonged beyond my joys." Do what you can! Do not go among people with fear. Do not be ashamed to look duty in the face. If you are not successful, at first, do not be cowards and run away from your guns! We should do all we can to bring our guns into line with our Brothers and take good aim at our foes. Never desert your work, though you come home distressed in spirit, though you see no gleam of success and nothing is gained. Remember you cannot run out of the battle, but you must go on. And you cannot escape the service. On, then, and glory shall be yours, by God's grace!

Now, my brethren, what bearing has this text upon the ungodly? There are some here, my dear friends, of whom I have sometimes thought that I could almost pray that God would take them out of the world! I can tell you why—they are so wicked—so dreadfully wicked! They are such hardened reprobates, with such iron souls, that they seem as if they never would be turned to God! There are some here whose portion it would appear to be damned and to lead others to the same condition. I know a village where there is a man so vicious, so abandoned, that I could almost pray for him to be removed out of the world. He is so awfully wicked that many of those I thought hopeful Christians, have been poisoned by his example. Indeed, he seems to be depraving the entire population! He stands like a deadly Upas tree, with outspread branches, over-shadowing the whole place. He is consuming all around him. And instead of it being a mercy for him to be here, it would be like a mercy if he were gone! Are not some of you like that man? Are you not so bad that you are doing all the mischief in the world you can? You never do anything for the cause of Christ. You are always trying to do your utmost against it. You never sow a little blade of God's grass where none grew before. You are of no service and yet you are spared because Jesus says, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world." He prays that you may be in the

world a little longer! And what has He preserved you from? First, fever comes and bows you down. But Christ says, "Let him not depart yet. O spare him now." And you are spared. The second time disease comes near you and great pains bow you down. Again He prays, "Spare him!" And you are yet safe. The third time you are fast approaching your end. Now the angel of death is lifting up the glittering steel and his axe is almost fallen on you. Yet Christ says, "Spare him, angel! Spare him—perhaps he may yet turn to Me with full purpose of heart." He whom you hate, loved you so much that He interceded for you and, therefore, you were spared till now. Remember, however, that this reprieve will not continue forever. At last Justice will cry, "Cut him down, he cumbers the ground." Some of you have been cumbering the ground for 60 or 70 years—old sinners—of no use in this world. Is it so? There you are! Occupying the ground, keeping other trees from growing and of no use! Your family is being damned by your example. The whole neighborhood is tainted by you. Do not tell me I should not speak so roughly. I tell you as long as I have a tongue in my head you shall have no mincemeat from me! If you are lost, it shall not be for want of plain speaking and honest warning. Oh, you cumber-grounds! How much digging and dunging have you received at the Lord's hand and yet you are fruitless? The axe will soon be at your root and oh, the fire into which you shall be cast! Ungodly man, you are spared until your overflowing cup of sin is dropping like oil upon the flame of vengeance and the increasing fire will presently reach you. The longer the archer draws the bow, the mightier is the force of the arrow. What though vengeance tarries, it is that its sword may be sharpened and its arm nerved for direr execution. Oh, you gray-heads! A little more delay and the stroke shall fall—tremble and kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little!

And yet, I think some of you who have cumbered the ground do most heartily desire to serve God. Poor sinner! I rejoice that you feel that you have been a cumber-ground. Do you confess that you have been a poor thorn and briar until now? Do you acknowledge that the Lord had been just to you if He had damned you? Then come as you are and cast yourself on Jesus—without works, without merit! Will you ask the Lord to turn you into a good fig tree? If you will, He will do it, for He declares that He hears prayer!

There was once a poor man in a small country town that had not all the sense people usually have, but he had sense enough to be a great drunkard and swearer! As God would have it, he once listened to a poor woman who was singing—

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all-in-all."

Home he went, repeating these words—he put his trust in a crucified Savior, and was really converted. Well, he soon came to church, and although he was a peddler and always traveling about, he said, "I want to join your church." They, remembering his sinful way of life, required some great evidence of a change before they received him, "Oh" he said, "I must come in." "But you have been such a great sinner and you are unconverted," added the elders. "Well," said poor Jack, "I don't know if I'm unconverted, and I confess I am a *great* sinner—but—

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all-in-all."

They could not get from him any other testimony save this. He would only say—

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all-in-all."

They could not refuse him, and therefore accepted him for fellowship. After this he was always happy. One day a Christian said to him, "You always seem so happy and pleased, Jack; how is it?" "Well" he said, "I ought to be happy, for—

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all-in-all."

"Well but," said the gentleman, "I can't see how you can be always so happy and sure. I sometimes lose my evidences." "I don't," said Jack,

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is in my all-in-all."

"Ah," said a friend, "I am at times miserable because I remember my sad sinfulness even since conversion." "Ah," said Jack, "You have not begun to sing—

'I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all-in-all.'"

"Oh," said the friend, "How do you get rid of your doubts and fears? My faith frequently fails, and I miss my sure hope in Christ. My frames are so variable and feelings so contrary, what do you think of that?" "Think?" said poor Jack, "Why Master, I have no good things to care about—

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all-in-all."

Well, then, if there is anyone here who is "a poor sinner and nothing at all"—where is he? In the gallery, or sitting down below? If he cannot say all that poor man said; if he can say the first line, he need not fear to say the second! Never mind if he can't say—

"Jesus Christ is my all-in-all."

If he can say—

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,"

he is most assuredly on the right road!

"Oh, but," says one, "I am sinful, vile, worthless." All right! You're "a poor sinner and nothing at all," and Jesus Christ is willing to be your "all-in-all." "But I have blasphemed God, departed from His ways and grievous! I transgressed!" Well, I believe all that and a great deal more, and am very glad to hear it, or thus I see you are—

"A poor sinner and nothing at all."

I am very glad if you will hold that opinion of yourself. "Ah! but I am afraid I have sinned too much. When I try, I cannot do anything! When I try to mend my ways; when I try to believe in Christ, I cannot." We are glad, very glad of it Brother, that you are—

"A poor sinner and nothing at all."

If you had a single particle of goodness; if you had a little bit—not big enough to cover the top of your little finger—we would not be glad. But if you are—

"A poor sinner and nothing at all,
Jesus Christ is your all-in-all."

Come! Will you have Him? You are "nothing at all." Will you have Christ? Here He stands. Ask—it is all He wants, for you are the object of His regard. There are only three steps. One is to step out of self. The second is to step upon Jesus. The third is to step into heaven. You have taken one step. I am sure you will take the others. God never makes you feel you are, "A poor sinner and nothing at all," but, sooner or later, He gives—

"Jesus Christ as your all-in-all."

O poor sinner, do not be doubtful of my Master's power! Do but touch the hem of His garment, and you shall be made whole! Like the poor woman in the crowd, do but get at it, and touch it, and He will surely say unto you, "You are saved."

If you will go to Him with this cry—

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
And Jesus Christ is my all-in-all."

Then you will see the blessed reason why Jesus interceded thus—"I pray not that You should take them out of the world."

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CHASTISEMENT
NO. 48

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 28, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of Him."
Hebrews 12:5

GOD'S people can never, by any possibility, be punished for their sins! God has punished them already in the person of Christ. Christ, their substitute, has endured the full penalty for all their guilt and neither the justice nor the love of God can ever exact, again, that which Christ has paid. Punishment can never happen to a child of God in the judicial sense—he can never be brought before God as his Judge, as charged with guilt—because that guilt was long ago transferred to the shoulders of Christ. The punishment was exacted at the hands of his Surety! But yet, while the sin cannot be punished, while the Christian cannot be condemned, he can be chastised. He shall never be arraigned before God's bar as a criminal, and punished for his guilt, because he now stands in a new relationship—that of a child to his parent—as a son he may be chastised on account of sin. Folly is bound up in the heart of all God's children and the rod of the Father must bring that folly out of them. It is essential to observe the distinction between punishment and chastisement. Punishment and chastisement may agree as to the nature of the suffering—the one suffering may be as great as the other. The sinner who, while here is punished for his guilt, may suffer no more in this life than the Christian who is only chastised by his parent. They do not differ as to the nature of the punishment, but they differ in the mind of the punisher and in the relationship of the person who is punished. God punishes the sinner on his own account because He is angry with the sinner and His justice must be avenged. His Law must be honored and His commands must have their dignity maintained. But He does not *punish* the believer! He afflicts him for his profit, He lays on the rod for His child's advantage. He has a good design towards the person who receives the chastisement. While in *punishment,* the design is simply with God for God's glory, in *chastisement* it is with the person chastised for his good, for his spiritual profit and benefit!

Besides, punishment is laid on a man in anger. God strikes him in anger—but when He afflicts His *child*, chastisement is applied in love. His strokes are, all of them, put there by the hand of love! The rod has been

baptized in deep affection before it is laid on the believer's back. God does not afflict willingly, nor grieve us for nothing. Out of love and affection He perceives that if He leaves us unchastened, we shall bring upon ourselves misery ten thousand-fold greater than we shall suffer by His slight rebukes and the gentle blows of His hand! Believer, understand this in the very beginning—that whatever your trouble, or your affliction—there cannot be anything punitive in it. You must never say—"Now God is punishing me for my sin." You have fallen from your steadfastness when you talk so. God cannot do that. He has once and for all done it. "The chastisement of our peace was upon HIM and by HIS stripes we are healed." He is *chastising* you, not *punishing* you! He is correcting you in measure; He is not smiting you in wrath. There is no hot displeasure in His heart. Even though His brow may be ruffled, there is no anger in His breast. Even though His eyes may have closed upon you, He hates you not—He still loves you! He is not angry with His heritage, for He sees no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel, considered in the person of Christ. It is simply because He loves you—because you are sons—that He, therefore, chastises you.

Perhaps this morning I may have some within these walls who are passing under the chastising hand of God. It is to them that I shall have to speak. You are not, all of you, in trial; I know no father chastises his whole family at once. It is so seldom that God afflicts people, after all, compared with their faults, that we must not expect to find in this congregation, perhaps, one-half of the children of God passing under the rod of the covenant. But if you are not under it, now, you will have to pass under it some time or other in your life! So that what we may say, if it is not profitable to you in present circumstances, yet if treasured up and remembered, it shall be fetched out in some future time. Then the wine will not have lost its flavor by keeping, but have improved—and you will find it a bottle of cordial to your spirit—useful to your heart!

There are two dangers against which a person under the chastising hand of God should always be very careful to keep a strict lookout. They are these—*"My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord."* That is one. On the other hand—*"Neither faint when you are rebuked of Him."* Two evils—the one is *despising the rod* and the other is *fainting under* it. Evils always hunt in couples—sins always go in a leash. It is a marvelous thing that there are always to be found two evils, side by side. We have said, sometimes, extremes are dangerous and for this reason—that one evil has its opposite—which is equally a hurtful thing! Take this—there is a haughty pride which laughs at the rod. On the other hand, there is a foolish faintness which faints under it. I have found through life that there is always a Scylla and a Charybdis. A rock on the one side and a whirlpool on the other, between which it is dangerous to steer! On the one hand we are tempted to feel that we can do something and to trust in

our works. If we try to shun that, we run into sloth and leave off doing anything. At times we get proud of what we have accomplished. And in seeking to avoid that, we become despairing and desponding. There are always two evils on the opposite side of one another. The way of righteousness is a difficult pass between two great mountains of error! And the great secret of the Christian life is to wind his way along the narrow valley. God help us to do so! We will point out the two this morning.

The first evil to which the chastened Christian is liable is this—*he may despise the hand of God.* The second is that *he may faint when he is rebuked*. We will begin with the first—"My son despise not you the chastening of the Lord."

I. This may be done in five ways—and in discussing the subject I shall propose the remedy for each of these as we pass along.

First, a man may despise the chastening of the Lord *when he murmurs at it*. Ephraim is like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. When a son of God first feels the rod, he is like a bullock—he kicks at it, he cannot bear it. He is an unbroken colt and when he first feels the collar put upon his shoulders, he rears in the air and by all manner of ways expresses his aversion to it. The first time a child of God receives a blow from his Father's hand, he may possibly turn round upon his own tender Father and murmur at Him—"Why ought I to have this? Why am I thus punished and afflicted? Why should I be chastised? What have I done to be afflicted and chastened?" You will wonder, perhaps, that a man who has grace in his heart should talk like this. But in reality we do say so—not with the words of our lips, but with the thoughts of our hearts—for we sit down and say, "I am the man who has seen affliction—I am the man more tried and troubled than others. No one is ever chastened as I am!" And we look around with the eye of jealousy, exclaiming, "That man is happier than I—that man has less sorrow and suffering." We are too apt to put our own condition in the worst place and describe ourselves as being the most afflicted of all God's people. Though we blush to say it, it is true. There are murmurers in the midst of Israel right now, as well as in the camp of Israel of old. There are people of God who, when the rod falls, cry out against it. Who, instead of kissing the Son lest He be angry, turn round upon Him and speak against the afflictive dispensations of God! We know, ourselves, what it is when we have a little sickness, to be so cross that hardly anybody dares to speak to us. And if we have a little pain, perhaps in our head, we know what it is to think the entire world is going wrong and to be grieved and vexed and melancholy on that account. Any of you have been foolish enough when bereaved of your property, to cry out, "Ah, God takes everything away! He smites me with one stroke upon another. Surely He is an unkind God!" And you have felt, when you have lost your friends that you could *not* say, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." You have

thought, "Oh, why this? Simon is not and Joseph is not, and now you would take Benjamin away? All these things are against me." We have murmured. Now listen to the exhortation—"My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord." That is despising God's chastening, when we murmur against it! Patience is the only way to receive it. A lack of resignation shows we despise God's chastening hand.

A word for you, O murmurer! Why should you murmur against the dispensations of your heavenly Father? Can He treat you more harshly than you deserve? Consider what a rebel you were, once, but He has pardoned you. Surely if He now chooses to lay the rod upon you, you need not cry out! Have you not read that among the Roman emperors of old, it was the custom when they would set a slave at liberty, to give him a blow to the head and then say, "Go free"? This blow which your Father gives you is a token of your liberty—and do you grumble because He smites you rather harshly? After all, are not His strokes fewer than your crimes and lighter than your guilt? Are you smitten as harshly as your sins deserve? Consider the corruption that is in your breast and then will you wonder that there needs so much of the rod to fetch it out? Weigh yourself and discern how much dross is mingled with your gold—and do you think the fire too hot to burn away so much dross as you have? Why, I think you have not the furnace hot enough! There is too much dross, too little fire. The rod is not laid on harshly enough, for that proud spirit of yours proves that your heart is not thoroughly sanctified. And though it may be right with God, your words do not sound like it and your actions do not portray the holiness of your nature. It is the old Adam within you that is groaning. Take heed if you murmur, for it will go hard with murmurers! God always chastises His children twice if they do not bear the first blow patiently. I have often heard a father say, "Boy, if you cry for that, you shall have something to cry for, by-and-by." So, if we murmur a little, God gives us something that will make us cry. If we groan for nothing, He will give us something that will make us groan! Sit down in patience. Despise not the chastening of the Lord, be not angry with Him, for He is not angry with you—say not that He deals too harshly with you. Let Humility rise up and speak—"It is well, O Lord! Just are You in Your chastising, for I have sinned. Righteous are You in Your blows, for I need them to fetch me near to You. If You leave me uncorrected and unchastened, I, a poor wanderer, must pass away to the gulf of death and sink into the pit of eternal perdition." There is the first sense in which we may despise the chastening of the Lord—we may murmur under it.

Secondly, we despise the chastening of the Lord *when we say there is no use in it*. There are certain things that happen to us in life which we immediately set down for providence. If a grandfather of ours should die and leave us five hundred pounds, what a merciful providence that would be! If by something strange in business we were suddenly to ac-

cumulate a fortune that would be a blessed providence! If an accident happens and we are preserved and our limbs are not hurt—that is always providence. But suppose we were to *lose* five hundred pounds—would not *that* be providence? Suppose our establishment should break up and business fail—would not *that* be providence? Suppose we should, during the accident, break our leg—would not *that* be providence? There is the difficulty. It is always providence when it is a good thing. But why is it not providence when it does not happen to be just as *we* please? Surely it is so. For if the one thing is ordered by God, so is the other! It is written, in Isaiah 45:7, "I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things." But I question whether it is not despising the chastening of the Lord when we set a prosperous providence before an adverse one. I think that an adverse providence ought to be the cause of as much thankfulness as a prosperous one. And if it is not, we are violating the command, "In everything give thanks." But you say, "Of what use will such a trial be to me? I cannot see that it can by any possibility be useful to my soul. Here I was growing in grace just now, but there is something that has dampened all my ardor and overthrown my zeal. Just now I was on the Mount of assurance, but God has brought me to the Valley of Humiliation. Can that be any good to me? A few weeks ago I had wealth and I distributed it in the cause of God. Now I have none. What can be the use of that? All these things are against me." Now, you are despising the chastening of the Lord—when you say that is of no use. No child thinks the rod of much value. Anything in the house is of more use than that rod, in his opinion. And if you were to ask the child which part of the household furniture could be dispensed with, he would like chairs, tables and everything else to remain but that! The rod he does not think of any good whatever! He despises the rod. Ah, and so do we. We think it cannot benefit us. We want to get rid of the rod and turn it away. "My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord."

Let me show you how wrong you are. What? Does your ignorance affect to say that God is unwise? I thought it was written that He is too wise to err! And I did think that if you were a believer that He was too good to be unkind. And does your little wisdom arrogate to itself the chair of honor? Does your finite knowledge stand up before your Maker and tell Him He is unwise in what He does? Will you dare to say that one of His purposes shall be unfulfilled, that He does an unwise act? O then, you are impudently arrogant! You are also impudently ignorant if you will thus speak! Say not so, but bend meekly down before His superior wisdom and say, "O God I believe that in the darkness You are brewing light, that in the storm clouds You are gathering sunshine, that in the deep mines, You are fashioning diamonds and in the beds of the sea, You are making pearls. I believe that however unfathomable may be Your de-

signs, yet they have a bottom. Though it is in the whirlwind and in the storm, You have a way and that way is good and altogether righteous! I would not have You alter one atom of Your dispensations. It shall be just as You will. I bow before You and I give my ignorance the word to hold its tongue and to be silenced while Your wisdom speaks words of right." "My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord" by thinking that it can be of no possible service to you!

There is a third way in which men despise the chastening of the Lord—*we may think it dishonorable to be chastened by God*. How many men have thought it to be dishonorable to be persecuted for righteousness sake! A young man, for instance, is in a situation in business where he has a large number of fellow workmen with him. They are accustomed to jeer him, to call him pretty titles—Methodist, Dissenter, Presbyterian—or some other kind of name most common among the worldly. This young man, for a time, bears it, but still thinks it a kind of disgrace to him. He does not know how to endure it. So, after a while, feeling beaten by these jeers and overcome by these insults, he denies his Lord because he discovers that the reproach of Christ is dishonorable to him. My son, if you do thus, you despise the chastening of the Lord! If you think that reproach for Christ's sake is a dishonor, you judge wrongly of it, for it is the greatest honor that can possibly happen to you! There are many of you who count that religion is very honorable while you can be respectable in it, while you can walk in respectable society. But if the cause of God brings you into tribulation, if it engenders the laugh and jeer of the worldling, the hiss and scorn of the world—then you think it a dishonor. But my son, you do not weigh the blessing rightly! I tell you once again, it is the glory of a man to be chastened for God's sake! When they say all manner of evil against us falsely, we put that down not in the book of dishonor, but in the scroll of glory. When they call us by scornful titles, we write not that down for loss, but for gain! We accept their jeers as honors. We count the vile things they cast at us in the pillory of scorn to be a donation of pearls and diamonds—we take their evil speaking, we read it by the light of the Word of God—and we discover that in it lies music, notes of honor and chords of glory to us forever. Now you who faint under a little trouble and despise the chastening of the Lord, let me encourage you in this way. My son, despise not the persecution! Remember how many men have borne it. What an honor it is to suffer for Christ's sake! Remember the crown of martyrdom has been worn by many heads better than yours. Oh, I think it would be the greatest dignity I could ever attain to, if the enemy would place the blood-red crown of martyrdom around this brow! We, in these gentle times, cannot suffer for Christ's sake. God has not put us in evil times because we cannot encounter so much as we wish for Him. These times are not good for us. We almost wish for different ones—when we might be more partakers

with Christ in His sufferings. We would almost envy those blessed men of yore who had the opportunity of showing their courage and faith to all men by enduring more for Christ.

And if any of you *are* in a peculiar place of trouble where you have more persecution than others, you ought to glory in it and be glad of it! He that stands in the thickest part of the battle shall have the highest glory, at last. The old warriors would not stand and skirmish a little on the outside of the army. But what would they say? "To the center, men! To the center!" And they cut through thick and thin till they reached the place where the standard was—the hotter the battle, the more glory the warrior felt! He could glory that he had been where shafts flew the thickest and where lances were hurled like hail. "I have been near the standard," he could say, "I have smitten the standard-bearer down." Count it glory to go into the hottest part of the field. Fear not, man, your head is covered in the day of battle. The shield of God can easily repel all the darts of the enemy. Be bold for His name's sake. Go on, still rejoicing! But mark you, if you turn back, you are guilty of the sin of despising the cross and despising the chastening of the Lord! Do not do so, but rather write it down for an honor and glory to be persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Again—in the fourth place, we despise the chastening of the Lord *when we do not earnestly seek to amend by it*. Many a man has been corrected by God and that correction has been in vain. I have known Christians who have committed some sin. God, by the rod, would have shown them the evil of that sin. They have been smitten and seen the sin, and never afterwards corrected it. *That* is despising the chastening of the Lord! When a father chastises a son for anything he has done and the boy does it again, directly, it shows that he despises his father's chastening. And so have we seen Christians who have had an error in their lives and God has chastened them on account of it, but they have done it again. Ah, you will remember there was a man named Eli. God chastened him once when he sent Samuel to tell him dreadful news—that because he had not reproved his children, those children would be destroyed. But Eli kept on the same as ever—he despised the chastening of the Lord although his ears were made to tingle! And in a little while God did something else for him. His sons were taken away and then it was too late to mend, for the children were gone. The time he might have reformed, his character had passed away. How many of you get chastened of God and do not bear the rod? There are many deaf souls that do not hear God's rod—many Christians are blind and cannot see God's purposes and when God would take some folly out of them, the folly is still retained. It is not every affliction that benefits the Christian. It is only a *sanctified* affliction. It is not every trial that purifies an heir of light—it is only a trial that God, Himself, sanctifies by His grace. Take heed if God is trying you

that you search and find out the reason. Are the consolations of God small with you? Then there is some reason for it. Have you lost that joy you once felt? There is some cause for it. Many a man would not have half so much suffered if he would but look to the cause of it. I have sometimes walked a mile or two, almost limping along because there was a stone in my shoe and I did not stop to look for it—and many a Christian goes limping for years because of the stones in his shoe! If he would only stop to look for them, he would be relieved. What is the sin that is causing you pain? Get it out and take away the sin, for if you do not, you have not regarded this admonition which speaks unto you as unto sons—"My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord."

Once more, and then we will pass away from that part of the subject. We despise the chastening of the Lord *when we despise those that God chastens*. You say, "Poor old Mrs. So-and-So, the last seven years she has been bed-ridden—what is the good of her in the church? Would it not be a mercy if she were dead? We always have to be keeping her—one and another giving her charities. Really, what is the good of her?" Many will go to see her and they will say, "Well, she is a very good sort of woman, but it would be a happy release if she were taken." They mean it would be a happy release for *them*, as they would not have to give her anything! But mark you, if you think little of those whom God is chastising, you are despising the God who chastens them! There is another man and he frequents the house of God, but he comes there in much affliction, much pain. Ah, you think that weakness of body incapacitates him from being of service to the church? If he is called upon to pray, there is a sweet brokenness of spirit about his prayer, but there is not that pointedness and warmth we would desire. And some will say when they are walking home, "Brother So-and-So, he is always melancholy and always dealing with the gloomy side of the Word of God. I don't like to talk to him; I would rather mix with the cheerful and light-hearted, and those Christians who are happy on the mount of assurance. I don't think I shall walk home with him, for he is so miserable it makes one feel so dull to be in his company." My son, my son! You are despising the chastened ones of the Lord! That man is being chastened. Be sure and keep his company, for though you do not know it, beneath the clothes of mourning he wears a garment of light! There is more in those chastened ones, very often, than there is in any one of us! I can speak from experience. The most tried children of God have been those that I have picked up the most from. Sometimes I go and see a poor much-tried countryman that I have told you about. You remember one saying of his—"Depend upon it; if you or I get an inch above the ground we get that inch too high." Well, I heard another the other day and I will give it to you. "I have been troubled lately," he said, "with that old devil, and I could not get rid of him for a long while. At last, after he had been conjuring up all my sins and

bringing them all before my remembrance, I said to him, 'you rascal you! Did not I transfer all my business to Jesus Christ long ago, bad debts and all? What right have you to bring them here? I laid them all on Christ; I made a transfer of the whole concern to Him. Go, tell my Master about them; don't come troubling me.'" Well, I thought that was not so bad. It was pretty rough, but it was gloriously true, and I have thought of it many times! We transferred the whole—bad debts and all—to Christ! He took the whole concern, the whole stock and everything. All our sins were given up into the hands of Jesus, so why need we be troubled? When Satan and Conscience come, we will tell them to go to our Master! He will settle all the accounts with them. Do not be ashamed to talk with the chastised ones—shun them not because of their poverty. I would walk with a true saint if he had a ragged coat and a hat without a crown.

II. The second evil, upon which we shall have to be brief, is this—*"Nor faint when you are rebuked of Him."* We, on the one hand, must not despise it and say, "I care not for the rod," and act like the stoic. And on the other hand we should not faint and give up everything because the Lord pleases to correct us in a measure and to chastise us in love. There are two or three different ways whereby we may faint under the afflicting hand of God.

The first way of fainting is *when we give up all exertion under the rod.* You understand what I mean better than I can describe it to you, for you have seen some such. I must give you a picture. I cannot tell you what I mean unless I do. There is a good woman there. She always regularly attended the house of God. She strove for her Master, was busy in the Sunday school, in the distribution of tracts and every other way. Suddenly she lost that excellent gift, the fullness of assurance. Her faith began to totter and she now trembles and fears that she is not accepted in the Beloved. And do you know what she has done? She has given up going to the house of God! She has given up attendance at the Sunday school! She does nothing for her Master at all! And if you ask her why it is, she says that God's hand is heavy on her and she cannot do anything, she has given it up. She is like a person in a fainting fit that cannot move. She is motionless, she does nothing. Many I have known in this state. Because they cannot enjoy all the comfort they wished, they will not do anything. I have seen some with eyes starting from their sockets who have said to me, "Oh, I am under such horror of darkness, so terribly am I afflicted, I have lost all evidence of Christianity—I never was a child of God. I must give it all up—I cannot keep on. I faint under it. I can do no more. Though I go to God's house, I feel as if I could not pray. As for singing, I dare not. I dare not read my Bible. I think I must give it up." Brethren, faint not when you are corrected of Him! God does not like sulky children, and there are many of His children fainting out of pure sulkiness and nothing else! Because God does not please to do as *they*

like, they will do nothing at all! "I must be top sawyer," one says, "and I will not be at the bottom to shove the saw up. If I cannot be where I like, I will be nowhere at all." We have many of these. Because they have to be shaft horses, now and then, they will not pull. If they could always be in front and wear the ribbons, it would be well, but when they have to go behind all, they "jib," as you say, and will not go at all! Instead of fainting, we should go forward when we have the lash. We should say, "Am I smitten? I will turn to the hand that smote me. Did my Father strike me? Then I will take care, by more ardent duty that He does not strike me again. I will go my way the more swiftly and get away from the rod. Does He send a cross every day out of love to me? I will seek to work all the more and so, if it is possible, I shall have my prayer fulfilled. 'Forgive my debts and pardon my transgressions.'"

Again, the man faints *when he doubts whether he is a child of God under chastisement*. Too many of the children of God have the blow of the Father's rod and they at once conclude that they are not the Father's children at all! Like one of old, they say, "If it is so, why am I thus?" They forget that it is "through much tribulation" they must "enter the kingdom of heaven." They forget that there is not a son whom the Father does not chasten. You are saying, this morning, "I cannot be a child, or I should not be in poverty and distress." Talk not so foolishly! That trial is more a proof of adoption than it is that you are not His! Remember the passage—"If we are not partakers of chastisement, then are we bastards and not sons." Say not He has forgotten you, but look upon your trial as a proof of His love! Cecil once called to see his friend, Williams, and the servant said he could not see him because he was in great trouble. "Then I would rather see him," said Cecil. And Williams, hearing it was his old pastor, said, "Show him up." Up he went and there stood poor Williams, his eyes suffused with tears, his heart almost broken—his dear child was dying. "Thank God," said Cecil, "I have been anxious about you for some time. You have been so prosperous and successful in everything that I was afraid my Father had forgotten you! But I know He remembers you now. I do not wish to see your child full of pain and dying, but I am glad to think my Father has not forgotten you." Three weeks after that Williams could see the truth of it, though it seemed a harsh saying at first.

Again—many persons faint *by fancying that they shall never get out of their trouble*. "Three long months," says one, "have I striven against this sad trouble which overwhelms me and I have been unable to escape it." "For this year," says another, "I have wrestled with God in prayer that He would deliver me out of this whirlpool, but deliverance has never come. I am almost inclined to give the matter up. I thought He kept His promises and would deliver those who called upon Him, but He has not delivered me, now, and He never will." What? Child of God, talk thus of your Father? Say He will never leave off smiting because He has afflicted you so

long? Rather say, "He must have chastened me long enough, now, and I shall soon have deliverance." If a man is in the woods and cannot see his way out, he goes straight on, for he thinks he shall come out some day or other. And if he is wise, he will climb the highest tree he can find in order to discover the right way. That is what you should do—climb one of the promises and you will see the other side of the woods with all the sweet fields where you shall feed in green pastures and lie down under your Savior's guidance! Say not you cannot escape! The fetters on your hands may not be broken by *your* feeble fingers but the hammer of the Almighty can break them in a moment! Let them be laid on the anvil of providence and be broken by the hand of Omnipotence and then they shall be scattered to the winds. Up, man! Up! Like Samson, grasp the pillars of your troubles and pull down the house of your affliction about the heads of your sins and you, yourself, shall come out more than conqueror!

I had intended to finish up by referring you to the succeeding verses, but instead of doing so, let me ask, "What son is there whom the Father chastens not?" You ministers of God who preach the gospel—is there among your ranks one son whom his Father chastens not? Unanimously they reply, "We all have been chastened!" You holy prophets who testified God's Word with the Holy Spirit from heaven—is there one among your number whom God chastened not? Abraham, Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Malachi—answer! And unanimously you cry, "There is not one among us whom the Father chastens not." You kings, you chosen ones, you Davids and you Solomons—is there one in your high and lofty ranks who has escaped chastisement? Answer David! Were you not obliged to cross the Brook Kidron in the darkness? Answer Hezekiah! Did not you spread the letter before the Lord? Answer Jehoshaphat! Had not you your cross when your ships were broken that were sent to Tarshish for gold? Oh you starry hosts above—translated out of the reach of the trials of this world—is there one among you whom the Father chastened not? Not one! There is not one in heaven whose back was unscarred by the chastening rod if he attained to the age when he needed it. The infant, alone, escapes, flying at once from his mother's breast to heaven. There is one more that I will ask—the Son of God—*the Son par excellence*, the Chief of all the family! You, Son of God Incarnate, did You escape the rod? Son without sin, were You a Son without punishment? Were you chastised? Listen! The hosts of earth and heaven reply—the church militant and triumphant answers—"The chastisement of our peace was even upon Him—He suffered. He bore the cross. He endured the curse as well as any of us. Yes, more—He endured ten thousand-fold more chastisement than any of us can by any possibility endure." "My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when you are rebuked of Him."

In closing, let me ask those who are afflicted and have no religion, where they get *their comfort*. The Christian derives it from the fact that he

is a son of God and he knows that the affliction is for his good. Where do you get comfort from? It has often puzzled me how poor tried worldlings get on. I can somewhat guess how they can be happy—when the glass is full, when hearts are glad and joyous, when hilarity and mirth sparkle in their eyes—when the board is covered and the family is well. But what does the worldling do when he loses his wife, when his children are taken away, when his health departs and he, himself, is near unto death? I leave him to answer. All I can say is I wonder every day that there are not more suicides, considering the troubles of this life and how few there are that have the comforts of religion. Poor sinner, even if there were no heaven and hell, I would recommend to you *this* religion! For even if only in this life we had hope, we would be, of all men, most *happy*, really, in our spirits, although we might seem to be "of all men most miserable." I tell you, if we were to die like dogs—if there were no second world—so happy does the Christian religion make the heart, that it were worthwhile having it for this life alone! The secularist who thinks of this world, only, is a fool for not thinking of Christianity—for it confers a benefit in *this* world as well as in that which is to come! It makes us bear our troubles. What would break your backs are only feathers to us. What would destroy your spirits are to us "light afflictions which are but for a moment." We find in our hearts, light—even in the depth of darkness! Where you find darkness, we have light. And, where you have light we have the brilliance of the sun!

May God put you in the number of His saved family, and then if He chastens you, I ask whether you will not think His rod light when compared with that sword which you deserve to have strike you dead! God give you, if you are chastened now, that you may be chastened and not killed—that you may be chastened with the righteous, and not condemned with the wicked! Amen.

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THE GOD OF PEACE
NO. 49

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, NOVEMBER 4, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."
Romans 15:33.

PAUL once advised the Romans to strive. Three verses before our text he actually gives them an exhortation to strive, and yet here he utters a prayer that the God of peace might be with them all. Lest you should think him to be a man of strife, you must read the verse. He says—"Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." That is a holy striving and such a striving as that we wish always to see in the church—a striving in prayer, a surrounding the throne, together, besieging God's mercy seat, a crying out before God—until it actually amounts to a striving together in our prayers! There is also another kind of striving which is allowed in the church, and that is striving earnestly after the best gifts—a sweet contention which all of us shall excel all others in love, in duty, and in faith. May God send us more striving of that kind in our churches—a striving in prayer, a striving in duty! And when we have mentioned these strivings, we find them of so peaceable a kind that we come back to the benediction of our text—"Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen." Without any preface, we shall consider, first, *the title*—"The God of peace." And secondly, *the benediction*—"The God of peace be with you all. Amen."

I. First of all, *the title*. Mars, among the heathens, was called the god of war. Janus was worshipped in periods of strife and bloodshed. But our God, Jehovah, styles Himself not the God of war, but the God of peace. Although He permits war in this world—sometimes for necessary and useful purposes; although He superintends them, and has even styled Himself the Lord, mighty in battle, yet His holy mind abhors bloodshed and strife; His gracious Spirit loves not to see men slaughtering one another; He is emphatically, solely, entirely, and without reserve, "the God of peace." Peace is His delight—"peace on earth and goodwill towards men." Peace in heaven (for that purpose He expelled the angels)—peace throughout His entire universe is His highest wish, and His greatest delight!

If you consider God in the Trinity of His persons for a few moments, you will see that in each—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the title is apt and correct—"the God of peace." There is *God, the everlasting Father.* He is the God of peace, for He, from all eternity, planned the great covenant of peace whereby He might bring rebels near to Him, and make strangers

and foreigners fellow-heirs with the saints, and joint-heirs with His Son, Christ Jesus. He is the God of peace, for He justifies, and thereby implants peace in the soul. He accepted Christ, and, as the God of peace, He brought Him again from the dead. And He ordained peace—eternal peace with His children—through the blood of the everlasting covenant. He is the God of peace! So is *Jesus Christ*, the second person, the God of peace for, "He is our peace who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us." He makes peace between God and man! His blood, sprinkled on the fiery wrath of God, turned it to love! Or rather that which must have broken forth in wrath, though it was forever love, was allowed to display itself in loving-kindness through the wondrous mediator, Jesus Christ. And He is the God of peace because He makes peace in the conscience and in the heart. When He says, "Come unto Me all you that are heavy laden," He gives "rest. And with that rest He gives "the peace of God which passes all understanding," which keeps our heart and mind! He is moreover the God of peace in the church, for wherever Jesus Christ dwells, He creates a holy peace. As in the case of Aaron of old, the ointment poured upon the head of Christ trickles down to the very skirts of His garments, and thereby He gives peace—peace by the fruit of the lips, and peace by the fruit of the heart—unto all them who love Jesus Christ in sincerity. So is *the Holy Spirit* the God of peace. He of old brought peace when chaotic matter was in confusion, by the brooding of His wings—He caused order to appear where once there was nothing but darkness and chaos. So in dark chaotic souls, He is the God of peace. When winds from the mountains of Sinai, and gusts from the pit of hell sweep across the distressed soul; when, wandering about for rest our soul faints within us, He speaks peace to our troubles, and gives rest to our spirits; when by earthly cares we are tossed about like the sea bird, up and down, up and down, from the base of the wave to the billows' crown, He says, "peace, be still." He it is who on the Sabbath brings His people into a state of serenity and bids them enjoy—

"That holy calm, that sweet repose
Which none but he that feels it knows."

And He shall be the God of peace when at life's last hour He shall still the current of Jordan, shall hush all the howling of the fiends, shall give us peace with God through Jesus Christ, and land us safely in heaven. Blessed Trinity! However we consider You, whether as Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, Your name is still thrice well deserved—the God of peace, and the God of love!

Let us now enter into the subject and see wherein God is a God of peace. We remark that He is the God of peace, for He originally created peace; He is the God of peace, for He is the restorer of it. Though wars have broken out through sin, He is the God of peace because He preserves peace when it is made, and He is the God of peace because He shall ultimately perfect and consummate peace between all His creatures and Himself. Thus He is the God of peace.

I. First of all, He is the God of peace *because He created nothing but peace*. Go back in your imagination to the time when the majestic Father stepped from His solitude, and commenced the work of creation. Picture to yourself the moment when He speaks the word and the first matter is formed! Before that time there had been neither space, time, nor anything existing but He. He speaks and it is done; He commands and it stands fast. Behold Him scattering from His mighty hands, stars as numerous as the sparks from an anvil! Witness how by His Word worlds are fashioned and ponderous orbs roll through that immensity which, first of all, He had decreed to be their dwelling place. Lift up your eyes, and behold these great things which He has already created; let the wings of your fancy carry you through the immensity of space and the vast profound, and see if you can discover anywhere the least sign or trace of war! Go through it from the north even to the south, from the east even to the west, and mark well if you can discover one sign of discord; whether there is not one universal harmony, whether everything is not lovely, pure, and of good report. See if in the great harp of nature, there is one string which when touched by its Maker's finger, gives forth discord! See if the pipes of this great organ God has made do not all play harmoniously. Mark you well and note it; are there bulwarks formed for war? Are there spears and swords? Are there clarions and trumpets? Has God created any material with which to destroy His creatures, and desolate His realms? No! Everything is peaceable above, beneath, and all around; all is peace; there is nothing else but calm and quietness. Listen when He makes the angels! He speaks—winged seraphs fly abroad, and cherubs flash through the air on wings of fire! He speaks and multitudes of angels in their various hierarchies are brought forth while Jesus Christ, as a mighty Prince of angels, is decreed to be their head. Is there, now, in any of those angels, one sign of sorrow? When God made them, did He make one of them to be His enemy? Did He fashion one of them with the least implacability or ill-will within his bosom?

Ask the shining cohorts and they tell you, "We were not made for war, but for peace. He has not fashioned us spirits of battle, but spirits of love, joy, and quietness!" And if they sinned, He made them not to sin. They did so; they brought woe into the world of their own accord! God created no war; the evil angel brought it first. Left to his free will, he fell, but the elect angels, being confirmed by divine grace, stood fast and firm. But God was not the author of any war, or any strife. Satan of himself conceived the rebellion, but God was not the author of it. He may from all eternity have foreseen it, and it may even be said in some sense that He ordained it to manifest His justice, His glory, and to show His mercy and sovereignty in redeeming man—but God had no hand in it whatever! The Eternal renounces war; He was not the author of it. Satan led the van; that morning star who sang together with the rest, fell of himself! God was not the author of his confusion, but the author of eternal and blessed order!

Look, too, at God in the creation of this world. Go into the Garden of Eden—walk up and down its bowers. Recline under its trees and partake of its fruits. Roam through the entire world! Sit down by the seashore, or stretch yourself upon the mountain. Do you see the least sign of war? Nothing like it! There is nothing of tumult and of noise—no preparation of destruction. Look at Adam and Eve—their days are perpetual sunshine, their nights are balmy evenings of sweet repose. God has put nothing in their hearts which can disturb them. He has no ill will towards them. On the contrary, He walks with them in the evening under the trees in the cool of the day. He condescends to talk with His creatures and hold fellowship with them! He is in no sense whatever, the author of the present confusion in this world. That was brought about by our first parents through the temptation of the cross. God did not create this world for strife; when He first fashioned it, peace, peace, peace, was the universal order of the day! May there come a time when peace once more shall be restored to this great earth, and tranquility to this world! Do you not observe that God is the God of peace because He created it originally? When He pronounced His creation "very good," it was entirely without the slightest exception a peaceful creation! God is the God of peace.

But, secondly, He is the God of peace *because He restores it*. Nothing shows a man to be much fonder of peace than when he seeks to make peace between others; or, when others have offended him, he endeavors to make peace between himself and them. If I could be able at all times to maintain peace with myself, and would never provoke a quarrel, I would of course be considered a peaceful spirit. And if other persons choose to quarrel and disagree with me, and I desire and purposely set to work to bring about reconciliation, then everyone says I am a man of peace. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they are the children of God." God is the great peacemaker, and thus He is indeed the God of peace. When Satan fell, there was war in heaven. God made peace there, for He smote Satan, and cast him and his entire rebel hosts into eternal fire. He made peace by His might and power, and majesty, for He drove Satan out of heaven and expelled him by his flaming brand, to never again pollute the sacred floor of bliss, and never more to endanger Paradise by misleading his peers in heaven. So He made peace in heaven by His power.

But when man fell, God made peace not by His power, but by His mercy! Man transgresses. Poor man! Mark how God goes after him to make peace with him! "Adam, where are you?" Adam never said, "God, where are You?" But God came after Adam, and He seemed to say with a voice of affection and pity, "Adam, poor Adam, where are you? Have you become a god? The evil spirit said you would be a god—is it so? Where are you, now, poor Adam? You were once in holiness and perfection; where are you now?" And He saw the truant Adam running away from Him, running away from the great peacemaker, to hide himself beneath the trees of the garden. Again God calls, "Adam, where are you?" Adam says, "I heard Your voice in the midst of the garden, and I was afraid, be-

cause I was naked, and I hid myself." And God says, "Who told you that you were naked?" How kind He is! Even then you can see He is a Peacemaker! But when after having cursed the serpent, and sent him to the ground, He comes to talk to Adam, you see Him still more as the Peacemaker! "I will," He said, "put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed. It shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." There He was making peace through the blood of the cross! Do not conceive, however, that that was the first preparation of peace God ever made. That was the first *display* of it, but He had been making peace from all eternity! Through the covenant He made with Jesus Christ from all eternity, God's elect people were at peace with God; although God saw that man would fall; though He foresaw that His elect would with the rest depart from rectitude, and become His enemies, yet He, long before the fall, drew up a covenant with Jesus, wherein Jesus stipulated that He would pay the debts of all His people, and the Father, on their behalf, did actually and positively forgive their sins, justify their persons, take away their guilt, acquitted them, and accepted and received them unto peace with Him!

Though that was never developed until the fall, and though to each of us it is not known until we believe, yet there was always peace between God and the elect. I must tell you a tale of a poor bricklayer who met with an accident, and everyone thought he was going to die, and he did. A clergyman said to him, "My poor fellow, I am afraid you will die. Try to make your peace with God." With tears in his eyes, he looked the clergyman in the face, and said, "Make my peace with God, sir? I thank God that was made for me in the everlasting covenant by Jesus Christ long before I was born!" So beloved, it was! There was a peace—a perfect peace which God made with His Son! Jesus was not merely our ambassador, but He *was* our peace. Not merely the maker of peace, but *our peace*. And since there was a Christ before all worlds, there was peace before all worlds! Since there always will be a Christ, so there always will be peace between God and all those interested in the covenant. Oh, if we can but feel we are in the covenant—if we know we are numbered with the chosen race, and purchased with redeeming blood—then we can rejoice because God has been to us the Restorer of breaches, the Builder of cities to dwell in—He has given us peace which once we lost! He is the Restorer of peace.

Thirdly, *He is the Preserver of peace*. Whenever I see peace *in the world*, I ascribe it to God! And if it is continued, I shall always believe it is because God interferes to prevent war! So combustible are the materials of which this great world is made that I am always apprehensive of war. I do not account it amazing that one nation should strive against another—I account if far more amazing that they are not all at arms! Where did wars and fights come from? Did they not come from our lusts? Considering how much lust there is in the world, we might well conceive that there would be more war than there is! Sin is the mother of wars, and remembering how plentiful sin is, we need not marvel if it brings

forth multitudes of them! We may look for them. If the coming of Christ is indeed drawing near, then we must expect wars and rumors of wars through all the nations of the earth. But when peace is preserved, we consider it to be through the immediate interposition of God. If, then, we desire peace between nations, let us seek it of God, who is the great Pacificator! But there is an *inward peace* which God alone can cause. Am I at peace with myself, with the world, and with my Maker? Oh, if I want to retain that peace, God alone, can preserve it! I know there are some people who once enjoyed peace, but who do not now possess it; some of you once had confidence in God, but may have lost it; you once thought yourselves to be in a glorious state from which now you seem to have somewhat departed. Beloved, no one can maintain peace in the heart but God! He is the only one who can put it there.

Some people talk about doubts and fears, and seem to think they are very allowable. I have heard some say, "Well, a sailor in the sunshine knows his reckoning, and can tell where he is; he has no doubt. But if the sun withdraws, he cannot tell his longitude and latitude, and he knows not where he is." That is not, however, a fair description of *faith*. Always needing the sun needs to live by *sight*. But living by faith is to say, "I cannot tell my longitude and my latitude, but I know the Captain is at the helm, and I will trust Him anywhere." But you still cannot stay in that peaceful state of mind unless you have God in the vessel to help you to smile at the storm! We can be peaceful at times, but if God goes away, how we begin quarrelling with ourselves! God alone can preserve peace! Backslider! Have you lost it? Go and seek it again of God. Christian! Is your peace marred? Go to God, and He can say to every doubt, "Lie down, doubt," and to every fear, "Begone!" He can speak to every wind that can blow across your soul, and He can say, "Peace, be still," for He is the God of peace, since He preserves it. Trust in Him!

Fourthly, God is the God of peace *because He shall perfect and consummate it at last*. There is war in the world now. There is an evil spirit walking to and fro, a restless being, eager like a lion to devour. He is walking through dry places, seeking rest and finding none, and there are men bewitched by those evil spirits at war with God, and at war with one another. But there is a time coming—let us wait a little longer—when there shall be peace on earth, and peace throughout all God's dominions! In a few more years we look for a lasting and perpetual peace on earth. Perhaps tomorrow Jesus Christ, the Son of God will come again—without a sin offering unto salvation! We know not either the day or the hour wherein the Son of man shall come, but by-and-by He shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the noise of a trumpet! He shall come, but not as once He came—a lowly and humble man—but a glorious and exalted monarch! Then He will cause wars to cease; from that day forth and forever they will hang the useless helmets on high, and study war no more! The lion shall lie down with the kid and eat straw like the ox; the cockatrice and the serpent shall lose their hurtful powers; the weaned child shall lead the lion and the leopard, each one by his

beard, with his little hands! The day is coming, and that speedily, when there shall not be found on earth a single man who hates his brother, but when each one shall find in every other a brother and a friend. And we shall be able to say, as the old poet did, but in a larger sense, "I know not that there is one Englishman alive with whom I am one jot at odds more than the infant that is born tonight." We shall all be united! Nationalities will be leveled because made into one—and the Lord Jesus Christ shall be king of the entire earth! After that time shall come the consummation of peace, when the last great day shall have passed away, and the righteous have been severed from the wicked; when the monster battle of Armageddon shall have been fought and won; when all the righteous shall have been gathered into heaven, and the lost sent down to hell.

Where will be the room for battle then? Look at the foemen, bruised and mangled in the pit of hell, perpetually howling, victims of God's vengeance! There is no fear of war from them. There is Satan himself, crest-fallen, bruised, battered, and slain; his head is broken. There he lies despoiled—a king without his crown; there can be no fear of war from him! Mark the angels who were once under his supremacy—can they arise? No! They writhe in tortures, and bite their iron bands in misery! They have no power to lift a lance against the God of heaven! And look on sinful man, condemned for his sin to dwell with those fallen beings—can he again provoke his Maker? Will he again blaspheme? Can he oppose the gospel? No! Injured in dungeons of hot iron, there he is—an abject, ruined spirit! Ten thousands times ten thousands lost and perished sinners are there; but if they could all unite in solemn league and covenant to break the bands of death, and sever the laws of justice, He that sits in the heavens would laugh at them—the Lord would have them in derision! Peace is consummated because the enemy is crushed! Then look up yonder; there is no fear of war from those bright spirits; the angels cannot fall—their period of probation is passed forever; a second Satan shall never drag with him a third part of the stars of heaven! No angel will totter any more, and the ransomed spirits, blood-bought and washed in the fountain of Jesus' blood, will never fall again! Universal peace is come; the olive branch has outlived the laurel; the sword is sheathed, the banners are furled, the stains of blood are washed out of the world! Again it moves in its orb, and sings like its sister stars—but the one song is PEACE—for the God who made it is the God of peace!

II. Now we come to the *benediction*. "The God of peace be with you all." I am not about to address you concerning that inward peace which rests in the heart. I am sure I wish above all things that you may always enjoy a peace with your conscience, and be at peace with God. May you always know that you have the blood of Jesus to plead, that you have His righteousness to cover you, that you have His atonement to satisfy for you, and that there is nothing which can hurt you. But I wish to address you as a church and exhort you to peace.

First, I will remind you that there is great need to pray this prayer for you all, because *there are enemies to peace always lurking in all societies.* There are five great enemies to peace—avarice, ambition, envy, anger, and pride. I shall alter them a little, but use the same number. Instead of avarice, I shall commence with *error*. One of the greatest means of destroying peace is error. Error in doctrine leads to the most lamentable consequences with regard to the peace of the church. I have noticed that the greatest fallings out have been among those who are most erroneous in doctrine. Though I admit that some called Calvinists are the most quarrelsome set breathing, this is the reason—while they have the main part of the truth of God, many of them are leaving out something important—therefore God chastises them because they are some of His best children! It may be a sign of life that they are so eager after truth that they kill one another in order to get it, but I wish they would leave off their quarrelling, for it is a disgrace to our religion! If they had more peace, I might hope better for the progress of truth. Everyone says to me—"Look there at your brothers and sisters! I never saw such a set of cut-throats in my life! I never saw a church where they have the gospel, but where they are always falling out!" Well, that is near the truth, and I am ashamed to confess it; I pray God to send a little more peace where He has sent the gospel. There are, however, strifes among our opponents which we do not see. The bishop uses his strong hand, and the people dare not disagree; the pastor has such power and authority that the crush of his mailed hand is sufficient to put down everything because there is no freedom!

Now, I would rather have a row in the church than have all the members asleep! I would rather have them falling to errors than sitting down in indifference! You never expect dead churches to have strife—but where there is a little life, if there is error—it always begets strife! What is the most litigious denomination now existing? No one would have a difficulty in pointing to our excellent friends, the Wesleyans—for just at this moment they are quarrelling and finding fault with one another—splitting up into numberless sections, and making reformed churches, and so on. What is the cause of it? I think because they are on the wrong track altogether with regard to church government, and with regard to some other things. John Wesley was a good man at making churches, I dare say. But he did not understand what the church ought to be in these days. He might do for a hundred years ago, but he bound his poor followers too tightly, and now they are trying to break out into freedom and liberty. If they had been right at first, they might have gone on, and a thousand years would not have spoiled their system! It would have done now, as well as then! Error is the root of bitterness in the church. Give us sound doctrine, sound practice, sound church government, and you will find that the God of peace will be with us! My brothers and sisters, seek to uproot error out of your own hearts. If one of you does not really believe the great cardinal doctrines of the gospel, I beseech you then, for the good of the church, leave! We need those who love the truths of God.

The next enemy to peace is *ambition*. "Diotrephes loves to have the pre-eminence," and that fellow has spoiled many a happy church! A man does not want perhaps to be pre-eminent, but he is afraid that another shall be, and so he would have him put down! Thus brethren are finding fault with each other—they are afraid that such a one and that such another will go too fast! The best way is to try to go as fast as *he* does; it is of no use finding fault because some may have a little pre-eminence; after all, what is the pre-eminence? It is the pre-eminence of one little animalcule over another! Look in a drop of water. One of these little fellows is five times as big as another, but we never think of that! I dare say he is very large and thinks, "I have the pre-eminence inside my drop." But he does not think the people of Park Street ever talk about him! So we live in this little drop of the world, not much bigger in God's esteem than a drop in the bucket! And one of us seems a little larger than the other—a worm a little above his fellow worm! But O, how big we get! And we want to get a little bigger, to get a little more prominent—but what is the use of it? For when we get ever so big, we shall then be so small that an angel would not find us if God did not tell him where we were! Whoever heard up in heaven anything about emperors and kings? Small tiny insects—God can see the animalcule; therefore He can see us—but if He had not an eye to see the most minute, He would never discover us! O may we never get ambition in this church! The best ambition is who shall be the *servant* of all? The strangers seek to have dominion, but children seek to let the father have dominion—and only the father.

The next enemy to peace is *anger*. There are some individuals in the world that cannot help getting angry very quickly. They grow all of a sudden very wrathful. While others who are not passionate, who take a longer time to be angry, are fearful enough when they do speak, and others who dare not speak at all are still worse, for they get to brewing their anger—

"Nursing their wrath to keep it warm."

They go into a sulky fit, disagreeing with everybody, eternally grumbling; they are like dogs in the flock—only barking and yielding no fleece! O that nasty anger! If it gets into the church, it will split it to pieces! But, somehow or other we cannot sometimes help getting angry. O that we could come into the church, and leave ourselves behind us! There is nobody I would like to run away from half as much, as from myself. Try, beloved, to curb your tempers! And when you do not exactly see eye to eye with another brother or sister, do not think it necessary to knock him in the eyes to make him see! That is the worst thing in the entire world to do—he will not see any the better for it, for—

"The man convinced against his will,
Is of the same opinion still."

Then *envy* is another fearful evil. One minister, perhaps, is envious of another, because one church is full and the other not. How can teachers agree in the Sunday school if there is any envy there? How can church members agree if envy creeps in? One member thinks another is thought

more highly of than he deserves; why, beloved, you are all too much thought of! But, after all, it does not matter what you are thought of by *man*—it only matters what *God* thinks of you—and God thinks as much of Little-Faith as of Great-Heart; He thinks as much of Mrs. Despondency as of Christiana herself! Drive, then, that "green-eyed monster" away, and keep him at a distance!

Again, there is *pride*, which gives rise to ill-feeling and bad blood. Instead of being affable to one another, and "condescending to men of low estate," we want that every punctilio of respect should be given to us—that we should be made lords and masters! That I am sure can never exist in a peaceable church.

Here, then, are our five great enemies. I wish I could see the execution of them all! Banish them! Transport them forever! Send them away among lions and tigers—we do not want any of them among us! But though I thus speak, it is not because I conceive that any of these have thoroughly crept in among you, but because I would have kept them away. I am most jealous in this matter! I am always afraid of the slightest contention, and I desire the God of peace to be always with us!

Now let me briefly show you the appropriateness of this prayer. We indeed ought to have peace among ourselves. Joseph said to his brothers, when they were going home to his father's house, "See that *you* fall not out by the way." There was something extremely beautiful in that exhortation. "See that you fall not out *by the way."* You have all one father; you are of one family. Let men of *two nations* disagree, but you are of the seed of Israel—you are of one tribe and nation; your home is in one heaven. "See that you fall not out by the way." The way is rough, there are enemies to stop you; see that if *you* fall out when you go home, you do not fall out by the way. Stay together! Stand by one another! Defend each other's character! Always manifest affection, for remember, you will need it all; the world hates you because you are not of the world. Oh, you must take care that you love one another! You are all going to the same house; you may disagree here, and not speak to one another, and be almost ashamed to sit at the same table even at the sacrament—but you will all have to sit together in heaven! Therefore do not fall out by the way. Consider, again, the great mercies you have all shared together—you are all pardoned, you are all accepted, elected, justified, sanctified, and adopted. See that you fall not out when you have so many mercies—when God has given you so much! Joseph has filled your sacks, but if he has put some extra things into Benjamin's sack, do not quarrel with Benjamin about that, but rather rejoice because your sacks are full! You have all got enough; you are all secure; you have all been dismissed with a blessing, and, therefore, I say once more, "See that you fall not out by the way."

Now, dear brothers and sisters, is there anything I can plead with you this morning in order that you may always dwell in peace and love? God has happily commenced a blessed revival among us. And under our means, by the help of God, that revival will spread through the entire

kingdom! We have seen that "the word of the Lord is quick and powerful." We know that there is nothing that can stop the progress of His kingdom, and there is nothing that can impede your success as a church except this. If the unhappy day should arrive—let the day be accursed if it does come—when you among yourselves should disagree! There would be a stop to the building of the Lord's house at once, when those who carry the trowel, and bear the spears do not stand side by side—then the work of God must tarry. It is sad to think how much our glorious cause has been impeded by the different fallings out among the disciples of the Lamb. We have loved one another, brothers and sisters, up till now fervently and with a true heart, and I am not afraid but that we shall always do so! At the same time, I am jealous over you, lest there should come in by any possibility any root of bitterness to trouble you. Let us this morning throw around you the bands of a man; let us unite together with a three-fold cord that cannot be broken; let us entreat you to love one another; let us entreat you by your one Lord, one faith, one baptism, to continue as one! Let us beg of you, by our great success, to let our unity be commensurate therewith. Remember "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" The devil wants you to disagree, and nothing will please him better than for you to fall at wars among yourselves. The Moabites and Ammonites cut down one another. Do not let us do that—

"Those should in strictest concord dwell,
Who the same God obey."

It is continual bickering and jealousy that has brought disgrace upon the holy name of Christ; He has been wounded in the house of His friends. The arrows we have shot at one another have hurt us more than all that ever came from the bow of the devil! We have done more injury to the escutcheon of Christ by our contentions, than Satan has ever been able to do! I beseech you, brothers and sisters, love one another! I know not how I could endure anything like discord among *you!* I can bear the scoff of the world, and the laughter of the infidel; I think I could bear martyrdom, but I could not bear to see you divided! I beseech my God and Master to allow me first to wear my shroud before I ever wear a garment of heaviness on account of your divisions! While I feel that I have your love and affection, and that you are bound to one another, I care not for the devils in hell, nor for men on earth. We have been, and we shall be omnipotent through God, and by faith we will stand firm with one another and to His truth. Let each one resolve within himself—"If there is strife, I will have nothing to do with it." "The beginning of strife is like the letting out of water," and I will not turn the tap. If you will take care not to let the first drop in, I will be sure about the second. Brothers and sisters, again I say for the gospel's sake, for truth's sake, that we may laugh at our enemies, and rejoice with unspeakable joy—LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

Though I may not have preached to the worldly this morning, I have been asking you to preach to them—for when you love one another, that

is a beautiful sermon to them. There is no sermon like what you can see with your own eyes! I went to the Orphanage last Wednesday, on Ashley Down, near Bristol, and saw that wonder of faith—I had some conversation with that heavenly-minded man, Mr. Muller. I never heard such a sermon in my life as I saw there! They asked me to speak to the girls, but I said, "I could not speak a word for the life of me." I had been crying all the while to think how God had heard this dear man's prayers, and how all those 300 children had been fed by my Father through the prayer of faith! Whatever is needed *comes*—without annual subscriptions, without asking anything—simply from the hand of God! When I found that it was all correct, what I had heard, I was like the Queen of Sheba, and I had no heart left in me. I could only stand and look at those children, and think, "Did my heavenly Father feed them, and would He not feed me and all His family?"

Speak to them? They had spoken to me quite enough, though they had not said a word! Speak to them? I thought myself ten thousand fools that I did not better believe my God! Here am I—I cannot trust Him day by day, But this good man can trust Him for 300 children! When he has not a sixpence in hand, he never fears. "I know God," he might say, "too well to doubt Him. I tell my God, 'You know what I need today to keep these children, and I have not anything.' My faith never wavers and my supply always comes." Simply by asking of God in this way, he has raised (I believe) £17,000 towards the erection of a new orphanage! When I consider that—I sometimes think we will try the power of faith, here, and see if we will not get sufficient funds whereby to erect a place to hold the people that crowd to hear the Word of God. Then we may have a tabernacle of faith as well as an orphanage of faith! God send us that—and to Him shall be all the glory! Amen.

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THE HOLY SPIRIT—THE GREAT TEACHER
NO. 50

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 18, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak of Himself; but whatever He hears, that will He speak: and He will show you things to come."
John 16:13.

THIS generation has gradually and almost imperceptibly, become, to a great extent, a godless generation. One of the diseases of the present generation of mankind is their secret but deep-seated godlessness by which they have so far departed from the knowledge of God. Science has discovered to us second causes. And therefore, many have too much forgotten the first Great Cause, the Author of All—they have so far been able to pry into secrets that the great axiom of the existence of a God has been too much neglected. Even among professing Christians, while there is a great amount of religion, there is too little *godliness*—there is much external formalism, but too little inward acknowledgment of God—too little living on God, living with God and relying upon God! Hence the sad fact that when you enter many of our places of worship, you will certainly hear the name of God mentioned—but except in the benediction, you would scarcely know there was a Trinity! In many places dedicated to Jehovah, the name of Jesus is too often kept in the background, the Holy Spirit is almost entirely neglected, and very little is said concerning His sacred influence. Even religious men in this age have become to a large degree godless. We sadly require more preaching regarding God—more preaching of those things which look not so much at the creature to be saved, as at God, the Great One, to be praised! My firm conviction is that in proportion as we have more regard for the sacred Godhead—the wondrous Trinity in Unity—shall we see a greater display of God's power, and a more glorious manifestation of His might in our churches. May God send us a Christ-exalting, Spirit-loving ministry—men who shall proclaim God the Holy Spirit in all His offices and shall extol God, the Savior, as the author and finisher of our faith! Men who shall not neglect that Great God, the Father of His people, who before all worlds elected us in Christ, His Son, justified us through His righteousness, and will inevitably preserve us and gather us together in one—in the consummation of all things at the last great day.

Our text has regard to God the Holy Spirit; of Him we shall speak and Him, only, if His sweet influence shall rest upon us.

The disciples had been instructed by Christ concerning certain elementary doctrines, but Jesus did not teach His disciples more than what we should call the A B Cs of religion. He gives His reasons for this in the 12th verse—"I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear

them now." His disciples were not possessors of the Spirit. They had the Spirit as far as the work of conversion was concerned, but not as to the matters of bright illumination, profound instruction, prophecy, and inspiration. Jesus says, "I am now about to depart, and when I go from you, I will send the Comforter unto you. You cannot bear these things now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." The same promise that He made to His apostles, stands good to all His children! And in reviewing it, we shall take it as our portion and heritage—and shall not consider ourselves intruders upon the manor of the apostles, or upon their exclusive rights and prerogatives—for we conceive that Jesus says even to us, "When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth."

Dwelling exclusively upon our text, we have five things to say. First of all, here is *an attainment mentioned*—a knowledge of all truth. Secondly, here is *a difficulty suggested*—which is that we need guidance into all truth. Thirdly, here is *a person provided*—"When He, the Spirit, shall come, He shall guide you into all truth." Fourthly, here is *a manner hinted at*—"He shall guide you into all truth." Fifthly, here is *a sign given as to the working of the Spirit*—we may know whether He works by His "guiding us into *all* truth"—into all of *one* thing. Not *truths*, but *truth*.

I. Here is AN ATTAINMENT MENTIONED, which is knowledge of all truth. We know that some conceive doctrinal knowledge to be of very little importance and of no practical use. We do not think so. We believe the science of Christ Crucified and a judgment of the teachings of Scripture to be exceedingly valuable. We think it is right that the Christian ministry should not only be awakening, but instructing. Not merely awakening, but enlightening—that it should appeal not only to the passions but to the understanding! We are far from thinking doctrinal knowledge to be of secondary importance. We believe it to be one of the first things in the Christian life—to know the truth and then to practice it. We scarcely need this morning to tell you how desirable it is for us to be well taught in things of the kingdom of God!

First of all, *nature itself* (when it has been sanctified by divine grace) *gives us a strong desire to know all truth*. The natural man separates himself and intermeddles with all knowledge. God has put an instinct in him by which he is rendered unsatisfied if he cannot probe a mystery to its bottom. He can never be content until he can solve secrets. What we call, curiosity, is something given us of God impelling us to search into the knowledge of natural things. That curiosity, sanctified by the Spirit, is also brought to bear in matters of heavenly science and celestial wisdom. "Bless the Lord," said David, "O my soul, and *all that is within me,* bless His holy name!" If there is a curiosity within us, it ought to be employed and developed in a search after the truth of God. "All that is within me," sanctified by the Spirit, should be developed, and, verily, the Christian feels an intense longing to bury his ignorance and receive wisdom. If he, when in his natural estate, panted for terrestrial knowledge, how much more ardent is the wish to unravel, if possible, the sacred mysteries of God's word? A true Christian is always intently reading and

searching the Scripture that he may be able to certify himself as to its main and cardinal truths. I do not think much of that man who does not wish to understand doctrines. I cannot conceive him to be in a right position when he thinks it does not matter whether he believes a lie or the truth of God, whether he is heretic or orthodox, whether he received the word of God as it is written, or as it is diluted and misconstrued by man! God's word will always be, to a Christian, a source of great anxiety. A sacred instinct within will lead him to pry into it. He will seek to understand it. Oh, there are some who forget this—men who purposely abstain from mentioning what are called, high doctrines, because they think if they should mention them, they would be dangerous! So they keep them back. Foolish men! They do not know anything of human nature—for if they did understand a grain's worth of humanity, they would know that the hiding of these things compels men to search them out! From the fact that they do not mention them, they drive men to places where these and these, only, are preached. They say, "If I preach election and predestination and these dark things, people will all go straight away and become Antinomians." I am not so sure if they were to be called Antinomians, it would hurt them much—but hear me, oh, you ministers that conceal these truths of God—that is the way to make them Antinomians, by *silencing* these doctrines! Curiosity is strong—if you tell them they must not pluck the truth, they will be sure to do it! But if you give it to them as you find it in God's word, they will not seek to "wrest" it. Enlightened men *will* have the truth and if they see election in Scripture, they will say, "It is *there* and I will find it out. If I cannot get it in one place, I will get it in another." The true Christian has an inward longing and anxiety after it. He is hungry and thirsty after the word of righteousness and he must and will feed on this bread of heaven, or at all hazards he will leave the husks which unsound divines would offer him.

Not only is this attainment to be desired because nature teaches us so, but knowledge of all truth is *very essential for our comfort*. I believe that many persons have been distressed half their lives from the fact that they had not clear views of truth. Many poor souls, for instance, under conviction, abide three or four times as long in sorrow of mind as they would require if they had someone to instruct them in the great matter of justification. So there are believers who are often troubling themselves about falling away. But if they knew in their soul the great consolation, that we are kept by the grace of God, through faith, unto salvation, they would be no more troubled about it! So have I found some distressed about the unpardonable sin, but God instructs us in that doctrine, and shows us that no conscience that is really awakened can ever commit that sin! He shows us that we need never fear or tremble—all that distress is for nothing! Depend on this, the more you know of God's truth—all things else being equal—the more comfortable you will be as a Christian! Nothing can give a greater light on your path than a clear understanding of divine things! It is a mingle-mangled gospel too commonly preached which causes the downcast faces of Christians! Give me the congregation whose faces are bright with joy, let their eyes glisten at the

sound of the gospel, and then I will believe that it is God's own words they are receiving! Instead thereof, you will often see melancholy congregations whose visages are not much different from the bitter countenance of poor creatures swallowing medicine because the word spoken terrifies them by its legality, instead of comforting them by its grace! We love a cheerful gospel and we think "all the truth" will tend to comfort the Christian!

"Comfort again?" says another, "always comfort!" Ah, but there is another reason why we prize the truth of God—because we believe that a true knowledge of all the truth *will keep us very much out of danger*. No doctrine is so calculated to preserve a man from sin as the doctrine of the grace of God! Those who have called it a licentious doctrine did not know anything at all about it! Poor ignorant things, they little knew that their own vile stuff was the most licentious doctrine under heaven. If they knew the grace of God in truth, they would soon see that there was no preservative from lying like knowledge that we are elect of God from the foundation of the world! There is nothing like a belief in my eternal perseverance and the immutability of my Father's affection which can keep me near to Him from a motive of simple gratitude! Nothing makes a man so virtuous as the belief of the truth of God. A lying doctrine will soon beget a lying practice. A man cannot have an erroneous belief without, by-and-by, having an erroneous life. I believe the one thing naturally begets the other. Keep near God's truth. Keep near His word—keep the head right and especially keep your *heart* right with regard to truth—and your feet will not go far astray!

Again—I also hold that this attainment to the knowledge of all truth is very desirable for *the usefulness which it will give us in the world at large*. We would not be selfish—we would always consider whether a thing will be beneficial to others. Knowledge of all truth will make us very serviceable in this world. We shall be skillful physicians who know how to take the poor distressed soul aside, to put a finger on his eye and take the scale off for him—that heaven's light may comfort him! There will be no character, however perplexing may be its peculiar phase, but we shall be able to speak to it and comfort it. He who holds the truth is usually the most useful man. As a good Presbyterian brother said to me the other day—"I know God has blessed you exceedingly in gathering in souls, but it is an extraordinary fact that nearly all the men I know—with scarcely an exception—who have been made useful in gathering in souls, have held the great doctrines of the grace of God." Almost every man whom God has blessed to the building up of the church in prosperity—and around whom the people have rallied—has been a man who has held firmly to free grace from first to last, through the finished salvation of Christ! Do you really think you need have errors in your doctrine to make you useful? We have some who preach Calvinism during the first part of the sermon, but finish up with Arminianism because they think that will make them useful! Useful? Nonsense! That is all it is. A man, if he cannot be useful with the truth, cannot be useful with an error! There is enough in the pure doctrine of God without introducing heresies to

preach to sinners. As far as I know, I never felt hampered or cramped in addressing the ungodly in my life. I can speak with as much fervency and yet not in the same style as those who hold the contrary views of God's truth. Those who hold God's word never need add something untrue in speaking to men. The sturdy truth of God touches every chord in every man's heart. If we can, by God's grace, put our hand inside a man's heart, we need nothing but that whole truth to move him thoroughly and to stir him up! There is nothing like the real truth of God and the whole truth of God, to make a man useful.

II. Now, again—here is a DIFFICULTY SUGGESTED, and that is that we require a guide to conduct us into all truth. The difficulty is that truth is not so easy to discover. There is no man born in this world by nature who has the truth in his heart. There is no creature that ever was fashioned, since the fall, who has a knowledge of truth innate and natural. It has been disputed by many philosophers whether there are such things as innate ideas at all. But it is of no use disputing as to whether there are any innate ideas of the truth of God! There are none such. There are ideas of everything that is wrong and evil. But in us—that is, our flesh—there dwells no *good* thing. We are born in sin and shaped in iniquity. In sin did our mother conceive us. There is nothing good in us and no tendency to righteousness. Then, since we are not born with the truth, we have the task of searching for it. If we are to be blest by being eminently useful as Christians, we must be well-instructed in matters of revelation. But here is the difficulty—that we cannot follow without a guide the winding paths of truth. Why is this?

First, because of *the very great intricacy of truth, itself*—the truth of God, itself, is no easy thing to discover. Those who fancy they know everything and constantly dogmatize with the spirit of, "We are the men, and wisdom will die with us," of course see no difficulties whatever in the system they hold. But I believe the most earnest student of Scripture will find things in the Bible which puzzle him. However earnestly he reads it, he will see some mysteries too deep for him to understand. He will cry out, "truth! I cannot find you! I know not where you are, you are beyond me! I cannot fully view you." truth is a path so narrow that two can scarcely walk together in it. We usually tread the narrow way in single file—two men can seldom walk arm in arm in the truth. We believe the same truth in the main, but we cannot walk together in the path—it is too narrow. The way of truth is very difficult. If you step an inch aside on the right, you are in a dangerous error. If you swerve a little to the left, you are equally in the mire. On the one hand, there is a huge precipice and on the other a deep morass. Unless you keep to the true line, to the breadth of a hair, you will go astray. Truth is a narrow path, indeed! It is a path the eagle's eye has not seen and a depth the diver has not visited. It is like the veins of metal in a mine—it is often of excessive thinness and, moreover, it runs not in one continued layer. Lose it once and you may dig for miles and not discover it again! The eye must perpetually watch the direction of the lode. Grains of truth are like the grains of gold in the rivers of Australia—they must be shaken by the hand of patience

and washed in the stream of honesty, or the fine gold will be mingled with sand! Truth is often mingled with error and it is hard to distinguish it. But we bless God, He has said, "When the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth"

Another reason why we need a guide is *the jealousness of error*. It busily steals upon us and if I may so describe our position, we are often like we were on Thursday night in that tremendous fog. Most of us were feeling for ourselves and wondering where on earth we were! We could scarcely see an inch before us. We came to a place where there were three turns. We thought we knew the old spot. There was the lamppost, and now we must take a sharp turn to the left. But not so; we ought to have gone a little to the right! We have been so often to the same place that we think we know every flagstone and there's our friend's shop over the way. It is dark, but we think we must be quite right and all the while we are quite wrong and find ourselves half-a-mile out of the way! So it is with matters of truth. We think, surely this is the right path. And the voice of the evil one whispers, "That is the way, walk in it." You do so and you find, to your great dismay, that instead of the path of truth, you have been walking in the paths of unrighteousness and erroneous doctrines. The way of life is a labyrinth. The grassiest paths and the most bewitching are the farthest away from right! The most enticing are those which are garnished with wrested truths. I believe there is not a counterfeit coin in the world so much like a genuine one, as some errors are like the truth. One is base metal, the other is true gold. Still, in externals they differ very little.

We also need a guide, because *we are so prone to go astray*. Why, if the path of heaven were as straight as Bunyan pictures it, with no turning to the right hand or left—and no doubt it is—still, we are so prone to go astray that we should go to the right to the mountains of destruction, or to the left in the dark wood of desolation. David says, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep." That means *very often*—for if a sheep is put into a field 20 times, if it does not get out 21 times, it will be because it cannot find a hole in the hedge! If grace did not guide us, we would go astray though there were signposts all the way to heaven! Let it be written, "Miklat, Miklat, the way to refuge," we would turn aside and the avenger of blood would overtake us! If some guide did not, like the angels in Sodom, put his hand on our shoulders and cry, "Escape! Escape for your life! Look not behind you! Stay not in all the plain," we would surely perish! These then are the reasons why we need a guide.

III. In the third place, here is A PERSON PROVIDED. This is none other than God—and this God is none other than a person. This person is, "He, the Spirit," the "Spirit of truth." Not an influence or an emanation, but actually a person! "When the Spirit of truth is come, He shall guide you into all truth." Now, we wish you to look at this guide to consider how adapted He is to us.

In the first place, He is *infallible*. He knows everything and cannot lead us astray. If I pin my sleeve to another man's coat, he may lead me part of the way, rightly, but, by-and-by, he will go wrong, himself, and I shall

be led astray with him. But if I give myself to the Holy Spirit and ask His guidance, there is no fear of my wandering!

Again, we rejoice in this Spirit because He is *ever-present*. We fall into a difficulty sometimes. We say, "Oh, if I could take this to my minister, he would explain it! But I live so far off and am not able to see him." That perplexes us and we turn the text round and round and cannot make anything out of it. We look at the commentators. We take down pious Thomas Scott and, as usual, he says nothing about it if it is a dark passage. Then we go to holy Matthew Henry and if it is an easy Scripture, he is sure to explain it. But if it is a text hard to be understood, it is likely enough, of course, left in its own gloom. And even Dr. Gill, himself, the most consistent of commentators—when he comes to a hard passage—he manifestly avoids it in some degree. But when we have no commentator or minister, we have still the Holy Spirit! And let me tell you a little secret—whenever you cannot understand a text, open your Bible, bend your knees and pray over that text. And if it does not split into atoms and open itself, try again! If prayer does not explain it, it is one of the things God did not intend you to know and you may be content to be ignorant of it! Prayer is the key that opens the cabinets of mystery! Prayer and faith are sacred picklocks that can open secrets and obtain great treasures! There is no college for holy education like that of the blessed Spirit, for He is an ever-present tutor to whom we have only to bend the knees and He is at our side—the great expositor of truth!

But there is one thing about the suitability of this guide which is remarkable. I do not know whether it has struck you—the Holy Spirit can "guide us *into* a truth." Now, man can guide us *to* a truth, but it is only the Holy Spirit who can "guide us *into* a truth." "When He, the Spirit of truth, shall come, He shall guide you *into"*—mark that word—"all truth." Now, for instance, it is a long while before you can lead some people to the doctrine of election. But when you have made them see its correctness, you have not led them "into" it. You may show them that it is plainly stated in Scripture, but they will turn away and hate it. You take them to another great truth but they have been brought up in a different fashion and though they cannot answer your arguments, they say, "The man is right, perhaps," and they whisper—but so low that conscience, itself, cannot hear—"but it is so contrary to my prejudices that I cannot receive it." After you have led them *to* the truth and they see it is true, how hard it is to lead them *into* it! There are many of my hearers who are brought *to* the truth of their depravity but they are not brought *into* it and made to feel it! Some of you are brought to know the truth that God keeps us from day to day. But you rarely get into it, so as to live in continual dependence upon God, the Holy Spirit, and draw fresh supplies from Him! The thing is to get inside it! A Christian should do with truth as a snail does with his shell—live inside it, as well as carry it on his back and bear it perpetually about with him! The Holy Spirit, it is said, shall lead us *into all truth*. You may be brought to a chamber where there is an abundance of gold and silver, but you will be no richer unless you effect an entrance. It is the Spirit's work to unbar the two-leaved gates and bring

us into a truth, so that we may get inside it and, as dear old Rowland Hill said, "Not only hold the truth, but have the truth hold us."

IV. Fourthly, here is A METHOD SUGGESTED—"He shall guide you into all truth." Now I must have an illustration. I must compare truth to some cave or grotto that you have heard of, with wondrous stalactites hanging from the roof and others starting from the floor. A cavern, glittering with spar and abounding in marvels! Before entering the cavern, you inquire for a guide, who comes with his lighted torch. He conducts you down to a considerable depth and you find yourself in the midst of the cave. He leads you through different chambers. Here he points to a little stream rushing from amid the rocks and indicates its rise and progress. There he points to some peculiar rock and tells you its name. Then he takes you into a large natural hall, tells you how many persons once feasted in it, and so on. Truth is a grand series of caverns! It is our glory to have so great and wise a Conductor. Imagine that we are coming to the darkness of it. He is a light of God shining in the midst of us to guide us. And by the light, He shows us wondrous things. In three ways the Holy Spirit teaches us—by suggestion, direction, and illumination.

First, he guides us into all truth *by suggesting it*. There are thoughts that dwell in our minds that were not born there but which were exotics brought from heaven and put there by the Spirit. It is not a fancy that angels whisper into our ears and that devils do the same—both good and evil spirits hold converse with men. And some of us have known it. We have had strange thoughts which were not the offspring of our souls, but which came from angelic visitors. And direct temptations and evil insinuations have we had which were not brewed in our own souls, but which came from the poisonous cauldron of hell! So the Spirit speaks in men's ears, sometimes in the darkness of the night. In ages gone by, He spoke in dreams and visions, but now He speaks by His word. Have you not, at times, had unaccountably in the middle of your business, a thought concerning God and heavenly things and could not tell from where it came? Have you not been reading or studying the Scripture but a text came across your mind and you could not help it? Though you even put it down, it was like cork in water and would swim up again to the top of your mind! Well, that good thought was put there by the Spirit. He often guides His people into all truth by suggesting, just as the guide in the grotto does with his torch. He does not say a word, perhaps, but He walks into a passage, Himself, and you follow Him. So the Spirit suggests a thought and your heart follows it up. Well can I remember the manner in which I learned the doctrines of grace in a single instant! Born, as all of us are, by nature, an Arminian, I still believed the old things I had heard continually from the pulpit and did not see the grace of God. I remember sitting one day in the House of God and hearing a sermon as dry as possible and as worthless as all such sermons are, when a thought struck my mind—how came I to be converted? I prayed, thought I. Then I thought how came I to pray? I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. How came I to read the Scriptures? Why did I read them and what led me to them? And then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bot-

tom of all and that He was the author of faith! And then the whole doctrine opened up to me, from which, by God's grace, I have not departed.

But sometimes He leads us *by direction*. The guide points and says—"There, gentlemen, go along that particular path, that is the way." So the Spirit gives a direction and tendency to our thoughts. Not suggesting a new one, but letting a particular thought, when it starts, take such-and-such a direction. Not so much putting a boat on the stream as steering it when it is there! When our thoughts are considering sacred things, He leads us into a more excellent channel from that in which we started. Time after time have you commenced a meditation on a certain doctrine and, unaccountably, you were gradually led away into another. And then you saw how one doctrine leaned on another, as is the case with the stones in the arch of a bridge—all hanging on the keystone of Jesus Christ, crucified! You were brought to see these things, not by a new idea suggested, but by direction given to your thoughts!

But perhaps the best way in which the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth is by *illumination*. He illuminates the Bible. Now, have any of you an illuminated Bible at home? "No," says one, "I have a Morocco Bible. I have a Polyglot Bible. I have a Marginal Reference Bible." Ah, that is all very well—but have you an *illuminated* Bible? "Yes, I have a large family Bible with pictures in it. There is a picture of John the Baptist baptizing Christ by pouring water on His head, and many other nonsensical things." But that is not what I mean—have you an *illuminated* Bible? "Yes, I have a Bible with splendid engravings in it." Yes. I know you may have. But have you an *illuminated* Bible? "I don't understand what you mean by an, 'illuminated Bible.'" Well, it is the Christian who has an illuminated Bible; he does not buy it originally illuminated, but when he reads it—

"A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic like the sun!
Which gives a light to every age,
It gives, but borrows none."

There is nothing like reading an illuminated Bible! Beloved, you may read to all eternity and never learn anything by it unless it is illuminated by the Holy Spirit! And then the words shine forth like stars! The book seems made of gold leaf. Every single letter glitters like a diamond! Oh, it is a blessed thing to read an illuminated Bible lit up by the radiance of the Holy Spirit! Have you read the Bible and studied it, my brothers and sisters, and yet have your eyes been unenlightened? Go and say, "O Lord, gild the Bible for me. I need an expounded Bible. Illuminate it! Shine upon it, for I cannot read it to profit unless You enlighten me." Blind men may read the Bible with their fingers, but blind souls cannot. We need a light to read the Bible; there is no reading it in the dark. Thus the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth, by suggesting ideas, by directing our thoughts and by illuminating the Scriptures when we read them!

V. The last thing is AN EVIDENCE. The question arises, How may I know whether I am enlightened by the Spirit's influence and led into all truth? First, you may know the Spirit's influence by its *unity*—He guides

us into all *truth.* Secondly, by its *universality*—He guides us into *all* truth.

First, if you are judging a minister, whether he has the Holy Spirit in him or not, you may know him, in the first place, by *the constant unity of his testimony*. A man cannot be enlightened by the Holy Spirit who preaches yes and no. The Spirit never says one thing, at one time, and another thing at another time! There are, indeed, many good men who say both yes and no, but still their contrary testimonies are not both from God the Spirit, for God the Spirit cannot witness to black and white, to a lie and to the truth of God! It has been always held as a first principle that truth is one thing. But some persons say, "I find one thing in one part of the Bible and another thing in another, and though it contradicts itself, must I believe it?" All quite right, brother, *if it did contradict itself;* but the fault is not in the wood, but in the carpenter! Many carpenters do not understand dove-tailing, so there are many preachers who do not understand dove-tailing. It is very nice work and it is not easily learned—it takes some apprenticeship to make all doctrines square together. Some preachers preach very good Calvinism for half-an-hour and the next quarter-of-an hour Arminianism. If they are Calvinists, let them stick to Calvinism! If they are Arminians, let them stick to that—let their preaching be all of one piece! Don't let them pile up things only to kick them all down again. Let us have one thing woven from the top, throughout, and let us not tear it! How did Solomon know the true mother of the child? "Cut it in halves," he said. The woman who was not the mother did not care, as long as the other did not get the whole, and she consented. "Ah," said the true mother, "give her the living child. Let her have it, rather than cut it in halves." So the true child of God would say, "I give it up, let my opponent conquer. I do not want to have the truth cut in halves. I would rather be all wrong than have the word altered to my taste!" We do not want to have a divided Bible. No, we claim the whole living child or none at all! We may rest assured of this, that until we get rid of our linsey-woolsey doctrine and cease to sow mingled seed, we shall not have a blessing! An enlightened mind cannot believe a gospel which denies itself. It must be one thing or the other. One thing cannot contradict another, and yet it and its opposite ar equally true! You may know the Spirit's influence, then, by the unity of its testimony!

And you may know it by its *universality*. The true child of God will not be led into *some* truth but into *all* truth. When first he starts, he will not know half the truth. He will believe it, but not understand it. He will have the germ of it, but not the sum total in all its breadth and length. There is nothing like learning by experience. A man cannot set up for a theologian in a week. Certain doctrines take years to develop themselves. Like the aloe that takes a hundred years to be dressed, there are some truths that must lie long in the heart before they really come out and make themselves appear so that we can speak of them as that we know, and testify of that which we have seen. The Spirit will gradually lead us into all truth. For instance, if it is true that Jesus Christ is to personally reign upon the earth for a thousand years, as I am inclined to believe it is, if I

am under the Spirit, that will be more and more opened to me until I, with confidence, declare it. Some men begin very timidly. A man says, at first, "I know we are justified by faith and have peace with God, but so many have cried out against eternal justification that I am afraid of it." But he is gradually enlightened and led to see that in the same hour when all his debts were paid, a full discharge was given—that in the moment when his sin was cancelled, every elect soul was justified in God's mind—though they were not justified in their own minds till afterwards. The Spirit shall lead you into all truth.

Now, what are the practical inferences from this great doctrine? The first is with reference to the Christian who is afraid of his own ignorance. How many are there who are just enlightened and have tasted of heavenly things, who are afraid they are too ignorant to be saved? Beloved, God the Holy Spirit can teach anyone, however illiterate, however uninstructed! I have known some men who were almost idiots before conversion, but they afterwards had their faculties wonderfully developed! Some time ago there was a man who was so ignorant that he could not read and he never spoke anything like grammar in his life, unless by mistake. And moreover, he was considered to be what the people in his neighborhood called, "daft." But when he was converted, the first thing he did was to pray. He stammered out a few words and in a little time his powers of speaking began to develop themselves! Then he thought he would like to read the Scriptures and, after long, long months of labor, he learned to read! And what was the next thing? He thought he could preach—and he did preach a little in his own homely way, in his house. Then he thought, "I must read a few more books." And so his mind expanded, until, I believe, he is at the present day a useful minister, settled in a country village, laboring for God! It needs but little intellect to be taught of God. If you feel your ignorance, do not despair! Go to the Spirit—the great teacher—and ask His sacred influence, and it shall come to pass that He "shall guide you into all truth."

Another inference is this, that whenever any of our brethren do not understand the truth, let us take a hint as to the best way of dealing with them. Do not let us argue with them! I have heard many controversies, but never heard of any good from one of them! We have had controversies with certain men called Secularists and very strong arguments have been brought against them. But I believe that the Day of Judgment shall declare that a very small amount of good was ever done by contending with these men. Better leave them alone—where there is no fuel, the fire goes out, and he that debates with them puts wood upon the fire. So with regard to Baptism, it is of no use to quarrel with our Paedo-Baptist friends! If we simply pray for them, that the God of truth may lead them to see the true doctrine, they will come to it far more easily than by discussions! Few men are taught by controversy, for—

"A man convinced against his will,
Is of the same opinion still."

Pray for them that the Spirit of truth may lead them "into all truth." Do not be angry with your brother, but pray for him. Cry, "Lord, open his eyes that he may behold wondrous things out of Your law."

Lastly, we speak to some of you who know nothing about the Spirit of truth, nor about the truth of God, itself. It may be that some of you are saying, "We care not much which of you are right, we are happily indifferent to it." Ah, but, poor sinner, if you knew the gift of God and who it was that spoke the truth, you would not say, "I care not for it"! If you knew how essential the truth is to your salvation, you would not talk so! If you knew that the truth of God is that you are a worthless sinner—but if you believe, then God, from all eternity, apart from all your merits, loved you! If you knew that He bought you with the Redeemer's blood and justified you in the forum of heaven—and will, by-and-by, justify you in the forum of your conscience through the Holy Spirit by faith. If you knew that there is a heaven for you beyond the chance of a failure, a crown for you, the luster of which can never be dimmed—*then* you would say, "Indeed the truth is precious to my soul!" Why, my ungodly hearers, these men of error want to take away the truth which alone can save you—the only gospel that can deliver you from hell! They deny the great truths of free grace, those fundamental doctrines which alone can snatch a sinner from hell! And even though you do not feel interest in them, now, I still would say you ought to desire to see them promoted.

May God give you grace to know the truth in your hearts! May the Spirit "guide you into all truth!" For if you do not know the truth, here, remember there will be a sorrowful learning of it in the dark chambers of the pit of hell where the only light shall be the flames of hell! May you here know the truth! And the truth shall make you free—and if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed, for He says, "I am the way, the truth, the life." Believe on Jesus, you chief of sinners! Trust His love and mercy and you are saved, for God the Spirit gives faith and eternal life!

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COMFORT FOR THE DESPONDING
NO. 51

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 25, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Oh that I were as in months past."
Job 29:2.

FOR the most part, the gracious Shepherd leads His people beside the still waters and makes them to lie down in green pastures. But at times they wander through a wilderness where there is no water and they find no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul faints within them and they cry unto the Lord in their trouble. Though many of His people live in almost constant joy and find that religion's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, yet there are many who pass through fire and through water—men ride over their heads—they endure all manner of trouble and sorrow. The duty of the minister is to preach to different characters. Sometimes we admonish the confident, lest they should become presumptuous. Oftentimes we stir up the slumbering, lest they should sleep the sleep of death. Frequently we comfort the desponding and this is our duty this morning—or if not to *comfort* them, to give them some exhortation which may, by God's help, be the means of bringing them out of the sad condition into which they have fallen, so that they may not be obliged to cry out forever—"Oh that I were as in months past!"

At once to the subject: *A complaint—its cause and cure*. And then close up with an *exhortation* to stir up your pure minds, if you are in such a position.

I. First, there is a COMPLAINT. How many a Christian looks on the past with pleasure, on the future with dread and on the present with sorrow! There are many who look back upon the days that they have passed in the fear of the Lord as being the sweetest and the best they have ever had. But as to the present, it is clad in a sable garb of gloom and dreariness. They could wish for their young days over, again, that they might live near to Jesus—for now they feel that they have wandered from Him, or that He has hidden His face from them and they cry out, "Oh that I were as in months past!"

1. Let us take distinct cases, one by one. The first is the case of a man who has *lost the brightness of his evidences* and is crying out, "Oh that I were as in months past!" Hear his soliloquy—"Oh that my past days could be recalled! Then I had no doubt of my salvation. If any man had asked for the reason of the hope that was in me, I could have answered with meekness and with fear. No doubt distressed me, no fear harassed

me. I could say with Paul, 'I know whom I have believed,' and with Job, 'I know that my Redeemer lives—

My steady soul did fear no more
Than solid rocks when billows roar.'

"I felt myself to be standing on the Rock, Christ Jesus. I said—

'Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall!
Surely I shall safely reach my home,
My God, my heaven, my all.'

"But ah, how changed it is, now! Where there was no cloud it is *all* cloud! Where I could read my 'title clear,' I tremble to read my damnation quite as clearly. I hoped that I trusted in Christ, but now the dark thought rises up that I was a hypocrite and had deceived myself and others. The most I can attain to, is—'I think I will hope in Him still. And if I may not be refreshed with the *light* of His countenance, still, I will trust in the shadow of His wings. I feel that if I depart from Him, there is no other Savior. But oh, what thick darkness surrounds me! Like Paul of old, there have been days and nights wherein neither sun, nor moon nor stars have appeared. I have lost my roll in the arbor of ease. I cannot, now, take it out of my breast and read it to console me on my journey. And I fear that when I get to the end of the way, they will deny me entrance! I feel I came not in by the door to receive His grace and know His love, but have been deceived. I have taken carnal fancies for the workings of the Spirit and have imputed what was but natural conviction to the work of God the Holy Spirit."

This is one phase and a very common one. You will meet many who are crying out like that—"Oh that I were as in months past!"

2. Another phase of this great complaint, which it also very frequent, is one under which we are lamenting—not so much because our evidences are withered as because *we do not enjoy a perpetual peace of mind as to other matters*. "Oh," says one, "Oh that I were as in months past. For then whatever troubles and trials came upon me were less than nothing. I had learned to sing—

'Father, I wait Your daily will,
You shall divide my portion still.
Give me on earth what seems to You best,
Till death and heaven reveal the rest.'

"I felt that I could give up everything for Him—that if He had taken away every mercy, I would have said—

'Yes, if You take them all away,
Yet will I not repine!
Before they were possessed by me,
They were entirely Thine.'

"I knew no fear for the future. Like a child on its mother's breast, I slept securely. I said, 'Jehovah-Jireh, my God, will provide.' I put my business into His hands. I went to my daily labor like the little bird that wakes up

in the morning and knows not where its breakfast is to come from, but sits on the branch, singing—

'Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow
God provides for the morrow.'

"I could have trusted Him with my very life—with wife, with children—with everything! I could give all into His hands and say each morning, 'Lord, I have not a will of my own, or if I have one, still, Your will be done. Your wish shall be my wish. Your desire shall be my desire.' Oh that I were as in months past! How changed am I now! I begin fretting about my business. And if I lose now but a five pound note, I am incessantly worried, whereas if it were a thousand, before, I could have thanked the God who took it away as easily as I could the God that gave it to me! How the least thing disturbs me. The least shadow of a doubt as to some calamity that may befall me rests on my soul like a thick cloud. I am perpetually self-willed, desiring always to have just what I wish. I cannot say I can resign all into His hands. There is a certain something I could not give up. Twined round my heart there is an evil plant, called, self-love. It has twisted its roots within the very nerves and sinews of my soul! There is something I love above my God. I cannot give up all, now. But, oh that I were as in months past! For then my mercies were real mercies, because they were God's mercies. Oh," he says, "that I were as in months past—I would not have to bear such trouble as I now have, for though the burden might have pressed heavily, I would have cast it on the Lord! Oh that I knew the heavenly science of taking the burdens off my own shoulders and laying them on the Rock that supports them all! Oh if I knew how to pour out my griefs and sorrows as I once did! I have been a fool, an arrant fool, a very fool, that I should have run away from that sweet confidence I once had in the Savior! I used to, then, go to His ear and tell Him all my griefs—

'My sorrows and my griefs I poured
Into the bosom of my God.
He helped me in the trying hour,
He helped me bear the heavy load!'

"But now, I foolishly carry them myself, and bear them in my own breast, Ah,—

'What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!'
Would that they would return to me.'"

3. Another individual, perhaps, is speaking thus concerning *his enjoyment in the house of God and the means of grace*. "Oh," says one, "in months past, when I went up to the house of God, how sweetly did I hear! Why, I sat with my ears open to catch the words as if it were an angel speaking. And when I listened, how at times did the tears come rolling down my cheeks! And how my eyes flashed when some brilliant utterance, full of joy to the Christian, awakened my soul! Oh how I would awake on the Sabbath morning and sing,

'Welcome, sweet day of rest,
That saw the Lord arise!

Welcome to this reviving breast,
And these rejoicing eyes!'

"And when they sang in the house of God, whose voice was so fond as mine? When I retired from worship, it was with a light dread. I went to tell my friends and my neighbors what glorious news I had heard in the sanctuary. Those were sweet Sabbaths. And when the prayer meetings came round, how was I found in my places and the prayers *were prayers,* indeed, to my spirit! Whoever I heard preach, provided it was the gospel, how did my soul feed and fatten under it! For I sat at a very banquet of joy! When I read the Scriptures, they were always illuminated and the glory of God did gild the sacred page whenever I turned it over! When I bent my knees in prayer, I could pour my soul out before God and I loved the exercise! I felt that I could not be happy unless I spent my time upon my knees. I loved my God and my God loved me. But oh, now how changed! Oh that I were as in months past! I go up to God's house. It is the same voice that speaks, the same man I love so much, still addresses me. But I have no tears to shed. My heart has become hardened even under his ministry! I have few emotions of joy. I enter the house of God as a boy goes to school, without much love to it—and I go away without having my soul stirred. When I kneel down in secret prayer, the wheels are taken off my chariot and it drags very heavily. When I strive to sing, all I can say is, 'I would, but cannot.' Oh that I were as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone round about me!"

I trust there are not many of you who can join in this. For I know you love to come up to the house of God. I love to preach to a people who feel the word, who give signs of assent to it—men and women who can afford a tear, now and then, in a sermon—people whose blood seems to boil within them when they hear the gospel! I don't think *you* understand much of the phase I am describing. But still, you may understand a little of it. The word may not be quite as sweet and pleasant to you as it used to be. And then you may cry out—"Oh that I were as in months past!"

4. But I will tell you one point which perhaps may escape you. There are some of us who extremely lament that *our conscience is not as tender as it used to be*. And, therefore, does our soul cry in bitterness, "Oh that I were as in months past!" "When I first knew the Lord," you say, "I was almost afraid to put one foot before another, lest I should go astray. I always looked before I leaped. If there was a suspicion of sin about anything, I faithfully avoided it. If there was the slightest trace of the trail of the serpent on it, I turned from it at once! People called me a Puritan. I watched everything. I was afraid to speak and some practices that were really allowable, I utterly condemned. My conscience was so tender, I was like a sensitive plant. If touched by the hand of sin, my leaves curled up in a moment! I was so tender, I could not bear to be touched—it was like I had wounds all over me! And if anyone brushed against me, I cried out. I was afraid to do anything, lest I should sin against God. If I heard an oath, my bones shook within me. If I saw a man break the Sabbath, I

trembled and was afraid. Wherever I went, the least whisper of sin startled me. It was like the voice of a demon when I heard a temptation and I said with violence, 'Get you behind me, Satan!' I could not endure sin. I ran away from it as from a serpent! I could not taste a drop of it. But oh that I were as in months past! It is true, by His grace I have not forsaken His ways. I have not quite forgotten His law. It is true, I have not disgraced my character, I have not openly sinned before men and none but God knows my sin. But oh, my conscience is not what it once was! It did thunder, once, but it does not now. O conscience! Conscience! You are gone too much to sleep! I have drugged you with a tincture of opium and you are slumbering when you ought to be speaking! You are a watchman. But you do not tell the hours of the night as you once did. O Conscience! Sometimes I heard your rattle in my ears and it startled me—now you sleep—and I go on to sin. It is but a little I have done—still, that little shows the way. Straws tell which way the wind blows. And I feel that my having committed one little sin evidences in what way my soul is inclined. Oh that I had a tender conscience again! Oh that I had not this rhinoceros conscience which is covered over with tough hide through which the bullets of the law cannot pierce! Oh that I had a conscience such as I used to have; oh that I were as in months past!"

5. One more form of this sad condition. There are some of us, dearly beloved, who *have not as much zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of men as we used to have*. Months ago, if we saw a soul going to destruction, our eyes were filled with tears in a moment! If we did but see a man inclined to sin, we rushed before him with tears in our eyes and wished to sacrifice ourselves to save him! We could not walk the street, but we must be giving somebody a tract, or reproving someone. We thought we must be forever speaking of the Lord Jesus. If there were any good to be done, we were always first and foremost in it—we desired by all means to save some and we did think at that time that we could give up ourselves to death—if we might but snatch a soul from hell! So deep, so ardent was our love to our fellow men, that for the love we bore Christ's name, we would have been content to be scoffed at, hissed at and persecuted by the whole world if we might have done any good in it! Our soul was burning with intense longing for souls and we considered all things else to be mean and worthless. But ah, now souls may be damned and there is not a tear! Sinners may sink into the scalding pit of hell and not a groan. Thousands may be swept away each day and sink into bottomless woe and yet not an emotion! We can preach without tears. We can pray for them without our hearts. We can speak to them without feeling their necessities. We pass by the haunts of infamy—we wish the inmates better and that is all. Even our compassion has died out. Once we stood near the brink of hell and we thought each day that we heard the yells and howls of the doomed spirits ringing in our ears. And then we said, "O God, help me to save my fellow men from going

down to the pit of hell!" But now we forget it all. We have little love to men. We have not half the zeal and energy we once had. Oh, if that is your state, dearly beloved—if you can join in that, as your poor minister, alas, can do in some measure—then may we well say, "Oh that I were as in months past!"

II. But now we are about to take these different characters and tell you the CAUSE AND CURE.

1. One of the causes of this mournful state of things is *defect in prayer*. And of course the cure lies somewhere next door to the cause! You are saying, "Oh that I were as in months past!" Come, my brothers and sisters. We are going into the very root of the matter. One reason why it is not with you as in months past is this—you do not pray as you once did! Nothing brings such leanness into a man's soul as lack of prayer. It is well said that a neglected closet is the birthplace of all evil. All good is born in the closet—all good springs from it. There the Christian gets it. But if he neglects his closet, then all evil comes of it. No man can progress in grace if he forsakes his closet. I care not how strong he may be in faith. It is said that fat men may, for a time, live on the flesh they have acquired. But there is not a Christian so full of flesh that he can live on old grace! If he grows fat, he kicks, but he cannot live upon his fat. Those who are strong and mighty in themselves cannot exist without prayer! If a man should have the spiritual might of 50 of God's choicest Christians in himself, he must die if he did not continue to pray! My brothers and sisters, can you look back and say, "Three or four months ago my prayers were more regular, more constant, more earnest than they are now—now they are feeble, they are not sincere, they are not fervent, they are not earnest"? O brothers and sisters do not ask anybody what is the cause of your grief! It is as plain as possible. You need not ask a question about it. There is the cause! And where is the remedy? Why, in more prayer! Beloved, it was little prayer that brought you down. It is great prayer that will lift you up! It was lack of prayer that brought you into poverty. It must be increase of prayer that will bring you again into riches! Where no oxen are, the crib is clean. There is nothing for men to eat where there are no oxen to plow. And where there are no prayers to plow the soil, you have little to feed upon. We must be more earnest in prayer! Oh, beloved, might not the beam out of the wall cry against us? Our dusty closets might bear witness to our neglect of secret devotion. And that is the reason why it is not with us as in months past. My friends—if you were to compare the Christian to a steam engine, you must make his prayers, fed by the Holy Spirit, to be the very fire which sustains his motion! Prayer is God's chosen vehicle of grace and he is unwise who neglects it. Let me be doubly serious on this matter and let me give a home-thrust to some. Dear friend, do you mean what you say and do you believe what you say—that neglect of prayer will bring your soul into a most hazardous condition? If so, I will say no more to you, for you will easily

guess the remedy for your lamentable cry, "Oh that I were as in months past!" A certain merchant wishes that he were as rich as he used to be—he is desirous to send his ships over to the gold country—to bring him home cargoes of gold. But lately never a ship has been out of port and, therefore, can he wonder that he has had no cargo of gold? So when a man prays, he sends a ship to heaven and it comes back laden with gold! But if he leaves off supplication, then his ship is weather-bound and stays at home—and no wonder he comes to be a poor man!

2. Perhaps, again, you are saying, "Oh that I were as in months past!" Not so much from your own fault as from *the fault of your minister*. There is such a thing, my dear friends, as our getting into a terribly bad condition through the ministry that we attend. Can it be expected that men should grow in grace when they are never watered with the streams that make glad the city of our God? Can they be supposed to grow strong in the Lord Jesus when they do not feed on spiritual food? We know some who grumble, Sabbath after Sabbath, and say they cannot hear such-and-such a minister. Why don't you buy an ear-trumpet, then? "*Ah, but I mean that I can't hear him to my soul's profit.*" Then do not go to hear him, if you have tried for a long while and don't get any profit! I always think that a man who grumbles as he goes out of chapel ought not to be pitied, but whipped—for he can stay away if he likes and go where he will be pleased! There are plenty of places where the sheep may feed in their own manner—and everyone is bound to go where he gets the pasture most suited to his soul. But you are not bound to run away, directly, if your minister dies, as many of you did before you came here. You should not run away from the ship as directly the storm comes and the captain is gone and you find her not exactly seaworthy. Stand by her, begin caulking her—God will send you a captain—there will be fine weather, by-and-by, and all will be right. But very frequently a bad minister starves God's people into walking skeletons, so that you can see all their bones. And who wonders that they starve out their minister, when they get no food and no nutriment from his ministrations? This is a second reason why men frequently cry out, "Oh that I were as in months past!"

3. But there is still a better reason that will come more home to some of you. *It is not so much the badness of the food, as the seldomness that you come to eat it*. You know, my dear friends, we find, every now and then, that there is a man who came twice a day to the house of God on the Sabbath. On the Monday night he was busy at work. But his apron was rolled up and if he could not be present all the while, he would come in at the end. On the Thursday evening he would, if possible, come to the sanctuary to hear a sermon from some gospel minister and would sit up late at night and get up early in the morning to make up the time he had spent in these religious exercises. But by-and-by he thought, "I am working too hard. This is tiring. It is too far to walk." And so he gives up, first, one service and then another—and then begins to cry out, "Oh that I

were as in months past!" Why, brothers and sisters, you need not be amazing at it! The man does not eat so much as he used to do! Little and often is the way children should be fed, though I have given you a great deal this morning. Still, little and often is a very good rule. I think when people give up weekday services, unless it is utterly impracticable for them to attend them, farewell to religion! "Farewell to practical godliness," says Whitefield, "when men do not worship God on the weekday!" Weekday services are frequently the cream of all. God gives His people pails full of milk on the Sabbath, but He often skims off the cream for the weekday! If they stay away, is it any wonder that they have to say, "Oh that I were as in months past"? I do not blame you, beloved. I only wish to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." A very plain fellow that is—(I'm speaking of myself) am I not? Yes, I always tell you what I mean and always intend to do so! Stand to your colors, my men! Keep close to the standard if you would win the battle! And when there seems to be the slightest defection, it is simply my duty to exhort you, lest by any measure you depart from the soundness of your faith!

4. But frequently this complaint arises from *idolatry*. Many have given their hearts to something else besides God and have set their affections upon the things of earth instead of the things in heaven. It is hard to love the world and love Christ. It is impossible—that is all. And it is hard not to love the creature. It is hard not to give yourself to earth. I had almost said, it is *impossible* not to do that. It *is* difficult and only God can enable us! He, alone, can keep us with our hearts fully set on Him. But mark—whenever we make a golden calf to worship—sooner or later it will come to this—we shall get our golden calf ground up and put into our water for us to drink and then we shall have to say, "He has made me drunk with wormwood." Never a man makes an idol to worship, but it tumbles down on him and breaks some of his bones! There was never a man, yet, who departed to broken cisterns to find water, but instead, thereof, he found loathsome creatures therein and was bitterly deceived! God will have His people live on Him and on none else! If they live on anything else but Him, He will take care to give them of the waters of Mara, to embitter their drink and drive them to the Rock of purest streams. Oh, beloved, let us take care that our hearts are wholly His, only Christ's, solely Christ's! If they are so, we shall not have to cry out, "Oh that I were as in months past!"

5. We scarcely need, however, detail any more reasons. We will add but one more and that is the most common one of all. We have, perhaps, become *self-confident and self-righteous;* if so, that is a reason why it is not with us as in months past. Ah, my friends, that old rascal, self-righteousness—you will never get rid of him as long as you live! The devil was well pictured under the form of a serpent because a serpent can creep in anywhere, though the smallest crevice. Self-righteousness is a serpent—for it will enter anywhere. If you try to serve your God, "What a

fine fellow you are," says the devil. "Ah, don't you serve your God well! You are always preaching. You are a noble fellow." If you go to a prayer meeting, God gives you a little gift and you are able to pour out your heart. Presently there is a pat on the back from Satan. "Did not you pray sweetly? I know the Brethren will love you! You are growing in grace very much." If a temptation comes and you are able to resist it, "Ah," he says at once, "You are a true soldier of the cross. Look at the enemy you have knocked down! You will have a bright crown, by-and-by. You are a brave fellow!" You go on trusting God implicitly. Satan says, "Your faith is very strong—no trial can overcome you—there is a weak brother, he is not half as strong as you are!" Away you go and scold your weak brother because he is not as big as you! And all the while, Satan is cheering you up and saying, "What a mighty warrior you are! So faithful always trusting in God; you have not any self-righteousness." The minister preaches to the Pharisee—but the Pharisee is not fifty-ninth cousin to you! You are not at all self-righteous in your own opinion—but all the while you are the most self-righteous creature in existence! Ah, beloved, just when we think ourselves humble, we are sure to be proud! And when we are groaning over our pride, we are generally the most humble! You may just read your own estimate backwards. Just when we imagine we are the worst, we are often the best. And when we conceive ourselves the best, we are often the worst. It is that vile *self-righteousness* who creeps into our souls and makes us murmur, "Oh that I were as in months past!" Your candle has got the wick of self-righteousness upon it. You need to have that replaced, and then you will burn all right. You are soaring too high! You require something that will bring you down, again, to the feet of the Savior as a poor lost and guilty sinner—nothing at all. Then you will not cry any longer, "Oh that I were as in months past!"

III. And now, the closing up is to be an EXHORTATION.

An exhortation first of all to *consolation*. One is saying, "Oh, I shall never be happy again, I have lost the light of His countenance. He has clean gone away from me and I shall perish." You remember in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the description of the man shut up in the iron cage? One said to him, "Will you never come out of this cage?" "No, never." "Are you condemned forever?" "Yes, I am." "Why was this?" "Why I grieved the Spirit and He is gone. I once thought I loved Him, but I have treated Him lightly and He has departed. I went from the paths of righteousness, but now I am locked up here and cannot get out." Yes, but does John Bunyan tell you that the man never did get out? There have been some in that iron cage that *have* come out. There may be one here this morning who has been for a long while sitting in that iron cage, rattling the bars, trying to break them, trying to file them through with his own little might and strength. Oh, dear friend, you will never file through the iron bars of that terrible cage! You will never escape by yourself. What must you do? You must begin to sing like the bird in the cage does.

Then the kind Master will come and let you out. Cry to Him to deliver you! And though you cry and shout and He shuts out your prayer, He *will* hear you, by-and-by. And like Jonah, you shall exclaim in days to come, "Out of the belly of hell I cried unto the Lord and He heard me." You will find the roll under the settle, although you have dropped it down the Hill of Difficulty. And when you have it, you will put it in your bosom, again, and hold it all the more tightly because you have lost it for a little season—

"Return, O wanderer, return,
And seek an injured Father's face.
Those warm desires that in you burn
Were kindled by reclaiming grace!"

And now another exhortation, not so much to console you as to stir you up more and more to seek to be what you ought to be. O Christian men and women, my brothers and sisters in the faith of Jesus Christ! How many there are of you who are content just to be saved and merely to enter heaven. How many do we find who are saying, "Oh, if I can but just get in at the door—if I can simply be a child of God!" And they literally carry out their desires, for they are as little Christian as possible! They would have moderation in religion! But what *is* moderation in religion? It is a lie! It is a farce! Does a wife ask her husband to be *moderately* loving? Does a parent expect his child to be moderately obedient? Do you seek to have your servants moderately honest? No! Then how can you talk about being moderately religious? To be moderately religious is to be *irreligious*. To have a religion that does not enter into the very heart and influence the life is virtually to have *no religion* at all! I tremble, sometimes, when I think of some of you who are mere professors. You are content you whitewashed sepulchers, because you are beautifully whitened! You rest satisfied, without looking at the morgue beneath! How many of you make clean the outside of the cup and platter. And because the church can lay nothing to your charge and the world cannot accuse you, you think the outside of the cup will be sufficient. Take heed! Take heed! The Judge will look at the inside of the cup and platter one day. And if it is full of wickedness, He will break that platter and the fragments shall forever be cast about in the pit of hell! Oh, may God give you grace to desire to be real Christians! Waxen-winged professors! You can fly very well, here. But when, like Icarus, you fly upwards, the mighty sun of Jesus Christ shall melt your wings and you shall fall into the pit of destruction! Ah, gilded Christians, beautifully painted, varnished, polished—what will you do when you shall be found, at last, to have been worthless metal? When the wood, hay and stubble shall be buried and consumed, what will you do if you are not the genuine coin of heaven? If you have not been molten in the furnace, if you have not been minted from on high? If you are not real gold, how shall you stand the fire in that "great and terrible day of the Lord"? Ah, and there are some of you who *can* stand the fire, I trust. You are the children of God. But, beloved, do I

charge you wrongfully when I say that many of us know that we are the children of God, but we are content to be as little dwarf children. We are always crying out, "Oh that I were as in months past!" That is a mark of dwarfishness. If we are to do great things in the world, we must not often utter this cry! We must often be singing—

"I the chief of sinners am.
But Jesus died for me,"

and with cheerful countenance we must be able to say that we "know whom we have believed." Do you wish to be useful? Do you desire to honor your Master? Do you long to carry a heavy crown to heaven, that you may put it on the Savior's head? If you do—and I know you do—then seek above all things, that your soul may prosper and be in health—that your inner man may not be simply in a living state, but that you may be a tree planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth your fruit in your season, your leaf never withering and whatever you do, prospering! Ah, do you want to go to heaven and wear a starless crown there—a crown that shall be a real crown, but that shall have no star upon it because no soul has been saved by you? Do you wish to sit in heaven with garments of Christ's, but without one single jewel that God has given you for your wages here, below? Ah, no! I think you wish to go to heaven in full dress and to enter into the fullness of the joy of the Lord! Five talents well improved five cities. And let no man be satisfied with merely his one talent, but let him seek to put it out at interest. "For unto him that has, shall be given, and he shall have abundance."

And finally, to many of you what I have preached about has no interest whatever. Perhaps you may say, "Oh that I were as in months past! For then I was quite well and I was a jolly fellow! Then I could drink with the deepest drinker anywhere! Then I could run merrily into sin, but now I cannot. I have hurt my body. I have injured my mind. It is not with me as it used to be—I have spent all my money. I wish I were as I used to be!" Ah, poor sinner, you have good reason to say, "Oh that I were as in months past!" But wait four or five months and then you will say it more emphatically, and think even today better than that day! And the further you go on, the more you will wish to go back again, for the path to hell is down, down, down, down—always down—and you will be always saying, "Oh that I were as in months past!" You will look back to the time when a mother's prayer blessed you and a father's reproof warned you—when you went to a Sunday school and sat upon your mother's knee, to hear her tell you of a Savior. And the longer the retrospect of goodness, the more that goodness will pain you! Ah, my friends, you have need to go back, some of you. Remember how far you have fallen—how much you have departed. But oh, you need not turn back! Instead of looking back and crying, "Oh that I were as in months past," say something different! Say, "Oh that I were a new man in Christ Jesus!" It would not do for you to begin again in your present state. You would soon be as bad as you now are. But say, "Oh that I were a *new man in Christ Jesus!* Oh that I

might begin a new life!" Some of you would like to begin a new life—some of you reprobates, who have gone far away! Well, poor mortal, you may! "How?" you say? Why, if you are a new man in Christ Jesus you *will* begin again! A Christian is as much a new man as if he had been no man at all, before! The old creature is dethroned. He is a new creature, born-again and starting on a new existence! Poor soul! God can make you a new man! God, the Holy Spirit, can build a new house out of you, with neither stick nor stone of the old man in it! And He can give you a new heart, a new spirit, new pleasures, new happiness, new prospects and, at last, give you a new heaven! "But," says one "I feel that I need these things, but may I have them?" Guess whether you may have them, when I tell you—"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save *sinners."* It does not say it is worthy of *some* acceptation, but it is worthy of *all* the acceptation you will ever give it! If you now say, "Jesus came into the world to save sinners, I believe He did! I know He did! He came to save *me,"* you will find it, "worthy of all acceptation." You still say, "But will He save *me?"* I will give you another passage—"Whoever comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." "Ah, but I do not know whether *I* may come!" "Whoever," it says. *"Him* that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." "Whoever will, let him come," it is written. Do you will? I only speak to such as will, who know their need of a Savior. Do you will? Then God, the Holy Spirit says, "Whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely"—

"The feeble, the guilty, the weak, the forlorn,
In coming to Jesus, shall not meet with scorn!
But He will receive them and bless them and save
From death and destruction, from hell and the grave."

And He will lift them up to His kingdom of glory. God so grant it; for His name's sake. Amen

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FREE WILL—A SLAVE
NO. 52

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 2, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"And you will not come unto Me, that you might have life."
John 5:40.

THIS is one of the great guns of the Arminians; mounted upon the top of their walls, and often discharged with terrible noise against the poor Christians called Calvinists! I intend to spike the gun this morning, or, rather, to turn it on the enemy—for it was never theirs. It was never cast at their foundry at all, but was intended to teach the *very opposite doctrine* to that which they assert. Usually, when the text is taken, the divisions are—first that man has a will. Secondly, that he is entirely free. Thirdly, that men must make themselves willing to come to Christ, otherwise they will not be saved. Now, we shall have no such divisions! But we will endeavor to take a calmer look at the text, and not because there happens to be the words, "will," or, "will not," in it conclude that it teaches the doctrine of free will. It has already been proved beyond all controversy that free will is nonsense! Freedom cannot belong to will any more than ponderability can belong to electricity. They are altogether different things. *Free agency* we may believe in, but free will is simply ridiculous. The will is well-known by all to be directed by the understanding, to be moved by motives, to be guided by other parts of the soul, and to be a secondary thing. Philosophy and religion both discard at once the very thought of free will! And I will go as far as Martin Luther, in that strong assertion of his, where he says, "If any man does ascribe anything of salvation, even the very least to the free will of man, he knows nothing of divine grace, and he has not learnt Jesus Christ aright." It may seem a harsh sentiment, but he who in his soul believes that man does of his own free will turn to God, cannot have been taught of God—for that is one of the first principles taught us when God begins with us—that we have neither will nor power—but that He gives both—that He is "Alpha and Omega" in the salvation of men.

Our four points, this morning, shall be, first, *that every man is dead,* because it says, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." Secondly, *that there is life in Jesus Christ*—"You will not come unto Me that you might have *life*." Thirdly, *that there is life in Christ Jesus for everyone who comes for it*—"You will not come unto Me that you might have life," implying that all who go will have life. And fourthly, the gist of the text lies here, *that no man by nature ever will come to Christ,* for the text says, "You will *not* come unto Me that you might have life." So far from asserting that men of their own wills ever do such a thing, it boldly and

flatly denies it, and says, "You WILL NOT come unto Me that you might have life." Why, beloved, I am almost ready to exclaim, "Have all that believe in free will no knowledge that they dare to run in the teeth of inspiration? Have all those that deny the doctrine of grace no sense? Have they so departed from God that they wrest this to prove free will—whereas the text says, "You WILL NOT come unto Me that you might have life."

I. First, then, our text implies THAT MEN, BY NATURE ARE DEAD. No being needs to go after life if he has life in himself. The text speaks very strongly when it says, "You will not come unto Me, that you might have life," though it says it not in words, yet it does in effect affirm that men need a life more than they have themselves. My hearers, we are all dead unless we have been begotten unto a lively hope. First, we are all of us, by nature, *legally* dead—"In the day that you eat, thereof, you shall die the death," said God to Adam. And though Adam did not die in that moment, naturally, he died *legally.* That is to say, death was recorded against him! As soon as at the Old Bailey the judge puts on the black cap and pronounces the sentence, the man is reckoned to be dead at law. Though perhaps a month may intervene before he is brought on the scaffold to endure the sentence of the law, yet the law looks upon him as a dead man. It is impossible for him to transact anything. He cannot inherit, he cannot bequeath. He is nothing—he is a dead man. The country considers him not as being alive at all. There is an election—he is not asked for his vote because he is considered as dead. He is shut up in his condemned cell, and he is dead. Ah, and you ungodly sinners who have never had life in Christ, you are alive this morning by reprieve, but do you know that you are legally dead? God considers you as such, that in the day when your father, Adam, touched the fruit, and when you sinned, God, the Eternal Judge, put on the black cap and condemned you! You talk mightily of your own standing and goodness and morality—where is it? Scripture says you are, "condemned already." You are not to wait to be condemned at the Judgment Day—that will be the execution of the sentence—"You are condemned already." In the moment you sinned, your names were all written in the black book of justice. Everyone was then sentenced by God to death for his sins—unless he found a substitute in the person of Christ. What would you think if you were to go into the Old Bailey and see the condemned culprit sitting in his cell, laughing and merry? You would say, "The man is a fool, for he is condemned and is to be executed, yet how merry he is." Ah, and how foolish is the worldly man who while sentence is recorded against him, lives in merriment and mirth! Do you think the sentence of God is of no effect? Do you think that your sin, which is written with an iron pen on the rocks forever, has no horrors in it? God has said you are condemned already! If you would but feel this, it would mingle bitters in your sweet cups of joy. Your dances would be stopped, your laughter quenched in sighing if you would remember that you are already condemned! We ought all to weep,

if we lay this to our souls—that by nature we have no life in God's sight. We are actually, positively condemned—death is recorded against us—and we are considered in ourselves right now in God's sight as much dead as if we were actually cast into hell! We are condemned here by sin—we do not yet suffer the penalty of it—but it is written against us, and we are legally dead. Nor can we find life unless we find legal life in the person of Christ, about which I will say more by-and-by.

But, besides being legally dead, we are also *spiritually dead*. For not only did the sentence pass in the book but it passed in the heart—it entered the conscience! It operated on the soul, on the judgment, on the imagination and on everything. "In the day you eat, thereof, you shall surely die," was not only fulfilled by the *recorded* sentence, but by something which took place in Adam. Just as in a certain moment, when this body shall die, the blood stops, the pulse ceases, the breath no longer comes from the lungs, so in the day that Adam ate that fruit, his soul died. His imagination lost its mighty power to climb into celestial things and see heaven! His will lost its power to always choose that which is good. His judgment lost all ability to judge between right and wrong decidedly and infallibly. Though something was retained in conscience, his memory became tainted—liable to hold evil things and let righteous things glide away; every power of his ceased as to its moral vitality; goodness was the vitality of his powers—that departed! Virtue, holiness, integrity—these were the life of man—but when these departed, man became dead! And now every man as far as *spiritual* things are concerned, is "dead in trespasses and sins" spiritually. Nor is the soul less dead in a carnal man, than the body is when committed to the grave. It is actually and positively dead—not by a metaphor, for Paul speaks not in metaphor when he affirms, "You has He quickened, who *were dead* in trespasses and sins." But my hearers, I would again wish I could preach to your hearts concerning this subject! It was bad enough when I described death as having been recorded. But now I speak of it as having actually taken place in your hearts. You are not what you once were! You are not what you were in Adam, not what you were created! man was made pure and holy. You are not the perfect creatures of which some boast. You are altogether fallen! You have gone out of the way; you have become corrupt and filthy! Oh, listen not to the siren song of those who tell you of your moral dignity and your mighty elevation in matters of salvation! You are not perfect—that great word, "ruin," is written on your heart! And death is stamped upon your spirit. Do not conceive, O moral man that you will be able to stand before God in your morality, for you are nothing but a carcass embalmed in legality, a corpse arrayed in some fine robes, but still corrupt in God's sight! And think not, O you possessor of natural religion, that you may, by your own might and power, make yourself acceptable to God!

Why, man, you are DEAD! And you may array the dead as gloriously as you please, but still it would be a solemn mockery. There lies Queen

Cleopatra—put the crown upon her head, deck her in royal robes, let her sit in state. But what a cold chill runs through you when you pass by her! She is fair, now, even in her death—but how horrible it is to stand by the side, even, of a dead queen, celebrated for her majestic beauty! So you may be glorious in your beauty—fair, amiable and lovely. You may put the crown of honesty upon your head and wear about you all the garments of uprightness—but unless God has quickened you—O man—unless the Spirit has had dealings with your soul, you are in God's sight as obnoxious as the chilly corpse is to yourself! You would not choose to live with a corpse sitting at your table. Nor does God love that you should be in His sight. He is angry with you every day, for you are in sin—you are in death. Oh, believe this! Take it to your soul and appropriate it, for it is most true that you are dead, spiritually as well as legally!

The third kind of death is the consummation of the other two. It is *eternal death*. It is the execution of the legal sentence. It is the consummation of the spiritual death. Eternal death is the death of the soul—it takes place after the body has been laid in the grave, after the soul has departed from it! If legal death is terrible, it is because of its consequences. And if spiritual death is dreadful, it is because of that which shall succeed it. The two deaths of which we have spoken are the roots—and that death which is to come is the flower thereof! Oh, had I words that I might, this morning, attempt to depict to you what eternal death is! The soul has come before its Maker, the book has been opened, and the sentence has been uttered. "Depart you cursed" has shaken the universe and made the very spheres dim with the frown of the Creator! The soul has departed to the depths where it is to dwell with others in eternal death. Oh, how horrible is its position! Its bed is a bed of flame! The sights it sees are murdering ones that frighten its spirit, the sounds it hears are shrieks, wails, moans and groans! All that its body knows is the infliction of miserable pain! It has the possessor of unutterable woe, of unmitigated misery. The soul looks up. Hope is extinct—it is gone. It looks downward in dread and fear. Remorse has possessed its soul. It looks on the right hand—and the adamantine walls of fate keep it within its limits of torture. It looks on the left—and there the rampart of blazing fire forbids the sealing ladder of even a dreamy speculation of escape! It looks within and seeks for consolation there, but a gnawing worm has entered into the soul. It looks about it—it has no friends to aid, no comforters, but tormentors in abundance. It knows nothing of hope of deliverance. It has heard the everlasting key of destiny turning in its awful wards and it has seen God take that key and hurl it down into the depth of eternity never to be found again! It hopes not. It knows no escape. It guesses not of deliverance. It pants for death, but death is too much its foe to be there! It longs that non-existence would swallow it up, but this eternal death is worse than annihilation! It pants for extermination as the laborer for his Sabbath. It longs that it might be swallowed up in nothingness just as would the galley slave long for freedom, but it comes

not. It is eternally dead! When eternity shall have rolled round multitudes of its everlasting cycles, it shall still be dead. Forever knows no end. Eternity cannot be spelled except in eternity! Still the soul sees written over its head, "You are damned forever." It hears howls that are to be perpetual. It sees flames which are unquenchable. It knows pains that are unmitigated. It hears a sentence that rolls not like the thunder of earth which soon is hushed—but onward, onward, onward, shaking the echoes of eternity—making thousands of years shake again with the horrid thunder of its dreadful sound—"Depart! Depart! Depart you cursed!" This is the eternal death.

II. Secondly, IN CHRIST JESUS THERE IS LIFE, for He says, "You will not come unto Me that *you may have life."* There is no life in God the Father for a sinner! There is no life in God the Spirit for a sinner apart from Jesus. The life of a sinner is in Christ. If you take the Father away, though He loves His elect, and decrees that they shall live, yet life is only in His Son. If you take God the Spirit away from Jesus Christ, though it is the Spirit who gives us spiritual life, yet it is life in Christ, life in the Son! We dare not, and cannot apply in the first place either to God the Father, or to God the Holy Spirit for spiritual life! The first thing we are led to do when God brings us out of Egypt is to eat the Passover—the very first thing. The first means whereby we get life is by feeding upon the flesh and blood of the Son of God—living in Him, trusting on Him, believing in His grace and power. Our second thought was—there is life in Christ. We will show you there are three kinds of life in Christ, as there are three kinds of death.

First there is *legal life* in Christ. Just as every man by nature, considered in Adam, had a sentence of condemnation passed on him in the moment of Adam's sin and more especially in the moment of his own first transgression, so I, if I am a believer and you, if you trust in Christ, have had a legal sentence of acquittal passed on us through what Jesus Christ has done. O condemned sinner, you may be sitting, this morning, condemned like the prisoner in Newgate! But before this day has passed away, you may be as clear from guilt as the angels above! There is such a thing as legal life in Christ and, blessed be God, some of us enjoy it! We know our sins are pardoned because Christ suffered punishment for them! We know that we can never be punished, ourselves, for Christ suffered in our place. The Passover is slain for us! The lintel and doorpost have been sprinkled and the destroying angel can never touch us. For us there is no hell, although it blazes with terrible flames! Let Tophet be prepared of old, let its pile be wood and much smoke—we can never go there—Christ died for us, in our place! What if there are racks of horrid torture? What if there is a sentence producing most horrible reverberations of thundering sounds? Neither rack, nor dungeon, nor thunder is for us! In Christ Jesus we are now delivered. "There is, therefore, NOW, no condemnation unto us who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Sinner, are you legally condemned this morning? Do you feel that? Then let me tell you that faith in Christ will give you knowledge of your legal acquittal! Beloved, it is no fancy that we are condemned for our sins—it is a reality! So, it is no fancy we are acquitted, *it* is a reality! A man about to be hanged, if he received a full pardon, would feel it a great reality. He would say, "I have a full pardon, I cannot be touched now." That is just how I feel—

"Now freed from sin I walk at large
The Savior's blood's my full discharge!
At His dear feet content I lay,
A sinner saved and homage pay."

Brothers and sisters, we have gained legal life in Christ and such legal life that we cannot lose it! The sentence has gone against us once—now we are pardoned! It is written, THERE IS NOW NO CONDEMNATION and that, *now,* will do as well for me in 50 years as it does now. Whatever time we live, it will still be written, "There is, therefore, *now,* no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Then, secondly, there is *spiritual life* in Christ Jesus. As the man is spiritually dead, God has spiritual life for him—for there is not a need which is not supplied by Jesus. There is not emptiness in the heart which Christ cannot fill. There is not a ruin which He cannot fix! There is not a desert which he cannot make to blossom as the rose. O you dead sinners! You spiritually dead, there is life in Christ Jesus, for we have seen—yes—these eyes have seen—*the dead live again!* We have known the man whose soul was utterly corrupt, by the power of God seek after righteousness. We have known the man whose views were carnal, whose lusts were mighty, whose passions were strong, suddenly by irresistible might from heaven—consecrate himself to Christ, and become a child of Jesus! We know that there is life in Christ Jesus, of a spiritual order. Yes, more—we, ourselves, in our own persons, have felt that there is spiritual life. Well, can we remember when we sat in the house of prayer, as dead as the very seat on which we sat! We had listened for a long, long while to the sound of the gospel, but no effect followed, when suddenly, as if our ears had been opened by the fingers of some mighty angel, a sound entered into our heart. We thought we heard Jesus saying, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear." An irresistible hand put itself on our heart and crushed a prayer out of it. We never, before, had a prayer like that. We cried, "O God! Have mercy upon me a sinner." Some of us, for months, felt a hand pressing us as if we had been grasped in a vice and our souls bled drops of anguish. That misery was a sign of coming life! persons, when they are being drowned, do not feel the pain so much as while they are being restored. Oh, we remember those pains, those groans, that living strife which our soul had when it came to Christ! Ah, we can remember the giving of our spiritual life as easily as could a man his restoration from the grave. We can suppose Lazarus to have remembered his resurrection, though not all the circumstances of it. So we, although we have forgotten a great deal, do remember our giving ourselves

to Christ. We can say to every sinner, however dead, there is life in Christ Jesus! Though you may be rotten and corrupt in your grave, He who has raised Lazarus, has raised us—and He can say, even to you, "Lazarus! Come forth!"

In the third place, there is *eternal life* in Christ Jesus—and, oh, if eternal death is terrible, eternal life is blessed, for He has said, "Where I am, there shall My people be." "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given unto Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish." Now, any Arminian that would preach from that text must buy a pair of rubber lips, for I am sure he would need to stretch his mouth amazingly! He would never be able to speak the whole truth without winding about in a most mysterious manner! Eternal life—not a life which they may lose, but *eternal* life! If I lost life in Adam, I gained it in Christ. If I *lost* myself forever, I *find* myself forever in Jesus Christ. Eternal life! Oh blessed thought! Our eyes will sparkle with joy, and our souls burn with ecstasy in the thought that we have eternal life. Be quenched you stars; let God put His finger on you—but my soul will live in bliss and joy. Put out your eyes O sun—but my eyes shall "see the king in His beauty" when your eyes shall no more make the green earth laugh! And moon, be you turned into blood—but my blood shall never be turned to nothingness! This spirit shall exist when you have ceased to be! And you, great world! You may all subside, just as a moment's foam subsides upon the wave that bears it—but I shall have ETERNAL LIFE! O time! You may see giant mountains dead and hidden in their graves. You may see the stars like figs, too ripe, falling from the tree. But you shall never, never see my spirit dead!

III. This brings us to the third point—that ETERNAL LIFE IS GIVEN TO ALL WHO COME FOR IT. There never was a man who came to Christ for eternal life, for legal life, for spiritual life, who had not already received it, in some sense, and it was manifested to him that he had received it soon after he came. Let us take one or two texts—"He is able to save to the uttermost them that *come* unto Him." Every man who comes to Christ will find that Christ is able to save him—not able to save him a little—to deliver him from a little sin, to keep him from a little trial, to carry him a little way and then drop him—but able to save him to the uttermost extent of his sin, unto the uttermost length of his trials, the uttermost depths of his sorrows—unto the uttermost duration of his existence! Christ says to everyone who comes to Him, "Come, poor sinner, you need not ask whether I have power to save. I will not ask you how far you have gone into sin. I am able to save you to the uttermost." And there is no one on earth who can go beyond God's "uttermost"!

Now another text—"Him that *comes* to Me, (mark the promises are nearly always to the *coming* ones) I will in no wise cast out." Every man that comes, shall find the door of Christ's house opened—and the door of His heart, too! Every man that comes—I say it in the broadest sense—

shall find that Christ has mercy for him! The greatest absurdity in the world is to need to have a wider gospel than that recorded in Scripture. I preach that every man that believes shall be saved—that every man who comes shall find mercy. People ask me, "But suppose a man should come who was not chosen, would he be saved?" You suppose nonsense and I am not going to give you an answer! If a man is not chosen, he will never come. When he does come, it is a sure proof that he was chosen! Says one, "Suppose anyone should go to Christ who had not been called of the Spirit." Stop, my brother—that is a supposition you have no right to make, for such a thing cannot happen! You only say it to entangle me, and you will not do that just yet. I say every man who comes to Christ shall be saved. I can say that as a Calvinist, or as a hyper-Calvinist as plainly as you can say it. I have no narrower gospel than you have—only my gospel is on a solid foundation, whereas yours is built upon nothing but sand and rottenness. "Every man that comes shall be saved, for no man comes to Me except the Father draws him." "But," says one, "suppose all the world should come, would Christ receive them?" Certainly, if all came, but they won't all come; I tell you, *all that come*—yes, if they were as bad as devils, Christ would receive them! If they had all sin and filthiness running into their hearts as into a common sewer for the whole world, Christ would receive them! Another says, "I want to know about the rest of the people. May I go out and tell them Jesus Christ died for every one of you? May I say—there is righteousness for every one of you, there is life for every one of you"? No. You may not. You may say there is life for every man that comes. But if you say there is life for one of those who do not believe, you utter a dangerous lie. If you tell them that Jesus Christ was punished for their sins and yet they will be lost, you tell a willful lie! To think that God could punish Christ and then punish them—wonder at your daring to have the impudence to say so!

A good man was once preaching that there were harps and crowns in heaven for his entire congregation; but then he wound up in a most solemn manner—"My dear friends, there are many for whom these things are prepared who will not get there." In fact, he made such a pitiful tale, as indeed he might do. But I tell you who he ought to have wept for—he ought to have wept for the angels of heaven and all the saints—because that would spoil heaven thoroughly. You know when you meet at Christmas, if you have lost your brother, David, and his seat is empty, you say—"Well, we always enjoyed Christmas, but there is a drawback to it now—poor David is dead and buried." Think of the angels saying—"Ah, this is a beautiful heaven, but we don't like to see all those crowns up there with cobwebs on them. We cannot endure that uninhabited street—we cannot behold yon empty thrones." And then, poor souls, they might begin talking to one another and say, "We are none of us safe here, for the promise was—'I give unto My sheep eternal life,' and there is a lot of them in hell that God gave eternal life to. There is a number that Christ shed His blood for burning in the pit of hell and if they may be

sent there, so may we! If we cannot trust one promise we cannot another." So heaven would lose its foundation and fall. Away with your nonsensical gospel! God gives us a safe and solid one, built on covenant doings and covenant relationships, on eternal purposes and sure fulfillments!

IV. This brings us to the fourth point, THAT BY NATURE NO MAN WILL COME TO CHRIST, for the text says, "You will not come unto Me, that you might have life." I assert, on Scripture authority from my text, that you will not come unto Christ, that you might have life. I tell you, I might preach to you forever, I might borrow the eloquence of Demosthenes or of Cicero, but you will not come unto Christ! I might beg of you on my knees, with tears in my eyes and show you the horrors of hell and the joys of heaven, the sufficiency of Christ and your own lost condition—but you would, none of you, come unto Christ of yourselves unless the Spirit that rested on Christ should draw you! It is true of all men in their natural condition that they *will not* come to Christ. I think, though, I hear another of these babblers asking a question—"But could they not come if they liked?" My friend, I will reply to you another time. That is not the question this morning! I am talking about whether they *will*, not whether they *can*. You will notice, whenever you talk about free will, the poor Arminian, in two seconds, begins to talk about power—and he mixes up two subjects that should be kept apart! We will not take two subjects at once! We decline fighting two at the same time, if you please. Another day we will preach from this text—"No man *can* come except the Father draws him." But it is only the will we are talking of now. And it is certain that men *will not come* to Christ, that they might have life. We might prove this from many texts of Scripture, but we will take one parable. You remember the parable where a certain king had a feast for his son and bade a great number to come? The oxen and fatlings were killed and he sent his messengers bidding many to the supper. Did they go the feast? Ah, no. But they all, with one accord, began to make excuses. One said he had married a wife and, therefore, he could not come, whereas he might have brought her with him. Another had bought a yoke of oxen and went to prove them. But the feast was at night—and he could not prove his oxen in the dark! Another had bought a piece of land and wanted to see it, but I should not think he went to see it with a lantern. So they all made excuses and would not come. Well, the king was determined to have the feast. So he said, "Go into the highways and hedges and invite them"—stop! Not *invite—"COMPEL* them to come in," for even the ragged fellow sinning in the hedges would never have come unless they were compelled! Take another parable. A certain man had a vineyard. At the appointed season he sent one of his servants for his rent. What did they do to him? They beat that servant. He sent another and they stoned him. He sent another and they killed him! He at last said, "I will send them my son; they will reverence him." But what did they do? They said, "This is the heir, let us kill him and cast him out of the vine-

yard." So they did. It is the same with all men by nature. The Son of God came, yet men rejected Him. "You will not come unto Me, that you might have life." It would take too much time to mention any more Scripture proofs.

We will, however, refer to the great doctrine of the fall. Anyone who believes that man's will is entirely free and that he can be saved by it does not believe the fall. As I sometimes tell you, few preachers of religion believe the doctrine of the fall thoroughly, or else they think that when Adam fell down he broke his little finger and did not break his neck and ruin his race. Why, beloved, the fall broke man up entirely! It did not leave one power unimpaired. They were all shattered, debased and tarnished like some mighty temple. The pillars might be there, the shaft and the column and the plaster might be there, but they were all broken, though some of them retain much of their form and position. The conscience of man sometimes retains much of its tenderness—still it has fallen. The will, too, is not exempt. What, though it is, "the Lord Mayor of Man Soul," as Bunyan calls it—the Lord Mayor goes wrong! The Lord Will-be-Will was continually doing wrong! Your fallen nature was put out of order. Your will, among other things, has clean gone astray from God! But I tell you what will be the best proof of that. It is the great fact that you never did meet a Christian in your life who ever said he came to Christ without Christ coming to him! You have heard a great many Arminian sermons, I dare say, but you never heard an Arminian prayer—for the saints in prayer appear as one in word, and deed, and mind. An Arminian on his knees would pray desperately like a Calvinist. He cannot pray about free will—there is no room for it. Fancy him praying, "*Lord, I thank You I am not like those poor presumptuous Calvinists. Lord, I was born with a glorious free will. I was born with power by which I can turn to You of myself. I have improved my grace. If everybody had done the same with their grace that I have, they might all have been saved. Lord, I know You do not make us willing if we are not willing ourselves. You give grace to everybody. Some do not improve it, but I do. There are many who will go to hell as much bought with the blood of Christ as I was. They had as much of the Holy Spirit given to them. They had as good a charge and were as much blessed as I am. It was not Your grace that made us to differ—I know it did a great deal, still I turned the point. I made use of what was given me and others did not—that is the difference between me and them.*" That is a prayer for the devil, for nobody else would offer such a prayer as that!

Ah, when they are preaching and talking very slowly, there may be wrong doctrine. But when they come to pray, the true thing slips out—they cannot help it! If a man talks very slowly, he may speak in a fine manner. But when he comes to talk fast, the old brogue of his country, where he was born, slips out. I ask you again, did you ever meet a Christian who said, "I came to Christ without the power of the Spirit?" If you ever did meet such a man, you need have no hesitation in saying, "My dear sir, I quite believe it—and I believe you went away again without the

power of the Spirit. I believe you know nothing about the matter and are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity." Do I hear one Christian saying, "I sought Jesus before He sought me; I went to the Spirit, and the Spirit did not come to me"? No, beloved, we are obliged, each one of us to put our hands to our hearts and say—

"Grace taught my soul to pray
And made my eyes overflow.
'Twas grace that kept me to this day
And will not let me go."

Is there one here—a solitary one—man or woman, young or old—who can say, "I sought God before He sought me?" No! Even you who are a little Arminian, will sing—

"O yes! I do love Jesus—
Because He first loved me"

Then, one more question. Do we not find, even after we have come to Christ, our soul is not free, but is kept by Christ? Do we not find times, even now, when to will is not present with us? There is a law in our members, warring against the law of our minds. Now, if those who are spiritually alive feel that their will is contrary to God, what shall we say of the man who is "dead in trespasses and sins"? It would be a marvelous absurdity to put the two on the same level! And it would be still more absurd to put the dead before the living! No. The text is true. Experience has branded it into our hearts, "You will not come unto Me, that you might have life."

Now, we must tell you the reasons why men will not come to Christ. The first is because no man by nature thinks he needs Christ. By nature, man conceives that he does not need Christ. He thinks that he has a robe of righteousness of his own—that he is well-dressed—that he is not naked. He thinks that he needs not Christ's blood to wash him, that he is not black or crimson and needs no grace to purify him! No man knows his need until God shows it to him—and until the Holy Spirit reveals the necessity of pardon—no man will seek pardon. I may preach Christ forever, but unless you feel you need Christ you will never come to Him. A doctor may have a good shop, but nobody will buy his medicines until he feels he needs them.

The next reason is because men do not like Christ's way of saving them. One says, "I do not like it because He makes me holy. I cannot drink or swear if He saves me." Another says, "It requires me to be so precise and Puritanical—and I like a little more license." Another does not like it because it is so humbling. He does not like it because the "gate of heaven" is not quite high enough for his head and he does not like stooping. That is the chief reason you will not come to Christ, because you cannot get to Him with your heads straight up in the air. Christ makes you stoop when you come! Another does not like it to be grace from first to last. "Oh," he says, "If I might have a little honor." But when he hears it is all Christ, or no Christ, a whole Christ or no Christ, he says, "I shall not come," and turns on his heels and away he goes! Ah,

proud sinners, you *will not* come to Christ. Ah, ignorant sinners, you *will not* come to Christ because you know nothing of Him! And that is the third reason.

Men do not know His worth, for if they did, they would come to Him. Why did not sailors go to America before Columbus went? Because they did not believe there was an America! Columbus had faith, therefore he went. He who has faith in Christ, goes to Him. But you don't know Jesus. Many of you never saw His beauteous face. You never saw how applicable His blood is to a sinner, how great is His Atonement—and how all-sufficient are His merits—therefore, "You will not come unto Him."

And oh my hearers, my last thought is a solemn one. I have preached that you will not come. But some will ask, "Is it their sin that they do not come?" It is so. You will not come because your will is a sinful will! Some think that we "sew pillows to all armholes" when we preach this doctrine, but we don't. We do not set this down as being part of man's original nature, but as belonging to his *fallen* nature! It is SIN that has brought you into this condition that you will not come! If you had not fallen, you would come to Christ the moment He was preached to you. But you do not come because of your sinfulness and crime. People excuse themselves because they have bad hearts. That is the most flimsy excuse in the world! Do not robbery and thieving come from a bad heart? Suppose a thief should say to a judge, "I could not help it, I have a bad heart." What would the judge say? "You rascal! Why, if your *heart* is bad, I'll make the sentence heavier, for you are a villain, indeed—your excuse is nothing." The Almighty shall "laugh at them and shall have them in derision." We do not preach this doctrine to excuse you, but to humble you! The possession of a bad nature is my fault as well as my terrible calamity. It is a sin that will always be charged on men. When they will not come to Christ, it is sin that keeps them away! He who does not preach that, I fear is not faithful to God and his conscience. Go home, then, with this thought, "I am by nature so perverse that I will not come to Christ—and that wicked perversity of my nature is my sin. I deserve to be sent to hell for it." And if the thought does not humble you; even the Spirit using it, no other can! This morning I have not preached human nature up, but I have preached it down! God humble us all! Amen.

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HEALING FOR THE WOUNDED
NO. 53

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 11, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds."
Psalm 147:3.

THE next verse finely declares the power of God. "He tells the number of the stars. He calls them all by their names." Perhaps there is nothing which gives us a nobler view of the greatness of God than a contemplation of the starry heavens, when by night we lift up our eyes and behold Him who has created all these things. When we remember that He brings out their host by number, calls them all by their names and that by the greatness of His power not one fails, then, indeed, we adore a mighty God and our soul naturally falls prostrate in reverential awe before the throne of Him who leads the host of heaven and marshals the stars in their armies! But the Psalmist has here placed another fact side by side with this wondrous act of God. He declares that the same God who leads the stars, who tells the number of them, and calls them by their names, heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds! The next time you rise to some idea of God by viewing the starry floor of His magnificent temple above, strive to compel your contemplation to this thought—that the same mighty hand which rolls the stars along, puts liniments around the wounded heart—that the same Being who spoke the worlds into existence and now impels those ponderous globes through their orbits, does, in His mercy, cheer the wounded and heal the broken in heart!

We will not delay you by a preface, but will come at once to the two thoughts. First, here is a *great ill*—a broken heart. And secondly, *a great mercy*—"*He heals* the broken in heart and binds up their wounds."

Man is a double being—he is composed of body and soul—and each of the portions of man may receive injury and hurt. The wounds of the body are extremely painful and if they amount to a breaking of the frame, the torture is singularly exquisite. Yet God has, in His mercy, provided means whereby wounds may be healed and injuries repaired. The soldier who retires from the battlefield knows that he shall find a hand to extricate the shot and certain ointments and liniments to heal his wounds. We very speedily care for bodily diseases. They are too painful to let us slumber in silence and they soon urge us to seek a physician or a surgeon for our healing. Oh, if only we were as much alive to the more serious wounds of our *inner man!* If we were as deeply sensible of *spiritual*

injuries, how earnestly would we cry to "the beloved physician"—and how soon would we prove His power to save! Stabbed in the most vital part by the hand of our original parent and, from head to foot disabled by our own sin, we yet remain as insensible as steel—careless and unmoved—because though our wounds are known, they are not felt! We would count that soldier foolish who would be more anxious to repair a broken helmet than an injured limb. Are not we even more to be condemned when we give precedence to the perishing fabric of the body and neglect the immortal soul? You, however, who have *broken hearts,* can no longer be insensible. You have felt *too acutely* to slumber in indifference! Your bleeding spirit cries for consolation—may my glorious *Master* give me words in season for you! We intend to address you upon the important subject of broken hearts and the great healing provided for them.

I. Let us commence with THE GREAT ILL—a broken heart. What is it? We reply there are several forms of a broken heart. Some are what we call naturally broken and some are spiritually so. We will occupy a moment by mentioning certain forms of this evil, naturally considered. And verily our task would be a dreary one if we were called upon to witness one tenth of the misery endured by those who suffer from a broken heart!

There have been hearts broken by *desertion*. A wife has been neglected by a husband who was once the subject of her attachment and whom even now she tenderly loves. Scorned and despised by the man who once lavished upon her every token of his affection, she has known what a broken heart means. A friend is forsaken by one upon whom he leaned, to whose very soul he was knit, so that their two hearts had grown into one. He feels that his heart is broken, for the other half of himself is severed from him. When Ahithophel forsakes David, when the kind friend unto whom we have always told our sorrows, betrays our confidence, the consequence may possibly be a broken heart. The desertion of a man by his fellows, the ingratitude of children to their parents, the unkindness of parents to their children, the betrayal of secrets by a comrade, the changeableness and fickleness of friends—along with other modes of desertion which happen in this world—have brought about broken hearts. We know not a more fruitful source of broken hearts than disappointment in the objects of our affections—to find that we have been deceived where we have placed our confidence. It is not simply that we leaned upon a broken reed and the reed has snapped—that were bad enough—but in the fall, we fell upon a thorn which pierced our heart to its center! Many have there been who have gone to their graves not smitten by disease, not slain by the sword—but with a far direr wound than the sword could ever give, a more desperate death than poison could ever cause! May you never know such agony!

We have also seen hearts broken by *bereavement*. We have known tender wives who have laid their husbands in the tomb and who have stood by the grave until their very heart did break for solitary anguish. We have seen parents bereaved of their beloved offspring, one after another. And when they have been called to hear the solemn words, "earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes," over the last of their children, they have turned away from the grave, bidding adieu—longing for death and abhorring life! To such the world becomes a prison—cheerless, cold, and unutterably miserable. The owl and bittern seem, alone, to sympathize with them and anything of joy in the whole world appears to be but, intended, as a mockery to their misery. Divine grace, however, can sustain them even here!

How frequently might this be supposed to occur to our brave countrymen engaged in the present war? Do not they feel, and acutely feel, the loss of their comrades? You will, perhaps, imagine that the slaughter and death around them prevent the tender feelings of nature. You are enough mistaken if you so dream! The soldier's heart may never know fear, but it has not forgotten sympathy! The fearful struggle around renders it impossible to pay the usual court and homage at the gates of sorrow, but there is more of real grief, oftentimes, in the hurried midnight funeral than in the flaunting pageantry of your pompous processions. Were it in our power to walk among the tents, we would find abundant need to use the words of our text by way of cordial to many a warrior who has seen all his chosen companions fall before the destroyer!

Oh you mourners! You who seek a balm for your wounds—let me proclaim it unto you—you are not ignorant of it, I trust, but let me apply that in which you already place your confidence. The God of heaven knows your sorrows, repair to His throne and tell your simple tale of woe! Then cast your burden on *Him.* He will bear it! Open your heart before *Him*—He will heal it! Think not that you are beyond hope. You would be if there were no God of love and pity, but while Jehovah lives, the mourner need not despair!

Poverty has also contributed its share to the number of the army of misery. Pinching need, a noble desire to walk erect without the crutch of charity, and inability to obtain employment have, at times, driven men to desperate measures. Many a goodly cedar has withered for lack of moisture and so has many a man pined away beneath the deprivations of extreme poverty. Those who are blessed with sufficiency can scarcely guess the pain endured by the sons of need—especially if they have once been rich. Yet O child of suffering, be patient—God has not passed you over in His Providence. Feeder of sparrows, He will also furnish *you* with what you need! Sit not down in despair—hope on, always hope! Take up arms against a sea of troubles and your opposition shall yet end your distress-

es. *There is* one who cares for you. One eye is fixed on you, even in the home of your destitution. One heart beats with pity for your woes and an omnipotent hand shall yet stretch out to you the needed help! The dark cloud shall yet scatter itself in its season—the blackest gloom shall have its morning! *He* will bind up your wounds, and heal your broken heart with hands of grace if you are one of His family!

Multiplied also are the cases where *disappointment* and *defeat* have crushed the spirits. The soldier fighting for his country may see the ranks broken, but he will not be broken in heart as long as there remains a single hope for victory. His comrade reels behind him and he, himself, is wounded, but with a shout, he cries, "On! On!" and scales the ramparts. Sword in hand, he still goes carrying terror among the foe, himself sustained by the prospect of victory. But let him once hear the shout of defeat where he hoped for triumph. Let him know that the banner is stained in the earth, that the eagle has been snatched from the standard. Let him once hear it said, "They fly, they fly!" Let him see the officers and soldiers flying in confusion—let him be well assured that the most heroic courage and the most desperate valor are of no use—then his heart bursts under a sense of dishonor! Then he is almost content to die because the honor of his country has been tarnished and her glory has been stained in the dust. Of this the soldiers of Britain know but little—may they speedily carve out a peace for us with their victorious swords! Truly in the great conflict of life we can bear anything but defeat. Toils on toils would we endure to climb a summit, but if we must die before we reached it—that were a brokenness of heart, indeed! To accomplish the objective on which we have set our minds, we would spend our very heart's blood. But once let us see that our life's purpose is not to be accomplished—let us, when we hoped to grasp the crown, see that it is withdrawn, or other hands have seized it—then comes brokenness of heart. But let us remember, whether we have been broken in heart by poverty or by defeat, that there is a hand which "binds up the broken in heart and heals all their wounds." Even these natural breakings are regarded by Jehovah, who, in the plentitude of His mercy, gives a balm for every wound to each of His people! We need not ask, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" There *is* a balm! There *is* a Physician who can heal all these natural wounds, who can give joy to the troubled countenance, take the furrow from the brow, wipe the tear from the eyes, remove the agitation from the bosom—and calm the heart now swelling with grief. He "heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds."

But all that we have mentioned of woe and sorrow which the natural heart endures is not sufficient to explain our text. The heart broken not by distress or disappointment, but on account of *sin*, is the heart which

God peculiarly delights to heal. all other sufferings may find a fearful center in one breast, and yet the subject of them may be unpardoned and unsaved. But if the heart is broken for sin by the Holy Spirit, salvation will be its ultimate issue and heaven its result! At the time of regeneration, the soul is subject to an inward work, causing considerable suffering at the time. This suffering does not continue after the soul has learned the preciousness of a Savior's blood, but while it lasts, it produces an effect which is never forgotten in later life! Let none suppose that the pains we are about to describe are the constant companions of an heir of heaven during his entire existence. They are like the torture of a great drunkard at the time of his reformation, rendered necessary, not by the reformation, but by his old habits. So this broken heart is felt at the time of that change of which the Bible speaks, when it says, "Except a man be born-again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The fruit of the Spirit is afterwards joy and peace, but for a season we must, if saved, endure much mental agony.

Are any of you at the present moment disturbed in mind and vexed in spirit because you have violated the commands of God? And are you anxious to know whether these feelings are tokens of genuine brokenness and contrition? Hear me, then, while I briefly furnish you with tests whereby you may discern the truth and value of your repentance.

1. We cannot conceive it possible that you are broken in heart if the pleasures of the world are your delight. We may consent to call you amiable, estimable and honorable, even, should you mix somewhat in the amusements of life—but it would be a treason to your common sense to tell you that such things are consistent with a broken heart! Will any venture to assert that yon gay reveler has a broken heart? Would he not consider it an insult, should you suggest it? Does that lewd song, now defiling the air, proceed from the lips of a broken-hearted sinner? Can the fountain, when filled with sorrow, send forth such streams as these? No, my friends, the wanton, the lewd, the rioting and the profane are too wise to lay claim to the title of broken-hearted persons, seeing that their claim would be palpably absurd! They scorn the name as mean and paltry—unworthy of a man who loves free living and counts religion *cant*.

But should there be one of you so entirely deceived by the evil spirit as to think yourself a partaker in the promises, while you are living in the lusts of the flesh, let me solemnly warn you of your error! He who sincerely repents of sin will hate it and find no pleasure in it. And during the season when his heart is broken, he will loathe to detestation, the very approach of evil! The song of mirth will then be as a dirge in his ear—"As he that pours vinegar upon niter, so is he that sings songs to a sad heart." If the man who makes merry with sin is broken-hearted, he must be a prince of hypocrites, for he pretends to be worse than he is!

We know right well that the wounded spirit requires other cordials than this world can afford. A soul disturbed by guilt must be lulled to a peaceful rest by other music than carnal pleasures can afford. The tavern, the house of vice and the society of the profligate are no more to be endured by a contrite soul than the jostling of a crowd by a wounded man!

2. Again, we will not, for one moment, allow that a *self-righteous man* can have a broken heart. Ask him to pray and he thanks God that he is every way correct. What need has he to weep because of the iniquity of his life, for he firmly believes himself to be well-deserving and far enough removed from guilt! He has attended his religious duties; he is exceedingly strict in the form of his devotions; or if he cares not for such things, he is at any rate quite as good as those who do! He was never in bondage to any man but can look to heaven without a tear for his sin. Do not conceive that I am painting an imaginary case, for there are, unfortunately, too many of these proud self-exalting men. Will they be angry with me when I tell them that they are no nearer heaven than those whom we reproved a few moments ago? Or will they not be equally moved to wrath if I were so much as to *hint* that they need to be broken in heart for their sin? Nevertheless, such is the case, and Pharisees shall one day learn with terror that self-righteousness is hateful to God!

But what is a broken heart? I say, first, that a broken heart implies *a very deep and poignant sorrow on account of sin*. A broken heart—think of that! If you could look within, and see everything going on in this great mystery called man, you would marvel at the wonders thereof. But how much more astonished would you be to see its heart, not merely divided in two, but split into atoms! You would exclaim, "What misery could have done this? What a heavy blow must have fallen here!" By nature, the heart is of one solid piece, hard as a nether millstone. But when God smites it, it is broken to pieces in deep suffering. Some will understand me when I describe the state of the man who is feeling a sorrow for sin. In the morning he bends his knees in prayer, but he feels afraid to pray. He thinks it is blasphemy for him to venture near God's throne! And when he does pray at all, he rises with the thought—"God cannot hear me, for He hears not sinners." He goes about his business and is perhaps a little diverted. But at every interval, the same black thought rolls upon him—"*You are condemned already."* Mark his person and appearance. A melancholy has rested upon him. At night he goes home, but there is little enjoyment for him in the household. He may smile, but his smile ill conceals the grief which lurks underneath. When again he bends the knees, he fears the shadows of the night. He dreads to be on his bed, lest it should be his tomb! And if he lies awake, he thinks of death, the second death—damnation and destruction! If he dreams, he dreams of demons and flames of hell. He wakes, again, and almost feels the torture of

which he dreamed. He wishes in the morning it were evening—and at evening it were night. "I loathe my daily food," he says. "I care for nothing for I have not Christ! I have not mercy, I have not peace." He has set off running on the road to heaven and he puts his fingers in his ears and will hear of nothing else. Tell him of a ball or concert—it is nothing to him. He can enjoy nothing! You might put him in a heaven and it would be a hell to him! Not the chants of the redeemed, not the hallelujahs of the glorified, not the hymns of flaming cherubs would charm woe out of this man as long as he is the subject of a broken heart.

Now I do not say that all must have the same amount of suffering before they arrive at heaven. I am speaking of some who have this especial misery of heart on account of sin. They are utterly miserable. As Bunyan has said, "They are considerably tumbled up and down in their souls"—and conceive that, "As the Lord their God lives, there is but a step between themselves and eternal death." Oh, blessings on the Lord forever! If any of you are in that condition, here is the mercy. Though this wound is not provided for in any earthly pharmacy—though there are found no physicians who can heal it, yet, "He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds." It is a blessing to have a broken heart, after all!

Again—when a man has a broken heart, he not only feels sorrow for sin, but he feels himself *utterly unable to get rid of it*. He who believes himself able to save himself, has never known the meaning of a broken heart. Those who imagine that reformation can atone for the past—or secure righteousness for the future—are not yet savingly brought to know them. No, my friends, we must be humbled in the dust and made to look for all in Christ, or else we shall be deceived, after all! But are you driven out of yourself? Are you like the wounded soldier crying for someone else to carry you to the hospital of mercy and longing for the aid of a mightier than yourself? Then be of good cheer, there shall be found a great deliverance for you! So long as you trust in ceremonies, prayers or good works, you shall not find eternal grace. But when stripped of all strength and power, you shall gain a glorious salvation in the Lord Jesus! If morality can join the pieces of a broken heart, the cement shall soon cease to bind and the man shall again be as vile as ever. We must have a *new heart* and a right spirit, or vain will be all our hopes!

Need I give any other description of the character I desire to comfort? I trust you are discovered. Oh, my poor brothers and sisters, I grieve to see you in distress, but there is pardon through Jesus—there is forgiveness even for you! What? Though your sins lie like a millstone on your shoulders, they shall not sink you down to hell! Arise! He, my gracious Lord, calls you! Throw yourself at His feet and lose your griefs in His loving and cheering words! You are saved if you can say—

"A guilty, weak and helpless worm
On Christ's kind arms I fall.

He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

II. We have spoken a long time on the great ill of a broken heart. Our second thought will be the GREAT MERCY—"He *heals* the broken in heart."

First, *He, only,* can do it. Men may alleviate suffering, they may console the afflicted and cheer the distressed, but they cannot heal the broken in heart, nor bind up their wounds! It is not human eloquence, or mortal wisdom. It is not the oration of an Apollos, nor the wondrous words of a prince of preachers. It is the "still small voice" of God which alone confers the "peace which passes all understanding." The binding of the heart is a thing done immediately by God, oftentimes without any instrumentality whatever! But when instrumentality is used, it is always in such a way that the man does not extol the instrument, but renders grateful homage to God. In *breaking* hearts, God uses man continually—repeated fiery sermons and terrible denunciations break men's hearts. But you will bear me witness when your hearts were *healed*— only God did it! You value the minister that broke your heart. But it is not often that we ascribe the healing to any instrumentality whatever! The act of Justification is generally apart from all means— only God does it. I know not the man who uttered the words that were the means of relieving my heart—"Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." I do not remember what he said in the sermon and I am sure I do not care to know. I found Jesus then and there. And that was enough for me! When you get your wounds healed, even under a minister, it seems as if it were not the minister who spoke. You never heard him speak like it in all your life before. You say, "I have often heard him with pleasure, but he has outdone himself. *Before*, he spoke to my ears, but *now* to my heart." We are, some of us, rejoicing in the liberty of Christ and walking in all the joy of the Spirit. But it is to *God* we owe our deliverance and we are grateful neither to man nor book, so much as to the great Physician who has taken pity on us. Oh that Jesus would walk through this Bethesda now! Oh, poor sick, dying man, does guilt weigh heavy on your soul? Turn not to any helper but to Him that sits on the throne!

Then He only *can* do it. I defy any of my brothers to bind up a broken heart. I have often labored to do it, but could never effect it. I have said a word to console the mourner, but I have felt that I have done but little, or have, perhaps, put the wrong mixture in the cup. Only HE can do it! Some of you seek mercy through Baptism, or the Lord's Supper, or regular attendance at the house of prayer. Some of you, again, have certain forms and observances to which you attach saving value. As the Lord lives, NONE of these things bind up the broken in heart apart from the Holy Spirit! They are empty wind and air. You may have them and be lost! You can have no peace and comfort unless you have immediate

dealings with God, who alone, as the great Physician, heals the broken in heart! Ah, there are some of you who go to your ministers with broken hearts and say, "What shall I do?" I have heard of a preacher who told his anxious hearer, "You are getting melancholy; you had better go to such-and-such a place of amusement. You are getting too dreary and melancholy by half." Oh, to think of a nurse in a hospital administering poison, when she ought to be giving the true medicine! If he deserves to be hung, who mixes poison with his drugs, how much more guilty is that man who tells a soul to seek for happiness where there is none—who sends it to a carnal world for joy when there is no joy to be found except in God?

Then again, God only *may* do it. Suppose we could heal your broken heart? It would be good for nothing. I do beseech the Lord that I may never get a broken heart healed, except it is by God. A truly convinced sinner will always rather keep his heart broken than have it healed wrongly. I ask you who are suffering whether you would not rather keep your broken heart as it is than allow a bad physician to cure it for you, and so deceive you and send you to hell, at last? I know your cry is, "Lord, let me know the worst of my case. Use the knife. Do not be afraid of hurting me! Let me feel it all. Cut the proud flesh away rather than let it remain." But there are not a few who get their wounds glossed over by some pretended good works or duties. Oh, my hearer let no man deceive you! Be not content with a name to live while you are really dead. Bad money may pass on earth, but genuine gold, alone, will be received in heaven. Can *you* abide the fire?

In vain your presumption! When God shall come to examine you, you will not pass muster unless you have had a real healing from His hand! It is easy enough to get religious notions and fancy you are safe, but a real saving work is the work of God and God, alone! Seek not to the priest—he may console—but it is by deluding you! Seek not to your own self—you may soothe yourself into the sleep of hell! See that your heart is washed in the blood of Jesus. Be careful that the Holy Spirit has His temple in it and may God, of His great and sovereign grace, look to you that you deceive not yourself!

But next, God *will* do it. That is a sweet thought. "He heals the broken in heart." He WILL do it! Nobody else can, nobody else may, but He will! Is your heart broken? He WILL heal it, He is sure to heal it, for it is written—and it can never be altered, for what was true 3,000 years ago, is true now—"He heals the broken in heart." Did Saul of Tarsus rejoice after three days of blindness? Yes, and you, also, shall be delivered! Oh, it is a theme for eternal gratitude that the same God who, in His loftiness and omnipotence stooped down in olden times to soothe, cherish, relieve and bless the mourner, is even *now* taking His journeys of mercy among the

penitent sons of men! Oh, I beseech Him to come where you are sitting and put His hand inside your soul—and if He finds, there, a broken heart, to bind it up! Poor sinner, breathe your wish to Him, let your sigh come before Him, for, "He heals the broken in heart." There you lie wounded on the plain. "Is there no physician?" you cry! "Is there none?" Around you are your fellow sufferers, but they are as helpless as yourself. Your mournful cry comes back without an answer and space, alone, hears your groan. Ah, the battlefield of sin has one kind Visitor. It is not abandoned to the vultures of remorse and despair. I hear footsteps approaching! They are the gentle footsteps of Jehovah! With a heart full of mercy, He is hastening to His repenting child. In His hands there is no thunder, in His eyes no anger, on His lips no threat—look how He bows Himself over the mangled heart! Hear how He speaks, "Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." And if the patient dreads to look in the face of the mighty Being who addresses him, the same loving mouth whispers, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My name's sake." Look how He washes every wound with sacred water from the side of Jesus! Mark how He spreads the ointment of forgiving grace and binds around each wound the fair white linen, which is the righteousness of saints. Does the mourner faint under the operation? He puts a cordial to his lips, exclaiming, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." Yes, it is true—most true—neither dream nor fiction, "HE HEALS THE BROKEN IN HEART AND BINDS UP THEIR WOUNDS."

How *condescending* is the Lord of heaven, to thus visit poor forlorn man! The Queen has kindly visited the hospitals of our soldiers to cheer, by her royal words, her loyal defenders. By this she has done herself honor, and her soldiers love her for it. But when the God of the whole earth, the Infinite Creator, stoops to become servant to His creatures—can you conceive the majestic condescension which bows itself in mercy over the miserable heart and with loving fingers closes the gaping wounds of the spirit? Oh, sin-sick sinner! The King of heaven will not despise *you*, but you, too, shall find Him your Comforter, who heals all your diseases! Mark, moreover, how tenderly He does it. You remember that passage in the Psalms, "Loving-kindness and *tender* mercies"? God's mercies are "tender mercies." When He undertakes to bind up the broken in heart, He always uses the softest liniment. He is not like your army surgeon who hurries along and says, "A leg off here, an arm off there." But He comes gently and sympathizing; He does not use roughness with us; But with downy fingers He puts the wound together, and lays the plaster on. Yes, He does it in such a soft and winning way that we are full of wonder to think He could be so kind to such unworthy ones!

Then He does it *securely*, so that the wound cannot open again. If He puts on His plaster, it is heaven's court plaster and it never fails. If He heals, He heals effectually. No man who is once saved of God shall ever be lost! If we receive mercy by faith, we shall never lose it. When God heals once, He heals forever! Although some who teach false doctrine do assert that children of God may be lost, they have no warrant in Scripture, nor in experience, for we know that He keeps the saints. He who is once forgiven cannot be punished. He who is once regenerated cannot perish. He who is once healed shall never find his soul sick unto death. Blessings on His name—some of us have felt His skill and have known His mighty power! And were our hearts broken, now, we would not stop a moment, but go at once to His feet and we would cry, "O, You who bind the broken in heart, bind ours! You who heals wounds, heal ours, we beseech You."

And now, my hearers, a parting word with you. Are you careless and ungodly? Permit me to speak with you. Is it true that after death there is a judgment? Do you believe that when *you* die, *you* will be called to stand before the bar of God? Do you know that there is a hell of eternal flame appointed for the wicked? Yes—you know and believe all this—and yet you are going down to hell thoughtless and unconcerned—you are living in constant and fearful jeopardy of hell's fires—without a friend on the other side the grave! Ah, how changed will your note be soon' you have turned away from rebuke, you have laughed at warning, but laughter will then give place to sighs, and your singing to yells of agony! Think about it, my brothers and sisters, before you again place your life in peril. What will you do if your soul is required of you? Can you endure the terrors of the Almighty? Can you dwell in everlasting burnings? Were your bones of iron, and your ribs of brass, the sight of the coming judgment would make you tremble! Forbear then to mock at religion. Cease to blaspheme your Maker, for remember, you will soon meet Him face to face—and how will you then account for your insults heaped upon His patient person? May the Lord yet humble you before Him!

But I am seeking the distressed and I am impatient to be the means of his comfort. It may be my words are now sounding in the ears of one of my weary, wounded fellow countrymen. You have been a long time tossing on the bed of languishing and the time for thought has been blessed to your soul by God. You are now feeling the guilt of your life and are lamenting the sins of your conduct. You fear there is no hope of pardon, no prospect of forgiveness—and you tremble lest death should lead your guilty soul unforgiven before its Maker. Hear, then, the word of God! Your pains for sins are God's work in your soul! He wounded you that you may seek Him. He would not have showed you your sin if He did not intend to pardon you! You are now a sinner and Jesus came to save sin-

ners—therefore He came to save you! Yes, He is saving you now! These strivings of soul are the work of His mercy. There is love in every blow and grace in every stripe. Believe, O troubled one that He is able to save you unto the uttermost and you shall not believe in vain. Now, in the silence of your agony, look unto Him who by His stripes heals you; Jesus Christ has suffered the penalty of your sins, and has endured the wrath of God on your behalf. See yonder crucified Man on Cavalry, and mark you that those drops of blood are falling for *you.* Those nailed hands are pierced *for you,* and that opened side contains a heart within it, full of love *to you*—

"None but Jesus! None but Jesus!
Can do helpless sinners good."

It is simple reliance on Him which saves! The Negro slave said, "Massa, I fall flat on de promise." So if you fall flat on the promise of Jesus, you shall not find Him fail you! He will bind up your heart, and make an end to the days of your mourning. We shall meet in heaven, one day, to sing hallelujah to the condescending Lord! Till then, may the God of all grace be our helper. Amen.

"The mighty God will not despise
The contrite heart's plea for sacrifice;
The deep-fetched sigh, the secret groan,
Rises accepted to the throne!
He meets, with tokens of His grace,
The trembling lip, the blushing face;
His heart yearns when sinners pray—
And mercy bears their sins away.
When filled with grief, overwhelmed with shame,
He, pitying heals their broken frame—
He hears their sad complaints and spies
His image in their weeping eyes."

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